

Called to Catch

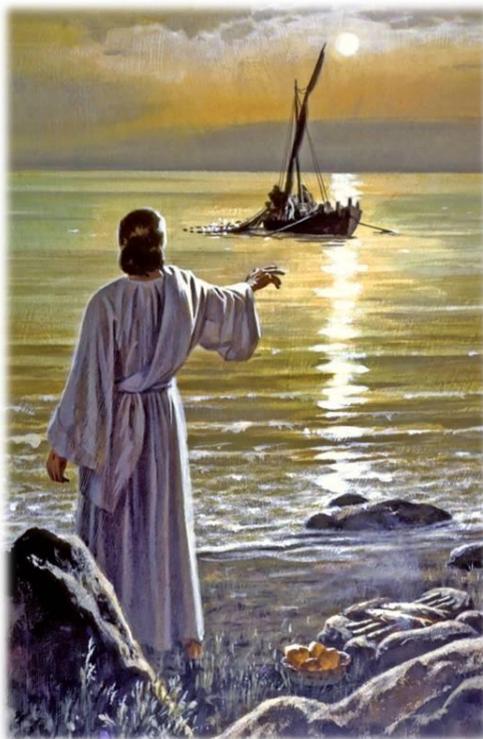
3rd Sunday of Easter – Year C

Acts of the Apostles 5:27-32, 40b-41
Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13

Revelation 5:11-14
John 21:1-19

The story of the Great Catch of fish is told twice between the four Gospels, once in Luke and again in John. The Gospel of Luke places the story at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and links it with the call of His first Disciples. The Gospel of John places it at the end and associates it with the Resurrection. In both cases, the story concludes with an exchange between Jesus and Peter that sets Peter apart as first among equals in the apostolic role of both "fisherman" and "shepherd".

The Gospel of John even goes as far as indicating the exact number of fish - one hundred fifty-three - caught by the Apostles through Jesus' intervention following the long dark night. I have often thought about that number, what it might mean, and what John's purpose might have been in going out of his way to tell us. No doubt it is symbolic of the great catch of new believers in the early decades of the Church's mission, people who responded to the eloquent



testimony of the Apostles, commissioned by Jesus to be "fishers of men".

On the other hand I would consider that detail from another angle, which leads me to a serious question to consider: How many of those one hundred fifty-three fish actually *wanted* to be in the net? How many of them were not desperately trying to swim out of the net? And yet, the Apostles dragged the net ashore, hauled it onto dry ground, and presented them to Jesus.

It brings to mind the words of Jesus in Luke's presentation of the Great Catch. When Peter falls to His knees and begs Jesus to depart, Jesus did not say that Peter would be "attracting", "finessing" or "wooing", but "from now on you will be *catching* men" (Luke 5:10). It brings to mind the conclusion of Matthew, in a passage traditionally referred to as The Great Commission, in which Jesus does not tell His disciples to "suggest", "put-forth", or "propose" discipleship, but rather "go and

The Great Catch of Fish

make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19).

The Great Catch as the Gospel of John presents it states the number of one hundred fifty-three fish, presumably trying to escape (after all they were fish in a net), and yet the net, which, given the circumstances, should have been torn, was not. All this accomplished in hard work of the Apostles, through the divine intervention of the Risen Jesus.

So it is with the work we are given as His Church, and the team effort for which we, with Christ are all participants, in which we cast the nets to catch the fish Jesus sends.

We cast the nets. Jesus provides the great, and continuous catch

Even at times that seem for us to be the darkest; after a long night of darkness in which all our efforts seem to be in vain, we continue to recognize the Risen Jesus in our midst, not far away, just on the shore, calling on us to throw out our nets just one more time. We cast the nets. Jesus provides the great, and continuous catch that builds up His Church down through history, and throughout the world.

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