

The Call of the First Disciples

Gospel: Matthew 4:18-22 AV: *"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. "*

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"
(Mat. 4:19)

After meeting Jesus, can anyone remain a fisherman?

After we, Christians, have seen the face of the Savior Jesus, the one who suffers for us, would we stay in our work, and continue to live for our work? Can an eye who has truly seen saw Christ remain blind to the most noble and truthful mission of the Gospel?

Today, we are faced with the call that Christ directed to His first four disciples. Those had already met Jesus, as John the Evangelist wrote in 1:35. At that meeting, they got to know Jesus who gave Simon the name of Peter. Just a bit before this final call to

apostleship, Jesus entered into the daily life and work of his disciples. For example, He made a miraculous draught for Peter. The latter was tired from fishing unsuccessfully all night. Upon the words of the Master he let down his nets for a draught (Luke 5:1-11). Jesus then called him to become a fisher of men.

In the history of revelation and salvation, God spoke only to those men who accepted His call to become fishers of men. The most beautiful pages in the Holy Scriptures are the ones that describe a wedding feast between God, the bridegroom of every human being, and the ones who followed Him. How beautiful this wedding feast is, the feast when God in the Burning Bush called Moses, when He called Isaiah in the Temple, and when He called the fishermen. In a few days, He will call Paul at the gates of Damascus.

How beautiful these souls are who, after meeting the Lord and hearing His call, left their nets, their father and their boat, and immediately followed Him. Jesus' call is not obligatory. The Lord desires those who worship Him in freedom and in the Spirit. The one who is called is always able to resist or accept the call. The response of Abraham and the conversion of Paul induce us to follow Jesus. On the other hand, the refusal of those who are invited to the wedding feast in the parable of Jesus alerts us.

We long to be like those who worship God in the Spirit. Whoever contemplates God draws from His light the light of life. Numerous are those who read the divine words, understand the noble human mission, and hear the call of the Lord to missions and evangelism. It is inevitable that every person who draws from the divine words ought to give them out. Freely we receive, freely

we give. The secret of the Lord's sweetness is its abundance, and the secret of the divine Word's fragrance is its intensity. Whoever tastes the Lord and buries Him in himself is deceived, for the Lord speaks in order to send. Love turns to others. Whoever reads the divine words and loves them truly cannot but love to preach them. Peter, do you love me? It is inevitable that your love will incite you to tend my sheep. This is one side of the divine call. It carries a strong urge to missions, because the Divine Love comes in abundance.

The other side of the Gospel call is the inner deep change that turns upside down one's entire being. The divine call goes deep into the conscience of man. It changes man, a change not just in his external life, but also in the depths of his heart.

The divine call does not just make man leave, if he has to, his parents or work or nets. It rather changes the love and purpose of his heart. The exchange of words (fisher of man and not of fish) by Jesus confirms this.

Come and follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Christ calls: "Come and follow me." Christ changes: "And I will make you..." He gives a new meaning to the purpose of work and jobs. For example, He gives to the fisher a new fishing, man instead of fish. Here, Christ confirms that the ideal and final goal of every work is people.

God sends us to people. This entails that sometimes we may have to remain far from them, or we may have to leave them, but at the end He will send us to be with them. God does not want to take us away but to protect us from the world. Salt is preserved to salt and the

light is elevated to shine. And the Christian is sent to preach.

The forsaking of nets and ships is possible if we follow Christ in total dedication. The purpose of the call is to be sent. And the apostle is the preacher. Working or forsaking work has to be dependent on this mission of preaching the Gospel.

Christ calls us, and the call demands a noble soul to answer this call of love. This answer changes us, and this change may demand the abandoning of our work or its use for the service of the Lord. There is no choice for the Christian other than hearing the call of the Gospel, "Come and follow me." This invitation is for all, but every Christian has to make a choice. The choices are many. It is up to every Christian to choose the nets that he can use to be for Christ a fisher of men.

Amen.