

“From Now On You Will Be Catching Men”

**By His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeev
October 7, 2012**

Our Lord Jesus Christ suggests that the fishermen let down their nets. They reply that they have been fishing all night and have caught nothing. Nonetheless, they obey the word of the Lord and go out to sea again. This time, they catch such an abundance of fish, that their nets begin to tear and rip open from the weight of the huge amount of fish that they have caught. When Peter becomes astounded because of this miracle, the Lord tells him: *Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching men* (Lk. 5:1-11).

This event from the Gospel speaks to us about the Church. The Church has been created thanks to the apostles of Christ, who have gone forth from generation to generation, casting their nets, and catching not fish, but people who were able to receive the good news of the Holy Gospel.

The Church strives so that as many people as possible may come to believe in God, because only the Church can offer to people that inner spiritual substance which they cannot receive anywhere else. One of the main problems and spiritual illnesses of contemporary man is that he has everything that is necessary for life and happiness, yet he has no happiness or the feeling and sense of life. He doesn't feel that he is moving towards any kind of goal, because the purpose and goal of his life is not clear.

The goal of mankind is clear in the Church of Christ in the Gospel, in the Divine services and in all of her teachings. The goal and purpose of life is defined as the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, as walking on the path to the Kingdom of Heaven. However, this does not mean that our temporary mortal life has some kind of relative meaning, that the only purpose of our earthly life is to prepare for eternal life. Namely, in this life the Lord gives us the opportunities to do good to other people, to be the Lord's preachers and apostles.

The Lord caught us in His nets, so that we would catch other people in them as well, that we would share with others that grace which we receive in the Church, that we would pass on to them that light, which we receive from the Lord, so that we, receiving Holy Communion in the Holy Mysteries of Christ and partaking of the grace of God, we would pass on this grace to other people as well. The Net of the Holy Church is such, that it never rips or tears. No matter how many fish are caught in the Lord's net, there is always room for more and the net just grows larger and larger ad infinitum, forever.

It will never be considered too crowded for people in the Church, and therefore it is our responsibility to be good Christians and to share with our neighbors everything which we receive from the Church of Christ. We are called to be fishers of men, to catch them for salvation and the Kingdom of Heaven. The Lord desires that each of us would be His apostle, disciple and follower, so that each one of us would not only live according to His commandments, but also that we would help others to follow the path to salvation. This is the reason that He has led us into the Church and this is what the Church reminds us about today.