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
(Ascó, Tarragona, Spain)

Today the Gospel offers us the simple yet profound dialogue between Jesus and Simon Peter, a dialogue that we could make our own: in the midst of the stormy waters of this world, we strive to swim against the current, seeking the good catch of a Gospel proclamation that obtains a fruitful response...

And it is then that the harsh reality inevitably falls upon us: our strength is not enough. We need something more: trust in the Word of the One who has promised us that he will never leave us alone. "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets" (Lk 5:5). We can understand this response of Peter in relation to the words of Mary at the wedding at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). And it is in the confident fulfillment of the Lord's will that our

work is profitable.

And all this, despite our limitations as sinners: “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man” (Lk 5:8). St. Irenaeus of Lyons discovers a pedagogical aspect in sin: those who are aware of their sinful nature are capable of recognizing their condition as creatures, and this recognition brings us before the evidence of a Creator who is greater than us.

Only he, who, like Peter, has been able to accept his limitations, is in a position to accept that the fruits of his apostolic work are not his own, but those of the One whom he has served as an instrument. The Lord calls the Apostles to be fishers of men, but the true fisherman is He: the good disciple is nothing more than the net that brings in the catch, and this net is only effective if he acts as the Apostles did: leaving everything and following the Lord (cf. Lk 5:11).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “[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)

- “Those who confess Jesus know that they cannot just take the easy way out, but have to risk putting out into the deep.” (Francis)

- “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, Nº 208)