

The Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time
(Year C)

<i>First Reading</i>	Isaiah 6:1-2A, 3-8
<i>Response</i>	In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8
<i>Second Reading</i>	1 Corinthians 15:1-11
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	Come after me and I will make you fishers of men
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 5:1-11

The 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time for Year C brings us to another one of the episodes in the Gospel of Luke that is similar to Matthew and Mark, but which has some unique material, some unique insights, and that is into the call of Simon Peter and the disciples at the Sea of Galilee at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. So although this story is actually contained in Matthew and Mark, Luke gives us the most detailed account of the call of Simon Peter. It's a very famous account, so we're going to look at that passage and then we're going to try to unpack it and see how it connects with the Old Testament for today's readings. The gospel for today is Luke 5:1-11. After Jesus has travelled to Nazareth, he's now going around in Galilee preaching and teaching, and this is what it says:

While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John,

sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.¹

Okay, so the first thing you might notice about this account in Luke’s gospel is, as I said, it’s more detailed than what we read in Mark and Matthew. I actually think this is important for us to see just as a principal of interpreting the gospels. It’s really crucial to remember that the gospels are not comprehensive accounts of everything that Jesus did or everything that Jesus said. And even when they’re telling us about something Jesus did or said, they don’t necessarily tell us everything that took place at that particular moment. So for example, if you were to look at Mark’s account of the call of Peter and James and John (or Matthew’s account), basically, all it says is that Jesus went up to them, said “come, follow me” and they dropped their nets and went off and followed him. It’s really puzzling — at least it used to be puzzling to me when I would read it because I would wonder, “what in the world about Jesus made these guys just drop everything and go and become his disciples? Did he have a halo around him? What was the motivation for departing from their work? And in a sense, Luke gives us the backstory, helps fill out one reason why Peter and John and James (and Andrew of course, although he’s not focused on here) would have done that. And it’s that Jesus didn’t simply call the Apostles, he accompanied that call with a miracle, he performed a miracle of this miraculous catch. That miracle was a motive of credibility that moved them, that helped them to see that this was no ordinary man, that he wasn’t just some Rabbi, and that they were being called through him by God to leave their lifestyle, leave their work behind, and go and become his students, become his disciples.

So just a little bit of comparison and contrast there with the other synoptic gospels, but I think it’s really helpful to remember that. It’s especially helpful if — as I think and as the tradition of the Church has held — if Luke and John, for example, are the two last gospels to be written, then it makes sense that the later gospels might fill in some of the gaps, so to speak, with the earlier gospels that readers may have been puzzled by, or questioning about, as many readers do when they encounter Mark or Matthew’s account of the call of Peter.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

With that basic point in mind, what's going on in Luke's account? There are a couple of elements here that are worth highlighting. The first of them has to do with the setting. What's taking place here is of course Simon Peter is a fisherman; the lake is called Gennesaret, which is just another name for the Sea of Galilee. Lots of times, lakes and places, cities, will have multiple names (I live near New Orleans, which is also called "The Crescent City"). The same thing would happen with topography in ancient Israel. Simon Peter has his boats, they're out on the lake, the Sea of Galilee, and they're fishing; there are multiple boats, there are two of them here, and Jesus gets into Simon Peter's boat (well in this case, notice he's just called Simon because he hasn't been renamed here, so it's his birth name) and goes out a little from the land and he teaches from the boat.

Now on one level, the basic historical significance of that is the reason Jesus gets into the boat is because the crowds are pressing around him so heavily that he can't teach them like he would like to. They were smothering him basically. A good way to alleviate that problem would be to get into one of Simon Peter's boats, put out a little bit from the land and then just preach to the people from close to the shore so that everyone can hear him. It basically gives him a platform, so to speak, to preach and to teach. That's the historical level. On a deeper level though, you recognize Jesus picks Simon's boat to get in, precisely because he knows already the role that Simon is going to play as the chief of his Apostles. He knows that he's going to call Simon to be one of his disciples, to come and to follow him. So if you look at the ancient Church Fathers, many of them saw a deeper spiritual significance in the fact that Christ teaches from the boat of Simon. They saw this as a kind of mystery (a typology, so to speak), not between Old and New Testament, but between the ministry of Jesus and the life of the Church. Namely, that Simon Peter would be the chief of the Apostles and that the "bark" of Peter ("bark" is an old word for a boat) would be a symbol of the Church, especially of the Church of Rome, which would hold the successor of Peter, and through whom Christ would teach the world as the chief of the Apostles and the supreme head of the Church on earth. Just as a side note, in the living tradition of the Church you'll see the bark of Peter get used as an image to describe the Church. But where does that come from? It really comes from Luke 5, with the image of Christ teaching from not just any boat, but Simon's boat in particular.

Another thing that happens on a human level here that's really comical to me is the exchange between Peter and Jesus. I'm from South Louisiana, I grew up fishing and hunting, and you have lots of fishermen down here (it's called "The Sports-

man's Paradise", that's one of the names of our state). And one of the things you'll learn really quickly (if you spend any time fishing) is that professional fishermen don't like to be told how to fish by non-professionals. I mean that's true in any field, but in fishing in particular, people tend to be a little (shall we say) "prickly" about their skill sets and their methods and their locations and what lake they go to and what spots they go to. And so we have to remember here, on a human level, Simon Peter is a professional fisherman. That might not come through clearly, but it's really important to notice. He's got partners, there are multiple boats; we learn from Mark's gospel that James and John, their father Zebedee has hired servants to work the boats, so this is a fishing business. This is a fishing enterprise. They're not just peasants who have nothing to do better than to fish. They're professionals and so they know what they're doing, and Jesus by contrast is a *tektōn*, in Greek he's a carpenter or a builder. So fishermen do not like carpenters to tell them how to fish. That's just a basic rule.

And so when Jesus gets into the boat and after teaching tells Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch", there's a real test taking place here because as Simon tells him, "Master, we toiled all night and we caught nothing." So they've been out all night long fishing, which is something you'll see in the gospels frequently, night time fishing. Evidentially that was a plentiful or strategic way to fish; they fish during the night. They fished "all throughout the night", so it's morning. So you can imagine, Peter's probably tired (on a human level), and he's frustrated from not having caught any fish and this carpenter comes along and says, "Well, hey, did you try the deep water? Go out into the deep water and try and put your nets down and see what happens." So this is a test. Is Peter going to do the human thing which would be, "I know what I'm doing, thank you very much. We failed. Nothing, caught nothing all night. I'm not about to just go out into the water again and let down a net." Especially, by the way, if fish don't like noise, and you've got crowds all along the shore and Jesus has been preaching. That's not really the ideal setting for throwing the nets into the water. And yet, what does Peter say? "At your word, I will let down the nets."

In this instance, Peter manifests the virtue of humility to Christ. On a human level, Peter's the expert and Jesus is the non-expert, but as he says to him later on, "Go away from me for I am a sinful man, Lord (*Kurios*)." He is putting himself in submission to Jesus. He recognizes his unworthiness in the presence of Jesus, so he obeys him. Humility and obedience are the two virtues that Peter shows in this very important story of his call. So they go out and they let down the nets, and they

don't just catch fish, they catch a great shoal of fish, so many that the nets are breaking. They call their partners to come and help them, and when they fill both the boats, there's so many fish that the boats are starting to sink. Now, I've been on good fishing trips before but never have I been on a fishing trip where we had so many fish that the boat started to sink. This is a super abundant catch. This is a miraculous catch. This is an inexplicable event because they've been fishing all night and they haven't caught a single thing. Now Jesus turns everything around, and makes it so super abundant that the boats are starting to sink. When Simon Peter sees this, he recognizes that this is supernatural. He recognizes, "this is a miracle." He recognizes that only God can make something like this happen, and in the face of the miracle, Peter is struck with awe and fear. We're going to see this over and over again in the Old Testament as well as in the gospels. Whenever people encounter displays of divine power, they don't simply say, "wow that's really cool!" They often respond with fear and trembling, because in the presence of a holy God we recognize our own unworthiness and our own powerlessness, and our own sinfulness, and that's what Peter says here in these powerful words. "But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down to Jesus knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'." The Greek word there is *Kurios*. *Kurios* can just mean a lord or a master, it is the term that's used for master. It can also be used to refer to a king as well. He is the "lord" of his people. But in the Old Testament, it's used most frequently to refer "The LORD" (God). It's a translation of the Hebrew name for God, "YHWH" (the tetragrammaton), the four holy letters.

What exactly is Peter's meaning here? In context, the strongest case is for the last one. In other words, he recognizes in Jesus some kind of divine power, that he is the LORD come in person. Now does he fully understand at this point? No, probably not, but he recognizes that what just happened was the power of God, and so he doesn't even want to come close to Jesus. Remember, he's fully human. He's a man. He's a carpenter from Nazareth and yet, what does Peter say? "Depart from me because I'm a sinful man." You'll see this over and over again in the Old Testament. Unlike modern people, our culture inculcates us to the view that sin isn't a big deal and that it doesn't matter. In the Old Testament, it was recognized that you do not bring sin into the presence of God. He's holy, we are not. He's good, we are sinful. So it's dangerous to bring your sin into God's presence, like into the tabernacle.

So Peter here says "Go away from me, I'm a sinful man", and what's beautiful about Jesus' response here is that Peter...first of all, Jesus doesn't correct Peter and

say, “No you’re fine. You’re a good guy.” He doesn’t do that. He accepts Peter’s declaration of his sinfulness, but that doesn’t stop him from calling him to be his Apostle. Instead, Jesus tells him, “Don’t be afraid. From now on, you will be catching men.”

Now, two things here real quick. First, sometimes people wonder, what was Peter’s sin? What does he mean, “I’m a sinful man”. If you look at the gospels, whenever you see the term “a sinner” it usually means some kind of public sinner like Zacchaeus, who was a tax collector, or maybe someone in an adulterous relationship, like Herod and Herodias, they would be public sinners, or a prostitute, something where the person lives life as a sinner and everybody knows it. It doesn’t seem to be the case that he has that kind of shadow hanging over his head, but what exactly was his sin? We don’t know. Luke doesn’t tell us. The 1977 Zeffirelli film, *Jesus of Nazareth*, which I grew up watching when I was young, depicts Peter as an angry man; the anger was his sin. And, he used profanity, and he also gets drinking and stuff when he gets angry. So he kind of depicts him as an angry man who had a drinking problem.

Well, there’s no evidence for that; we don’t know anything. Actually, I think it’s kind of fortuitous that Luke leaves that open because what he ends up doing is drawing us into the role. In other words, we can see ourselves in Peter, because we’re all sinful and we’re all not worthy to be in Jesus’ presence; and yet at the same time, what does Jesus do? He calls us to be his disciples, to be his emissaries, and in Peter’s case, to be the chief of his Apostles. So he says “you’ll be catching men”, which shows us (this is really important) that it’s not just the ancient Church Fathers who saw the miraculous catch as a sign pointing forward to the life of the Church, but that Jesus himself performs the miracle to reveal to Peter what exactly his mission is going to be. It’s not really about the fish at the end of the day. It’s about the grace that’s going to operate through Peter, from Jesus, to catch a multitude of souls and to bring them into the kingdom of God. You can think here about the parable in the gospel of Matthew where Jesus compares the kingdom to a dragnet that catches many fish. That’s what Peter is going to be doing as an Apostle. He’s going to be fishing, but he’s going to be fishing for human beings. He’s going to be fishing for souls, and that explains why “when they get to the land they left everything”.

Real quick, I just want to say something about this. Again, on a human level, I think it’s at least worth noting why Jesus chooses fishermen. In this case, Peter is a

fisherman to be the chief of his Apostles. We're going to see in a minute, when we get to the end of the presentation, what St. Augustine had to say about Peter's identity as a fisherman, but I'd like to throw in my own two cents here just on a human level. Having spent some time fishing in my life, one of the things that's interesting about fishing, and fishermen, is that someone who fishes regularly has to have certain qualities, certain virtues, in order to be successful at it. First, they have to be observant. They have to pay attention to their surroundings. If you don't pay attention to the weather and the water and the patterns of fishing, you're never going to be good at it. You really do have to be observant. Second, you also have to have the virtue of patience. There's no "quick fixes" when you go out to fish. You have to be willing to go out and spend hours or even a whole night (or a whole day) catching nothing. That's just part of what it means to be a fisherman. Sometimes you don't catch anything and there's nothing you can do about it. And if you just give up, because you haven't had success the first time, then you're never going to go back. And many people do that, they go fishing, they say, "Oh this is going to be fun. I'm going to go fishing, I'm going to catch fish all day." And then they have to go out on...maybe it's a particularly hot day and the sun's out and the fish aren't biting and they think, "Well I'm never doing that again", because it's the most boring thing in the world. So, observation, you have to have the virtue of observation, you have to have the virtue of patience. You also have the virtue of persistence. You have to keep trying. If you don't keep trying, you'll never be a good fisherman. And then finally, most importantly of all, fisherman, like all other farmers and people who work the land, have to rely on God. At the end of the day, whether the fish bite or not, whether they're abundant or not, is really out of your control. You can't control it. You can't force the fish to bite; you can't force them to be abundant. It's really up to God. So there's a certain dependency on God that's distinctive to the fisherman's trade.

So I think all of those qualities are important for what Jesus is calling Peter to do, which is to be an Apostle. If he's going to be an Apostle for the kingdom of God, he's going to have to be observant, he is going to have to pay attention to the people and places around him. He's going to have to be patient and recognize that you can go and plant the seeds, but they're not going to grow everywhere. Jesus himself was rejected by Capernaum and Bethsaida and Nazareth. He fails, so to speak, in the sense that he doesn't have a very fruitful catch in those towns. Persistence, you have to be willing to keep preaching and keep teaching even in the face of opposition and failure (and all those things). And then finally, reliance on God. You have to recognize that at the end of the day it's God who saves souls. It's not hu-

man beings who do it. We are his instruments, his Apostles are instruments, but it's his grace that's operating, just like with the fish. They toiled all night by their own power and what did they catch? Nothing, not one thing. As Jesus says in the gospel of John, "Apart from me, you can do nothing." Not "Apart from me, you won't do as well" or "Apart from me, you might get 50%", no, it's "Apart from me, you do nothing." But with me, I'll make you catch so many fish you can't even keep the boats afloat. There's a real powerful lesson (I think) in the fact that the Apostles are fishermen – just in terms of their human virtues, their human characteristics, their human traits. Not that all of the Apostles are fishermen, I mean, to be clear, you've got some tax collectors in there (somebody's got to take notes, right?). That's what Matthew's job is. But these particular four (Peter, Andrew, James and John) have the virtues that would have been necessary to be successful fishermen.

With that in mind, let's go back to the Old Testament for today. The Old Testament reading is from the book of Isaiah. It's a very famous passage from the book of Isaiah. It's famous because it is the account of the call of the prophet Isaiah. So if you want to understand who Isaiah was and how he got commissioned to be a prophet, Isaiah 6:1-8 is kind of a *locus classicus* (it's a classical text) — I have to throw in some Latin in there every now and then.

Alright, so chapter 6, verses 1-2 and 3-8 are the verses that the Church selects here. So let's just read through these together.

In the year that King Uzzi'ah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

Pause there. The "I" speaking here is Isaiah himself. He is speaking in the first person about a vision of God that he had in the temple.

Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken

away, and your sin forgiven." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

That is the end of the passage. In the book of Isaiah it goes on to describe that God is going to tell Isaiah, "I'm going to send you to proclaim to a wicked people whose hearts have grown dull and whose ears have grown closed", and that kind of thing. So it's a prophetic commissioning of Isaiah. But for this case, the Church is focusing us, in this reading, just on the first part. A few elements here, a background. First, when it says, "In the year that King Uzzi'ah died"...so this is in the 8th century B.C., that Isaiah, the son of Amoz (that's the name of the prophet), was living and doing his ministry. If you think here, we're eight centuries before Christ, so this is one of the older books of the prophets in the Old Testament. And at that time though, we do have a temple, King Solomon's temple is in place, and so what Isaiah is doing is he's having a vision of the Lord in the temple. But it's not the earthly temple, it is the heavenly temple. So he's being, so-to-speak, "caught up" into the heavens to see God, he's being brought into the heavenly temple. And you know that because he says "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne." So it's his heavenly throne room.

In that throne room he's surrounded by angels, so he says "I saw the seraphim" (Seraphim: most people know that it's a name for the angels, what they don't often know is that the Hebrew word just simply means, "I saw the burning ones"). So these are angels whose (in a sense) very nature is fire; spiritual fire. They're so close to God (who is a consuming fire), that their very being consists of fire. They are "the burning ones", and they surround the throne of God with six wings. They fly and they chant constantly, "*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*" (in Hebrew); "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts". So they're singing this song of praise in the heavenly temple. That should be familiar to you as a Catholic because (of course) we sing the same doxology in the mass with the Sanctus. "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus", that's a Latin translation of the same word, "Holy, holy, holy is Lord the God of hosts." Now, notice this too, when we hear the expression "Lord of hosts", that's a technical term. You might have noticed in the new English translation of the mass that came out several years back, we shifted from saying "Lord, God almighty" (or "God of power and might", sorry, I forgot already), to "The Lord God of hosts". The reason for that is that the Latin is "The Lord, *dominus deus sabaoth*." Sabaoth is not a Latin word, it's a Hebrew word, and it means "hosts". It's not talking about the hosts of communion (that's what I thought when I was a kid, He's the lord of

hosts, so we have the host for communion), no, he's talking about the hosts of angels. So what we have here is the seraphim singing a hymn of praise to the God of the angels, to the Lord of the angelic armies, and saying the earth is full of his glory. So as Isaiah is hearing the song, the foundations start to shake at their voices, and the house is filled with smoke. But what house is this? Well this is the temple, and the smoke filling it is not from a campfire or something like that, it's from the altar of incense.

These are all parts of the earthly temple. The earthly temple would have had an inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. In there you would have found the ark (and on the ark were cherubim, which were angels, which were seen as the throne of God), you had an altar of incense (a golden altar of incense that would fill that inner sanctuary with smoke); and so what Isaiah is doing is having a heavenly vision that parallels these earthly realities. So smoke here is incense, the angel's song is the Sanctus, and Isaiah realizes where he is and so he says "Woe is me, I'm undone." In other words, "I'm going to die" because "my eyes have seen the Lord of hosts." He would have known that in the Old Testament, over and over again, it says "Man shall not see God and live." And Isaiah recognizes, "I'm a sinner. I have no business being in the heavenly temple. I'm going to die." And so what happens in response to that is one of the angels takes the tongs and he grabs a coal (a burning coal) from the altar of incense and he puts it in Isaiah's mouth because he says "I'm a man of sinful, unclean lips." In other words, "I've sinned with my tongue." And so he puts the burning coal in Isaiah's mouth to cleanse him of his sin. Now this is really significant because it should be clear (although I'm going to make it clear) that we're not talking about an actual piece of charcoal in the heavenly temple. This is the heavenly temple, right? Whenever you see heavenly images, they always are figures of spiritual realities. The angels are made of pure spirit; they're not actually made of lighter fluid or something like that. So it's a spiritual fire and this coal is a figure of spiritual fire, cleansing fire, the cleansing fire of the altar of prayer; and he takes it and places it on Isaiah's lips and says "your sins are forgiven."

I bring this up because it's one of the first indications in the Old Testament of what will later develop into the notion of "the purifying fire" of the spiritual realm that we call Purgatory; the idea that there is a place, a spiritual realm, that we go after we die, in which we will be cleansed through spiritual fire, the fire of God's love. St. Paul talks about being saved "as through fire" in 1st Corinthians 3, and this is one of the foundation texts for the notion of Purgatory. I bring it up here because it

shows that already in the Old Testament there's an idea that heavenly fire can purify you and cleanse you of your sins. That's what happens to Isaiah.

So, after this, God says, "who will I send to be a prophet?" And Isaiah says, "Here I am Lord, send me." So there we land on the reason for this text being chosen for today's liturgy. The Old Testament passage describes the prophetic call of a sinful man, Isaiah, to be a prophet to Israel. Just like the gospel describes the prophetic call of St. Peter to be an Apostle to Israel and the nations, an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Both Isaiah and Peter are sinners, and yet both of them are called by God to perform this mission of proclaiming the word of God to the people of God. That's the parallel here.

The Responsorial Psalm for today connects the two. It's a beautiful psalm about worshiping the Lord in the temple. It says:

I bow down toward thy holy temple

And then in verse 8 it says:

The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me.

So what this psalm is basically doing is showing us that if we respond to the Lord's call with worship and praise, then he will empower us, he will protect us, he will give us the grace and the strength to fulfill his mission that he has for us. Each one of us has a particular mission, a vocation that he's called us to, and the fact that we're sinners does not mean that we're not called. It just means that we're human beings and we're sons of Adam. What we have to do is recognize our sinfulness, ask God to help us and forgive us, and then ask him to give us the grace to be his prophets in the world. And you might be thinking, "Well hold on Dr. Pitre. I'm not a prophet, I'm just a mom, or I'm a dad, just living in the world." Well maybe that's your state in life, but when you were baptized you were anointed with the triple consecration of priest, prophet and king. The prophetic consecration you received in your baptism means that you were commissioned and set apart to speak the good news. Whether you work in a machine shop and you need to share the good news with your fellow workers, whether you're a teacher and you need to share it with your students, whether you're a mom, and you just need to share it with your kids; every one of us has that prophetic call, and the fact that we're sinners isn't a barrier to that. In fact, that's just part of the universal human condition,

and it's precisely humility about our sinfulness that's the condition that helps us to begin that process like St. Peter does in Luke 5.

In closing I just want to end with a quote from St. Augustine about Peter's identity as a fisherman. This is what St. Augustine says in one of his sermons about why Christ calls Peter the fisherman.

Christ says: Give me this fisherman, this man without education or experience, this man to whom no senator would deign to speak, not even if he were buying fish. Yes, give me him; once I have taken possession of him, it will be obvious that it is I who am at work in him... The senator can always take pride in what he is; so the orator and the emperor...

Augustine's writing in a Roman context, so he's thinking of these Roman offices.

...but the fisherman can glory in nothing except Christ alone. Any of these other men may come and take lessons from me in the importance of humility for salvation, but let the fisherman come first. He is the best person to win over an emperor...Remember this fisherman, then, this holy, just, good, Christ-filled fisherman. In this net, cast throughout the world he has the task of catching this nation as well as all the others.²

I can't help when I hear that to think of two things. First, notice what Augustine's main point is, the fact that Peter wasn't a philosopher (he wasn't Plato or Aristotle), that he wasn't an emperor (that he wasn't Constantine or Octavian), he wasn't a senator, he wasn't anyone of any public importance. In fact, he wasn't even an educated man (as we learned in the book of Acts 4). The fact that Peter isn't qualified to do what he's going to do becomes, in itself, a kind of miraculous sign of the fact that it's not Peter's Church, and it's not Peter's strength and it's not Peter's intelligence that makes the Church flourish. It's God working through Peter. It's God working through this humble fisherman. And so for me, second, as a Roman Catholic (there are Eastern Catholics, there are lots of different Catholic rites throughout the world, multiple rites going back to the early Church), but as a member of the Roman rite, I actually think it's significant. I think that there's a certain mystery and significance to the fact that to this day it's Peter's boat that has the most fish. The largest group of Catholics throughout the world is the Roman rite, and the largest church in the world is the Roman Catholic Church. And so for all

² Augustine, *Sermon 43*, 5-7; trans. E. Barnecut, p. 79

our problems, and there are many throughout the Church, and there always have been throughout history, the bark of Peter, which is located with his successor in Rome, is still catching the most fish. I think there's a sign there. There's a kind of fittingness to that; all the Apostles are fishermen for Christ. Andrew is linked with the Greek churches in the east, which have beautiful apostolic ancient rites going all the way back to the beginning. At the same time, the Roman rite and the successor of Peter has a certain charism, that goes all the way back to this day in Galilee when Christ filled the boats of Peter and said, "From now on, you will be catching men."