



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday, as we begin a new season, we will also commemorate the First Sunday of Luke. It seems appropriate therefore, that this Sunday's Gospel is also about beginnings.

We are in the small village of Gennesaret, where the multitudes who wish to hear Christ make it necessary for Him to speak from a fishing boat. Perhaps the fishermen themselves were only half listening to Christ during their work, but it is to them that Christ wishes to speak most of all.

When He finishes, He turns to Simon, the owner of the boat and suggests that Simon put down his nets. St. Luke makes it clear that while Simon is tired, having worked all night and most of the day with nothing to show for it, he still obeys Christ's command.

The catch is miraculous, and though Simon is a man of little education, even he understands who Christ is, when the nets begin to break and one of the boats starts to sink

from the weight of the fish. Simon is so overcome with awe, that his first words to Jesus are *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"* (Luke 5:8).

Jesus however, does not leave Simon, or Simon's partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Christ wished to prefigure that which He would teach them later, *"...do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind... your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well"* (Luke 12:29-31). Indeed, instead of leaving, He simply tells them, *"Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men."* (Luke 5:11)

Christ's words to them are so enticing and simple to understand, that it is easy to forget James and John were leaving behind their father, Zebedee. Later in the Gospel, when we read we read of Christ healing Simon Peter's mother-in-law, we know just what Christ demanded when He commanded His chosen disciples to leave their homes, and follow Him.

When we speak of what it means to be a follower of Christ, we are constantly faced with the notion that in order to go closer to our Creator we must deny ourselves. However, it is one thing to abandon love of worldly pleasures and materialism, but how many of us would be willing to abandon our homes, families, and friends as the disciples did? Indeed, speaking of ascetics throughout the world, there are only a select few who will be able to answer such a call.

Christ will call to each of us in different ways, and as the disciples understood firsthand, often when we are least expecting it. I pray that as we enter the fall season we hold fast to our Lord's command not to be afraid. So long as we seek His Kingdom, God will continue to provide us with the comfort and strength to make each day a fruitful new beginning.

+ALEXIOS

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