

**2ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
MAY 28/JUNE 10, 2007**

ROMANS 2: 10-16

ST. MATTHEW 4: 18-23

Fr. Dr. Photios+ (W)

Gospel: And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

We Need Spiritual Renewal

We were condemned to spiritual death and enslaved to the devil after the first Adam's sin. Thus it was imperative that Christ come in the flesh to spiritually rescue us. We needed renewal by our Creator:

For this reason the only-begotten Son and **ever** (emphasis supplied)-existing Word of God, Who is ageless and inseparable from the Father, in His goodness had compassion on our nature, which had slipped from blessedness, sped to perdition and sunk to the depths of hell through sin. At a certain time he desired and willed to become like us in everything **except** (emphasis supplied) sin.¹

The Lord's First 'Agents'

The Lord answered our dilemma through the Incarnation whereupon He "accomplished salvation for all men" (naturally, this also means for all mankind).² As a result, he needed spiritual 'agents' through whose efforts "He might grant the whole human race a return (to blessedness)."³

He came down from heaven and took flesh, became Man for us; and, it was appropriate that He “sanctify land and sea by the steps of His feet”. So, He came to the Sea of Galilee to gather up his first sheep, the Apostles, through which His Divine message would be **fully** revealed.⁴

And, “at that time, as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee...,” He called to Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew, and offered them a Divine deal: *Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.* And, of course, they did!

Their Second Encounter With Christ

Peter was married, but Andrew was not, being a disciple of John the Forerunner, the preacher of repentance. Peter was married to the daughter of Aristobulus, brother of the Apostle Barnabas, and by her he had one son and one daughter. Peter also cared for his elderly father.⁵ Really, both had been John’s disciples. They also had been previously taught by the Lord, but when they saw John arrested they returned to fishing.⁶

So, Christ comes fishing for them.

Andrew is labeled the First-Called rightly. It was he who brought Peter to Christ’s attention, Who, upon seeing the latter, stated that he would be called Cephas (meaning a stone) (St. John 1: 42):

Thus it was that these two apostles, Andrew and Peter, first followed Christ and became acquainted with Him, though they were **not** (emphasis supplied) chosen by Christ to be disciples at this time.⁷

The Forerunner had been arrested and put in prison. Thus, Andrew returned to his fishing with his brother, Peter. Christ calls them, then, on their **second** encounter:

When Christ came upon them **again** (emphasis supplied), He called them, saying, “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men,* Because they were **already** (emphasis supplied) acquainted with Christ, and had earlier been taught by Him, they readily followed Him, displaying great prudence and obedience.⁸

...

Behold, obedient men, who followed Him immediately. From this it is clear that this is the **second** (emphasis supplied) time that He called them. For they had been taught by Christ on a previous occasion (St. John 1: 35-42), then left Him and when they saw Him again followed Him readily.⁹

The Anointed One calls James And John

James, here, is the son of Zebedee, not James the Just, and John is his brother. John, of course, is St. John the Evangelist/St. John the Theologian. They mended their nets because they were old “Being poor and unable to buy new nets, they were mending an old net.”¹⁰

Zebedee, their father, was not a believer, so the sons left him to follow Christ. This is an example of a proper decision to separate from one’s family if a member harms our “piety and virtue, then it is right not only to leave them, but to hate them as being enemies of the truth and foes of the law of Christ”.¹¹ James and John followed the examples of Andrew and Peter (all four were from Bethsaida) and became disciples of the Lord.¹²

Jesus Obeys The Law

Christ demonstrates that He does not oppose the Law by teaching in the synagogues. He worked miracles “to give credibility to what he teaches”¹³ and thus “lead to faith those whom He taught and upon whom He performed (the miracles)”.¹⁴ The diseases/sicknesses He cured were chronic (long-suffering) illnesses, not ones temporary in nature.¹⁵

Christ’s Fame Spreads & Great Crowds Follow Him

Why did He not require an affirmation of all the sick people upon being brought to Him for healing? It wasn’t necessary, His fame had spread throughout all Syria “for the very fact that they were brought from a distance was a **sign** (emphasis supplied) of faith”.¹⁶ A bit on terminology: “lunatics” meant “those who were possessed by demons”.¹⁷

Follow Him: Some Comments On What This Entails

Let’s think about today’s message. He called His apostles, saying *Come and follow Me*. Following Christ means we are to transform ourselves in His image. Our goal is our deification in His energies. We need to emulate His teachings and conduct. Our spiritual concentration should be on the eternal, what is not of this world, not the secular rat race engaged in for money, possessions (which money can buy) and status (also available for purchase).¹⁸

We should flee the world within ourselves, developing **inwardly**; through spiritual usage of the Jesus Prayer we can pray without ceasing, even silently, throughout the secular day.

Our stress should be on our heartfelt repentance for our personal failings. Repentance and **change** in ourselves. It is no good to repent for sins 1 to n and then go right out and commit them again or others of a similar ilk. We must transform ourselves; our hearts should soften toward all others (our neighbours) so our love for God can be tracked by our treatment of others.

Remember, if we do not repent, if we do not depart from our wickedness and iniquity, if we do not strive to do good, we shall perish at the hands of God's just judgement and wrath. God is angered and threatens us because we sin and ignore His commandments; nevertheless, **if** we turn away from our wickedness He will refrain from sending punishments and woes upon us.¹⁹

The Lord stands ready and willing to build us up and give us good things, but this is 'conditioned' upon our spiritual response. If we do not change, or do so but then later renege on our promises to Him, He will consider us unworthy:

If I threaten, do not despair; ye can repent and remove My judgement. And if I promise some blessing, do not become **careless** on account of My promise; for if ye prove unworthy, My promise will not be fulfilled in you; rather, I **shall** punish you. I keep my promise to them **that are worthy**, but to sinners I shall send torment and torture.²⁰

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ *The Gospel Commentary (Lessons Taken from the Holy Gospel and from Many of the Divine Writings of Our Father among the Saints, John Chrysostom)* (translated from the Slavonic into English by Hieromonk German Ciuba, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, Pennsylvania, 2002, p. 267.

² *ibid.*

³ *id.*, pp. 267-268.

⁴ *id.*

⁵ *id.*, p. 268.

⁶ *id.*, p. 269.

⁷ *id.*

⁸ *id.*

⁹ Blessed Theophylact, *Explanations of the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew, Vol. I*, (translated from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade) Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p. 42.

¹⁰ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, pp. 269-270.

¹¹ *id.*, p. 270, and see Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹² Bl. Theophylact, *id.* and *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 270.

¹³ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁴ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 270.

¹⁵ *The Gospel Commentary, id.* and Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁶ *id.*, p. 43, and see *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 271..

¹⁷ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 43 and *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 271.

¹⁸ *The Gospel Commentary, id.*, see pp. 272-274.

¹⁹ *id.*, p. 273.

²⁰ *id.*, p. 274.