

SERMON - The Large Catch of Fish, Luke 5:1-11, Sunday, September 23, 2018

We have all heard the expression about the Jews that they were “the chosen people of God.” What were they chosen for? It was and still is God’s plan that not only the Jews, but that every human being be saved. God chose Israel to be an entire nation of priests. God’s original plan was that every Israelite was commissioned with the sacred task to bring the gentiles into the fold of the people of God, to reach out to all mankind and to bring everyone into God’s salvation. God had to alter his plan, because Israel proved unworthy of this task. When the Lord made the second and final covenant with the new Israel, God renewed his original plan. Do you know that it is the sacred duty of every Orthodox Christian to reach out to all mankind and to bring every human being into the saving ark of the Church? Do you know that every one of us has a sacred mission to bear witness to Christ? Just like the countless fish in today’s Gospel who were just waiting to be drawn into the net of Simon Peter, there are countless men and women just waiting for us to invite them to “come and see” and experience first hand the salvation offered in our holy church. Many people around us are lost, confused, lonely, despondent and suffering in their hearts. That is the condition of a person who does not know God. It should be the first and most important thing in our lives to share Christ and His holy Church with others, by example, by word of mouth, and by inviting. We should look for and seize any opportunity to tell our neighbor about the great joy of Christ and the faith of the Apostles that can be found in our holy church. I don’t expect everyone to bring a hundred people to our church overnight, but when we have the Harvest Fest, or when the bishop is here for our Parish Feastday, or when we have a Bible Study, or when we have the Pascha dinner or the Yolka, or if we have a healing service, do we try to invite everyone that we feel comfortable to invite? Every Sunday the Lord is crucified and resurrected and we receive His holy Body and Blood. Do we invite everyone that we feel comfortable to invite to witness this event, which is the greatest event on the earth? When you love someone or something, when someone or something brings you great joy, don’t you want to tell everyone about it? Don’t you love the Lord? Don’t you have joy in your faith here in the Church? Of course you do. If you didn’t, you wouldn’t be here. Why not share it with everyone as much as possible? Like Archbishop Michael always says, we have to tell the story. Like Nicodemus in the Gospel, we have to invite everyone to “Come and see!” Jesus healed ten lepers, and only one came back to give thanks. If ten people come, and one comes back, then we have done our job successfully. Metropolitan Philip Saliba used to say that “Orthodoxy is the best kept secret in America.” Whose fault is that? Why are there so many Americans who have no clue who we are and what we believe? It is because we don’t talk about it, we don’t bear witness to it, because we don’t invite anyone, because we don’t tell the story, because we keep it a secret. Metropolitan Philip used to also say, “Come home America. Come home to the Orthodox Faith.” We should all be saying the same thing. “Come home, America! Come home to the Orthodox Faith!” Amen.