

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 5th 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.