

## Let Jesus make you a Fisher of men!

Here in the South ... with **our favorable weather** for some 10 months of the year ... **many people** enjoy being outside doing things like **hunting** and **fishing**.

For me ... growing up in Chicago ...

**none of my friends** or **I ever went hunting or fishing**.

**But** here in the South, **many boys and girls** have been taken out on a lake or stood on a pier or at the edge of a pond and cast their **fishing line** out into the water.

To a **novice like me** ... **fishing** seems like no big deal ...

I mean ... you put **bait** on your hook ... fling it out into the water ... and hope that **some fish** will bite the bait and get hooked so you can reel them in.

That's **the basic idea** ... and **I'm sure** it works sometimes.

**But my simple notion** of fishing ...

doesn't reverence the skill necessary to be a true fisherman.

the **Birmingham News** reports how people spend thousands of dollars

to enter into fishing competitions during the year ...

and **for them** to go and do that ....

**I'm sure** that they're not simply relying on lady luck for them to win!

**No, when people pay that kind of money** to go fishing ...

they're counting on the skills that they have learned over a long period of time ...

to enable them to succeed at catching fish.

This very weekend, **thousands of people** will attend the **Birmingham Boat Show** down at **the BJCC** and **many of them** will be looking to acquire the wisdom and the **equipment** that will make them better fishermen. They want more than luck.

In our **Gospel** today, we hear of **Jesus** selecting the first 4 of his 12 Apostles ...

**Simon Peter** and his brother **Andrew** ... **James** and his brother **John**.

**All of them** were **fishermen** ... that was **their livelihood** ...

**it was how** they sustained themselves and others with food.

**Since it meant life** to them and others ... they counted on something more than **luck**, they relied on the wisdom they got from others and from their experiences of fishing.

Well, on that day, **Jesus** was calling them to follow Him and do something new.

**Jesus** was calling them to go out and catch ... **not fish ... but men!**

Now **just as** there's more to catching fish than putting bait on a hook ...  
and flinging your line out in the water ... and waiting for some fish to bite.

There's also more to catching men than putting a few bible verses in your memory...  
and flinging them out in public ... and waiting for someone to bite on them!

Which is **why Jesus** assured them ... "*I will make you fishers of men.*"

**You know,** we've heard **this statement of Jesus** so often that we concentrate on the profound change in what Jesus wants these men to do ... catch men not fish.

**But we need to also recognize that the task Jesus is calling them to do ...**  
will only be accomplished... with **His help and training.**

**He says today,** "*I will make you fishers of men.*"

In other words, **He's** saying ...

I will mold you ... I will form you ... I will prepare you ... I will teach you.

**How will those men become "fishers of men"?**  
**Jesus will make them "fishers of men"!**

And He'll do the same for us!

**Jesus will never set us up for failure.**

He will never ask us to do something where all we have is Lady Luck.

He'll never send us out to do anything ill equipped.

**Jesus will always offer us the wisdom necessary to carry out His will.**

**Just as a Dad or a Big Brother is delighted to teach a child about various types**  
of **fishing reels, and fishing line and bait and favorite fishing spots ...**  
**so that they're successful in catching fish.**

**Jesus, our Brother is delighted to teach all of us the things we need to know ...**  
to be **successful in catching men.**

And **here is something vitally important that we need to know and embrace ...**  
it's **the fact** that ... **all of us ... not just the 12 Apostles ... are called by Jesus to be...**  
**fishers of men!**

**Wow!** You may never have thought of that before ... but it's **so true.**

**This truth has been held by the Church from it's beginning ...**  
all **the Church Fathers** wrote about it ...  
and all of **our recent Popes** have been emphasizing it.

It's called **evangelization!**

The call to be fishers of men is the call to evangelize!

For **example**, throughout his 27 year Papacy, **Pope St. John Paul II** spoke again and again of **Jesus' call** ...

to **every baptized Christian** ... to go out and catch men ...

to evangelize them with **the Good News** of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Here's **what he wrote** in his encyclical, "**Mission of the Redeemer**"

*"The **mission** of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to **the Church**, is still very far from completion."*

He goes on:

*"I sense the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to **a new evangelization** ... No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: **To proclaim Christ to all peoples.**"*

**This is to say** ... when it comes to evangelization ... there are **no exceptions**  
**We all have our marching orders** ... they came with **Baptism**.

**The New Evangelization** that you are hearing about isn't a new program ...

And it isn't one program among many ...

no, **the New Evangelization** is the program ... the objective ... the mission ...  
of **the Universal Church!**

In other words, **the Church** doesn't just go on mission ... **the Church is mission!**

**We**, the members of the Church, **are all** called by God to spread the Good News.

We heard a **powerful example** this in our **First Reading**, where **God** calls Jonah saying, "*Set out for the Great City of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you.*"

In our **Gospel** we heard that **Jesus' first words** to his Apostles involved mission ...  
just as **Jesus' last words** to his Apostles involved mission

**Recall how He told them at His Ascension,**

*"Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father Son HS"*

**Jesus** is still calling His followers to go make disciples of all nations.

**He's calling** all men and women not just Priests ... to spread the Good News.

**Do you know what would bring God great joy?**

It would be for Him to hear every person say and really mean  
what we just said together in our **Responsorial Psalm**.

**4 times** in a row, we just prayed: “*Teach me your ways, O Lord!*”

**Sadly** there are **many people** who would not say these words. I’ve heard people say,  
Don’t talk to me about religion! I don’t want to hear about God! Don’t go there!

**For many people, God isn’t even a thought today**, let alone **a real option for them**  
to turn to ... in order to gain the wisdom and courage needed ...  
to be fishers of men and bring the Good News to others.

**What exactly is the Good News?**

**If someone on the street asked you, “What’s the Good News?”**  
**What would you tell them?**

**There are many ways to express it.**  
**Scott Hahn gives us a good one in his new book, “*Evangelizing Catholics*”**

**In the 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter** entitled, “*The New Evangelization: the Work of a Lifetime*”  
**He summarizes the Good News as:**

- 1. God loves us**
- 2. We have sinned**
- 3. Christ has died and risen to save us, and**
- 4. We have to respond in faith.**

**This is the news that Jesus expects all of us to get out to the world.**  
**It is the very mission of the Church to spread this Good News.**  
**Evangelizing is part of our baptismal call.**  
**No one is excused from this duty!**

**For those of you who fish, what would you do to become a better fisherman?**  
**You’d turn to professional fishermen and learn from them.**  
**You’d tap into their wisdom**

**Well the same is true if you want to be a better fisher of men,**  
**You need to turn to God and to others to tap into their wisdom.**

**Allow God to teach you.**  
**Use the words of our **Responsorial Psalm**, “*Teach me your ways, O Lord!*”**

**And He will ... through prayer and through others.**

**Jesus assures us today, “I will make you fishers of men.”**

- 1. Begin by asking Jesus to give you the desire to evangelize.**
- 2. Then ask Jesus to give you the courage to evangelize.**
- 3. Finally, go do it ... go fish.**

**You’ll never catch a single fish unless you cast your line in the water.**

**And you’ll never gather a single soul into the Household of God ...  
unless you put your faith out there for all to see.**

**God offers us much wisdom through **the evangelists of today:****

Pick up one of **many books of wisdom** on how to evangelize:

- **Scott Hahn’s book: *Evangelizing Catholics***
- **Allen Hunt’s book: “*Confessions of a Mega Church pastor*”.**
- **Matthew Kelly’s book: “*Rediscovering Catholicism*”.**
- **Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation: *The Joy of the Gospel*.**

The **New Year** is young; **but we are getting older!**

So, with **urgency of heart** let’s be about the mission of the Church  
**the mission we received at Baptism**  
**the mission to go out and be ... Fishers of men.**