

St Pius & St Anthony Homily 5th Sunday Ordinary Time Year C (2024)

Jesus is a fish whisperer! He knows where they live, where they school, He knows how to call them in! In fact, the Fish is his symbol! People ask sometimes how the fish symbol came to represent Christ and Christians (it competes with the cross to be the most popular identifying insignia (*similar to the P/X symbol-also called 'Chi-Rho', which are the first two letters of the name **Christ**, in Greek 'Ch' is 'X', and 'R' in Greek is 'P', so P/X is abbreviated name of Christ*) But Christ came to be identified with the Fish symbol, because the Greek word for Fish, is 'IchThys' and that word is an acrostic of the first letters of the phrase: "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior" (*'Iesous Christos Theos Yios, Soter' in Greek*). So the Fish became a great codeword, symbol or considering today's gospel a '**catch**word' for Christians! Certainly, we see in today's gospel miracle, Jesus perform his command, mastery over fish and bringing them in! I imagine today's marvelous scene of the great catch, similar to when people perform fish feedings. I recall many times watching my dad and mom, as they used to go down to the lakeside behind their home, and first they'd call up, and then feed the fish. It was like they were fish whisperers. He kept the food in a metal garbage can, close by the lake (to keep raccoons-possums out). Often, late in the afternoon they'd go down and start banging the metal can top and sure enough, here they would come up! First the water would darken with the catfish backs and fins, great swirls of waves came up, and then they'd surface with mouths open, like a sliding scoop across the top of water. He'd throw out a coffee can size amount and watch them feed. As he would throw successive cans across the water, they almost seemed to roll over each other to give everyone a boost or chance to eat on the front-row! (*Reminds me of a scene from America's Funniest Home Videos, recently that showed from a home security camera how two dogs seemed frustrated standing at kiddy gate staring into the kitchen-they stood there a minute and sure enough, the smaller one got an idea, reared back and used its feet to climb on back of the other, to leapfrog over the fence – a jail break!*)

But remembering my Dad and Mom calling in those catfish like fish whisperers to swarm by the shore and eat, must have been similar to Jesus just calling in all of those fish to the nets of Peter and his crew. And what a huge amount, as the reading said, it was two boat-fulls (to the point of almost sinking them). What a greatest catch! And I can't help but feel like this was another version or method of how Jesus so often **fed the multitudes**, because you have to ask what happened to all the huge catch after Peter and his crew 'left everything to follow Jesus'! Jesus had been teaching the people all day by the seashore! They feasted! But yes, Jesus knows fish, and fishing! As he will say, Peter you may have caught some big loads in your career, but now I have an even greater catch for you to take in- catch people, draw them in, net people for the kingdom of God!

However, maybe more than Jesus catching fish today, the greater point is how Jesus catches Peter and the apostles through this action. Peter is a fisherman that is what he has always done. I wonder how many times before that day, people had walked along the shore, and meddling tried to tell Peter where to catch the best fish (*how many times I've stood on a bank fishing, and been told by somebody walking by, "Oh they are biting good down by the bend" like they were Pro Bass fisherman, Bill Dance or Roland Martin-I always figured they were trying to move me out, to get this spot!-so I'd say, 'Oh yeah, well, I'll watch you catch them down ere!'*)

The reading said that Peter and the others were washing their nets – which means they weren't cleaning-prepping fish. No, they were cleaning out seaweed or sea-junk caught up in their net instead. And here Jesus tells them not only to go back at it in the same cold spot but even to make it more unlikely, by telling them to put out nets on the open, deep, sea-side of the boat. More likely they would have caught something, by fishing on the shallow-shore side of the boat, as they may have been able to squeeze in or trap a school of fish along the bank (reminds me of how we kids when we didn't; have any tackle or fishing poles, would wade out into the water and with buckets, we'd try to make waves and push little minnows swimming close to the shore (to not become fish food themselves for the big ones out in deeper waters) to push them up on the bank. On the shallow side of the boat, if good time, was like fishing in a barrel! But Jesus told them to fish on the open-sea side of the boat! Hesitantly, Peter agrees and throws nets.

And what a catch of a lifetime! Two boat-fulls! It becomes the catch of their life, for Peter and the other apostles called in that day! All, by listening and answering Jesus' call to 'follow Him'.

Two things **jump out** at me from this story: the nets nearly tearing and the boats nearly sinking! Haven't we all been called by God at times to step out and try something, and take on a mission with Jesus, (**deep-sea** fish-over our heads), where we felt, "No, It is too much Lord, too deep- I can't handle that" only to be shown later by Jesus that not only can we, but that He produces greater results and success than we might ever have imagined possible! Notice that with Peter's and his crew, first the nets were nearly tearing, and then even with additional help, from the second relief boat, both of them nearly sink by the fish's weight. They may have asked, "What have we gotten ourselves in to?" But Jesus provided for them-Everything-He took care of them when they turned to Him and trusted Him. He not only kept them afloat, but "His ship will carry us safely to shore" (*the music group 'Of Monsters and Men' Little Talks song lyrics*) and imagine that haul of a catch, more than enough and so much more to be given and shared with everyone else. Keep in mind that Jesus will always take care of us, when we accept and fish His Way. Think of Jesus' other miracles: Even if the apostles didn't have

the record-breaking (not net-breaking), more fish in the boat than in the bay, catch they brought in with Him that day, even if they only had two piece fish kid's dinner (& five loaves from John 6:9-13), then Jesus could make that be enough, for a whole multitude of five thousand to be fed from it! Again, Jesus will take care of us if we turn to Him and Trust Him.

Have we ever felt like our nets were near-tearing, or our boat weighted down to the level of even having water splashing waves over the deck of our boat? Well, if Jesus is with us, He navigating us, and we are following Him, then we are going to make it to shore and not only make it, but with Him, we'll bring in such an abundant catch. We only have to listen, and let Jesus fish in/through us!