

HOMILY for 5th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

As Jesus asked Peter to cast the net on the right side of the boat & let Him help catch some fish, I'm reminded of this cute story that a teacher asked her students to do on a Sunday School Class.

A Sunday-School teacher asked her students to take some time on Sunday afternoon to write a letter to Jesus. They were to bring their letters back the following Sunday. One little boy wrote, "Dear Jesus, we had a good time at church today. Wish You could have been there!" Another little boy wrote, "Dear Jesus, thank you for my baby brother, but I prayed for a puppy." A little girl wrote: "Dear Jesus, if You watch me in church on Sunday, I'll show You my new shoes!" Another interesting letter came from a young girl. "Dear Jesus," she wrote, "please send me a real live pony. I promise I never asked for anything before. You can look it up."

Some of us have been an expert at something. You might have been blessed with certain skills or known to do certain things well after many years of experience. Peter & some of the apostles were professional fishermen. Peter had made his living in fishing for many years. He probably knew all the fishing holes & mastered all the necessary skills to make him one of the best fishermen in his region. He worked hard one night as he usually had done every night all his life. But, this time he came home empty without any fish. We could relate to Peter as we might have one of those bad days like he did. Here's how this Sunday's Gospel described that bad night of fishing that Peter got, "...When Jesus Had finished speaking, He said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water & lower your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we've been hard at it all night long & have caught nothing. But, if you say so, I will lower the nets.'"

After a long, frustrated evening without catching anything, can you imagine Peter would give Jesus that answer? What would you tell Jesus if you were a tired Peter? Most of us would not listen to Jesus & give Him that sweet response as Peter did. We would vent & take it out on Jesus. We would say, "Where have you been when I needed your help the most like last night?" Or, we might say, "You had never been fishing before. Now you want to tell me how to do my job better?" Peter must have been patient & humble enough to listen to Jesus & answer the way he did. Many of us are impatient & proud & would never be able to respond like Peter did. Besides having those great virtues of patience & humility, Peter was also able to do see something extraordinary in Jesus. He decided to put all the trust in his new master & follow His guidance. Because of his trust & obedience in Jesus, Peter was able to experience one of the first miracles that his new master would do for him & the people of God. This Sunday's Gospel gives us the following summary of this miracle, "...They caught such a great number of fish that their nets were at the breaking point. They signaled to their mates in the other boat to come & help them. These came, & together they filled the boats until they nearly sank. At the sight of this, Simon Peter fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.'"

We've just heard how Peter was able to experience an awesome miracle that helped him recognize who Jesus really was. At first, Peter only considered Jesus to be a typical prophet & a holy man. As an old man, Peter had been through life & seen man great prophets, including John the Baptist. He was still checking out Jesus & not sure about His true identity. He continued to collect stories & information about Jesus. He did not know how long it would take him to come to a good conclusion about this new prophet, or which event would help him make up his mind about Him. Suddenly, a fishing event described in today's Gospel helped

convince him about Jesus' true identity. Peter worked hard all night & ended with nothing. But, someone like Jesus who never fished before told him how to cast the net & helped him catch two boats full of fish. That extraordinary event opened his eyes to see the truth about Jesus & realize his own sinfulness to deserve that miracle. That's why Pete exclaimed this after witnessing the miracle, "Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man."

In order for Peter to experience that miracle, he had to swallow his pride & listen to Jesus' advice on how to do his life-long trade. He was willing to change his way & put his total trust in Jesus. Because of his humility & trust in Jesus, he was blessed with an incredible miracle. That is the requirement for any miracle to happen. But, it's not just Peter who experienced a miracle. Paul evidently experienced the same thing. He was the worst sinner, but was able to witness a better miracle as the risen Christ appeared to him & convinced him to turn his sinful life around. He no longer persecuted Jesus & His Church. He was grateful for that honor & miracle. Here's how Paul recalled & thanked the Lord for that experience. He shared it in this Sunday's Second Reading, "...Last of all, He [the Lord] was seen by me, as one born out of the normal course. In any case, whether it be I or they, this is what we preach & this is what you believed." So, if we want to experience a miracle like Paul or Peter, we need to find ways to meet the Lord Jesus. That is the first requirement for us to see more miracles in our lives. Another requirement is that we have to have the humility to change our ways & put our trust in the Lord like Peter & Paul did. If we follow those requirements, we would be able to experience similar miracles or even much better ones in our daily lives.

My dear brothers & sisters, it's not easy to be humble & accept advice from others. Interestingly, our Lord often gives us His advice through people & events around us. But, we tend to ignore it & do not want to change our ways. We do not like to make any personal sacrifices. We'd rather want God & others to conform their ways to ours. Worst yet, we often lack faith in the Lord who can surprise us & bring us a miracle. We need to learn from Peter & Paul & let the Lord guide us through the course of our lives. When we do that & let the Lord be in charge, we'll see all kinds of miracles every day of our lives.