

GOSPEL

LUKE 5:1-11

Jesus was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats close to the bank. The fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats - it was Simon's - and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.' 'Master,' Simon replied 'we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' And when they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled the two boats to sinking point.

When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' For he and all his companions were completely overcome by the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is men you will catch.' Then, bringing their boats back to land, they left everything and followed him.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

In today's Gospel passage, Luke's narrative offers us the call of Saint Peter. His name — as we know — was Simon, and he was a fisherman. On the shore of the Lake of Galilee, Jesus sees him as he is arranging his nets, along with other fishermen. He finds him exhausted and discouraged, because that night they had caught nothing. And Jesus surprises him with an unexpected gesture: He gets into his boat and asks him to put out a short distance from the land because He wants to speak to the people from there — there were many people. So Jesus sits down in Simon's boat and teaches the crowd gathered along the shore. But His words reopen even Simon's heart to trust. Then, with

another surprising 'move', Jesus says to him: "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch".

Simon responds with an objection: "Master, we have toiled all night and took nothing!". And, as an expert fisherman, he could have added: 'If we didn't catch anything during the night, we aren't going to catch anything during the day'. However, inspired by Jesus' presence and enlightened by His Word, he says: "But at your word I will let down the nets". It is the response of faith, which we too are called to give; it is the attitude of willingness that the Lord asks of all his disciples, especially those who are tasked with responsibilities in the Church. And Peter's trustful obedience creates a prodigious result: "when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish".

It is a miraculous catch, a sign of the power of Jesus' word: when we place ourselves generously in his service, he accomplishes great things in us. This is what he does in each of us: he asks us to welcome him on the boat of our life, in order to set out anew with him and to sail a new sea, one which proves to be full of surprises. His call to go out into the open sea of the humanity of our time, in order to be witnesses to goodness and mercy, gives new meaning to our existence, which is often at risk of collapsing upon itself. At times we may be surprised and uncertain before the call that the divine Master addresses to us, and we may be tempted to reject it due to our inadequacy. Peter too, after this incredible catch, said to Jesus: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord". This humble prayer is beautiful: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'. But he says it on his knees before the One whom by this point he recognizes as 'Lord'. And Jesus encourages him by saying: "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men"; because God — if we trust in Him — frees us from our sin and opens a new horizon before us: to cooperate in his mission.

The greatest miracle that Jesus accomplished for Simon and the other tired and discouraged fishermen is not so much the net full of fish, as having helped them not to fall victim to disappointment and discouragement in the face of

failure. He prepared them to become proclaimers of and witnesses to his word and the Kingdom of God. And the disciples' response was immediate and unreserved: "when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him". May the Blessed Virgin, model of prompt adherence to God's will, help us to feel the allure of the Lord's call, and make us willing to cooperate with him to spread his word of salvation everywhere.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Although Simon had worked hard, he had caught nothing. Jesus, now in the boat with him, asked him to try again. Do you see Jesus as being in the boat with you as you work? How could you involve Jesus more in your day to day work life?
- After this encounter with Jesus, Simon, James and John left everything and followed him. Are there things in your life which you've had to leave behind in order to follow Jesus?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.