

## **Fish Only with the Net of the Gospel**

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Luke 5:1-11

One reason Jesus performs miracles is to express deeper spiritual principles or realities. And today, Jesus shows His disciples, and all of us, how salvation will spread throughout our communities. Jesus shows us today how St. Basil's will grow and flourish, how our community will thrive, how one day, our feast days may be standing room only again!

So, let's see what the Lord is telling us today. There are a number of disciples, named and unnamed, involved in today's miracle: Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, and their father Zebedee. Maybe there are others working as helping hands. There's also a crowd pushing on Jesus, they want to hear His Word, they want to know what God is asking of them, they want hope, they want to see God. Jesus finds two boats. He gets into Simon's boat, pushes out a little from the land, and then preaches the Gospel, the Good News of salvation and the love of God, to the crowd. He preaches from the boat with the crowd lined along the shore so that they can hear Him.

When He's finished preaching, either from within the boat or while He's on the shore, Jesus commands Simon Peter to take the boat into deep water and lower his net for a catch. But, Peter's been fishing all night and he's caught nothing. Peter's a professional fisherman. If Peter can't catch fish using all of his knowledge and skill, it's unlikely that a poor preacher, who knows nothing about fishing, will be able to catch any fish, nevermind an overabundance of fish. But, Simon Peter shows faith and trust in the Lord even before he's really begun

to follow Him. And he answers Jesus, "at Your word I will lower the net." There are so many fish that the nets are breaking. They need help pulling the fish into the boat and call their partners in the other boat to help them. When they get the fish on board, there are so many that the boats begin to sink.

Then Peter asks the Lord to depart from him, in a profound moment of humility. Peter has a sense of Jesus' holiness and power and his own ordinary sinful life. Peter knows he's not worthy that the Lord be present to him. Everyone's amazed, and Jesus says to Peter, "do not be afraid, from now on you will catch men." Then the four of them, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, leave everything to follow Christ.

So, I said at the beginning that this miracle story shows us how St. Basil's will flourish and grow and thrive. First, we must tie the symbols together. This area of the Church, where you, where all the faithful stand and pray and worship, is called the Nave. Think of the word Navy. This part of the Church is called the Nave because symbolically it is the boat, the ark, of salvation. Think of Noah's ark. Outside the boat are storms and waves, death and destruction. But, inside this ark, spiritually, we are saved from sin, renewed and recreated in righteousness. Well, we're in the boat, we're the disciples of the Lord. Today, we're the apostles in the boat with the Lord. Jesus calls us to be fishers of men. He commands us to lower our nets for a catch. The fish in today's Gospel, of course, are the many men, women and children that will be drawn into this boat and saved from sin and the destruction of the storms of wickedness.

So how and what nets are we lowering? The disciples lower the nets at the “Word of the Lord.” These are the commands and the teachings of Christ. This is the way of life and the will of God, given to us by Sacred Scripture and the examples of countless holy men and women before us. To fill St. Basil’s with a catch of many fish, we must first hear the Word of the Lord and do it. We must pray and read and study. We must learn so that we may know what God is asking of us. The nets... are the Gospel. No other net will catch fish. No other net will fill this parish and save the souls of many. We of course, are the fishermen. Jesus has commanded us, me in a special way, but each one of you in your own way, to lower our nets for a catch.

So, if we want St. Basil’s to grow, to flourish and thrive, to be filled with overabundance of people, we must hear the Word of the Lord, we must conform ourselves to the commands of Jesus and the Tradition and teachings of our Church. And we must lower our nets, the nets of the Gospel, in order to draw people to St. Basil’s. If we try to catch men with any other kind of net, we’ll fail to fill this boat. We must lower the net of the Gospel, the net of the teaching of our Lord. We must lower our nets with lives of prayer and fasting, of love and forgiveness, humility, hospitality, and gratitude. Let’s remember that our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ established this parish many years ago. The only way that we’ll succeed here, and that St. Basil’s will thrive, is if we do Church the way our Lord wants us to do Church! Amen.