

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (Lk 5:1-11): While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

“At your command I will lower the nets.”

Fr. Blas RUIZ i López
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Today, the Gospel offers us a simple but profound dialogue between Jesus and Simon Peter, dialogue we could also make ours: amidst the churning waters of the world's stormy seas, we try hard to swim against the tide, while hoping to fish the good news of a Gospel's announcement that bring us a fruitful answer...

But, it is then, when, unfailingly, the crude reality falls upon us; we are not strong enough. We need something else: our trust in God's Word. He, who promised He will never forsake us. “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” (Lk 5:5). Peter's answer can now be understood in relation to Mary's words during the Cana's wedding: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). And it is when we confidently accomplish our Lord's will when our work turns out to be really profitable.

And this, despite our limitations as sinners: “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” (Lk 5:8). Saint Ireneus of Lyon discovers a pedagogic aspect in sin: he who is conscientious of his sinful nature is also able to recognize his condition of creature, and this recognition places us before the clear evidence of a Creator that transcend us.

Only someone who, like Peter, knows his own limitations is able to accept that the fruit of this apostolic work is not his, but belongs to who has been profiting from him, as of an instrument. The Lord told the Apostles that from then on they would catch men, but the true Fisherman is Him: the good disciple is nothing but the net that catches the fish, and this net only works if it is used as the Apostles did: leaving everything and following him (cf. Lk 5:11).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“[Our task as children of God is] to get all men to enter, freely, into the divine net; to get them to love each other (...). Let us accompany Our Lord as he goes about his divine task of fishing.”
(Saint Josemaría)

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“Those who confess Jesus know that they cannot just take the easy way out, but have to risk

putting out into the deep.” (Francis)

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“Faced with God's fascinating and mysterious presence, man discovers his own insignificance (...). Before the divine signs wrought by Jesus, Peter exclaims: ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord’ (Lk 5:8).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 208)