

+ J. M. J.

We probably can relate to that scene with Peter, James, and John. In our lives how many times do we think that we are faced with the impossible? How many times this week did we feel that something or everything for that matter was out of our control and that we were at our wits end? We can cry out with Peter, **“Master we have worked hard”** and accomplished nothing. Jesus asked Peter to put out for one more catch symbolic for sure of the ministry that he would exercise as an apostle. We in fact are called to a supernatural task meaning that what Jesus asks of us is far beyond all of our natural gifts and abilities. It may not seem fair, but if he is in our boat, if he is at our side, and most importantly if he lives inside of us and it is the will of God that we do, we can accomplish anything that is asked.

We feel unworthy. How is it that the God and Creator of the entire universe has taken interest in me right here right now? We bring to this liturgy our situations our sinfulness, and we are in great company if we cry out to God **“I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips”** as did Isaiah.

We can exclaim with St. Paul **“I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God,”** or with St. Peter we can mutter **“Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man.”** Herein lies the mystery of the Church. God does not work in spite of us. God wants each of us individually as an integral part of the Church and God works in each of us as members of the Body of Christ, and certainly that work is impossible because God does the impossible.

Nine years ago Pope John Paul II wrote an apostolic letter which was intended to help us usher in the new millennium. He chose as the theme Jesus' words to Peter, “put out into the deep,” so just as Jesus gave those words to Peter, Peter in turn encourages us in this millennium. Of the points there are a couple that are worth reflecting on how we should be spiritually lowering our nets into the depths of God's love and mercy.

The first is prayer, which matches the first principle we have been discussing in our year of gracious living. In prayer we enter into conversation with Christ just as Peter and Paul conversed with Jesus. We

may begin with memorized formulas or prayers we have in books, but the hope is to move toward a pouring out of our hearts and listening, characteristics of what the pope calls a dialog of love so much so that at some point we become totally overcome with the Holy Spirit and we rest in the divine heart of the Father. Prayer is putting out into the deep, growing in love of God, an experience which makes the depths of the oceans look shallow. In order to get there, though, we have to make time in our busy lives so that the Lord can go to work. We need to put out from the shore and lower our nets so to speak.

That prayer should for us come to a summit when we have the body and blood of Christ inside us, receiving Jesus at the Eucharist. Fr. Mark wrote a beautiful article about the importance of the Eucharist and those moments of prayer that should accompany the reception of Holy Communion. Just as the seraphim purified the lips of Isaiah with an ember, so are our lips and indeed our whole being purified by receiving Jesus. Not only that but what we do here should be the highpoint of our entire Sunday and everything we do on this holy day should point to the Eucharist and flow from it. That begs the question is there something else, bigger than Jesus that occupies this day?

Isaiah, Peter, and Paul also remind us that when we acknowledge those times when we fall short and sin we allow ourselves to cast our sins into the unfathomable depths of God's mercy. Frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation is also putting out into the deep, and is when we recognize how often and quick God Jesus is to forgive our sins that we become more merciful and less judgmental to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

These are but a few suggestions. Today we find ourselves in a similar position to Peter. The Lord is inviting each of us in a unique way to put out into the deep and experience the great love and mercy of God. Let us then listen to that call and beg for the grace to do whatever we are asked. Our catch is an abundance of spiritual blessings and the grace to be changed this week and in our lives, doing the impossible because it is Jesus doing the work in us.