



My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Just as we have begun a new season, this week we will also commemorate the First Sunday of Luke. Therefore, it is appropriate that this Sunday's Gospel is also about beginnings; specifically, Christ calling His first Disciples to follow His Ministry. In the small village of Gennesaret, the size of the crowd who came to hear Him made it necessary for Christ to speak to them from a fishing boat. It would be understandable if the fishermen, hard at their days' work, were only half-listening to His sermon, but as the Gospel lesson shows, it is to those who are preoccupied by the cares of this life that Christ wishes to speak most of all.

When He finished teaching the crowd, our Lord turned to Simon, who was the owner of the boat, and suggested that Simon put down his nets. Having worked all night, and without catching anything, Simon was tired. Still, though the Evangelist does not tell us what Simon heard and felt, we know that something Simon heard from or saw in Jesus made

him obey the Lord's command. Simon let down the nets, and the catch was miraculous. Though Simon was a man of little education, when the nets began to break and one of the boats started to sink, he immediately understood who it was who spoke to him, because his first words to the long-awaited Messiah were, "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*" (Luke 5:8). Jesus did not leave Simon, or Simon's partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Instead, He simply told them, "*Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.*" (Luke 5:11) Christ's command to them was so inspiring, that James and John left their father, Zebedee's boats right where they lay.

When we speak of what it means to be a follower of Christ, we are constantly faced with the understanding that we must lose ourselves to the world, to gain the Kingdom of Heaven. However, it is one thing to abandon worldly pleasures—but how many of us would be willing to abandon our homes, families, and friends, as the Disciples did? Indeed, when we think of the ascetics of the world, there are only a few who will be able to answer such a call. However, Christ will speak to each of us in different ways, and as the Disciples saw, He often comes to us when we do not expect it. I pray that as we enter the season of the harvest, we ask ourselves: how do we witness Christ to the world? I do not mean "catching men" only in the sense of preaching, or speaking about our faith, because there are other ways to witness Christ to our friends and neighbors. Do we act with kindness, compassion and understanding, so that all who see us in their day-to-day meetings will sense that Jesus truly lives in us?

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