

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(Lk 5: 1-11)

(Poem Vol. 1, pp. 340-3; Gospel Vol. 1, pp. 406-8)

(It is very early in the first year of Jesus' public life. Jesus has been staying in the house of Simon Peter, on the edge of the lake of Gennesaret. After speaking to a crowd of people crammed into a room at the back of the house - a room full of nets, ropes, oars, baskets and other fishermen's gear - Jesus is called outside to attend to some sick people, whom He miraculously cures...)

He then goes to the beach, followed, preceded and blessed by many who implore Him: 'We didn't hear You. We couldn't get in. Speak to us also.'

Jesus nods assent, and as the crowd press forward almost to the point of suffocating Him, He gets into Peter's boat. But that is not sufficient. The siege continues, and He tells Peter: 'Set the boat afloat, and move off-shore a little...'

Jesus then starts speaking: 'When all the trees bloom in spring, the happy farmer says: "I will have a good crop", and that hope causes his heart to rejoice. But from springtime to autumn - from the month of flowers to the month of fruit - how many days, winds, rains, sunshine and storms must pass. Sometimes there are wars, or cruelty of the mighty ones. And there are diseases of plants, and at times diseases of the men of the fields. So that the plants - no longer hoed up, no longer watered, pruned, supported or cleaned, although they promised copious fruit - they wilt and die, or bear no fruit!

You follow Me. You love Me. Like plants in springtime, you adorn yourselves with purposes and love. Israel, indeed, at the dawn of My mission, is like our sweet countryside in the bright month of Nisan. But listen. Like the excessive heat in dry weather, Satan - who is envious of Me - will come to scorch you with his wrath. The world will come with its icy winds to freeze your blooms. Passions will come like storms. And tedium will come like a persistent rain. All My enemies, and yours, will come to sterilise what should be the fruit of your inclination to bloom in God.

I am warning you, because I know. Will everything then be lost, when I - like a sick farmer, even more than sick, but dead - will no longer be able to speak to you, and work miracles for you? No. I will sow and cultivate as long as I have time. Then everything will grow and ripen for you, if you keep a good watch.

Look at the fig-tree near the house of Simon of Jonas. Whoever planted it did not find the correct and the most favourable spot. Planted as it was, near the damp northern wall, it would have withered, if by itself it had not found protection to survive. But it sought sunshine and light. And there it is: all bent, but strong and proud, drawing in the rays of the sun from early dawn, and converting them into nutrition for its hundreds and hundreds of sweet fruits. It defended itself, by itself. It said: "The Creator wanted me, that I may give joy and food to man. And I want to join my will to His". A fig-tree! A speechless tree! A soulless tree! And will you - children of God, the children of man - will you be inferior to a wooden plant?

Keep a good watch, to bear fruits of eternal life. I will cultivate You. And at the end, I will give you such a potent juice, that you will never find a more powerful one. Do not allow Satan to laugh: at the destruction of My work, of My sacrifice and of your souls. Seek light. Seek sunshine. Seek strength. Seek life. I am the Life, Strength, Sunshine and Light of those who love Me. I have come to take you whence I came. I am speaking to you here, to call You all, and point out to you the ten commandments that give eternal life. And with loving advice I say to you: "Love God and your neighbour". It is the first condition for fulfilling everything else well. It is the most holy of the holy commandments. Love. Those who love God, in God, and for the Lord God, will have peace: both on the earth and in Heaven, for their abode and their crown.' People go away with difficulty after Jesus' blessing. There are neither sick nor poor people among them.

Jesus says to Simon Peter: 'Call the other two. Let us go on to the lake and cast the net.'

'Master' replies Peter, 'my arms ache with fatigue: all night I cast and hauled the net, and all in vain. The fish are down at the bottom. I don't know where.'

'Do as I tell you, Peter' says Jesus. 'Always listen to those who love you.'

Then Peter says: 'I will do as You say, out of respect for Your word.' And he shouts to the assistants, and also to James and John: 'Let us go out fishing. The Master wants to go.' And while they are moving away, he says to Jesus: 'Master, I assure You, however, that it is not the right time. Goodness knows where the fish will be resting just now!...'

Jesus, sitting at the prow, smiles and is silent.

They form a semicircle on the lake, and then cast the net. After a few minutes' waiting, the boat is shaken in a strange way, because the lake is as smooth as a glass pane under the midday sun.

'But that is fish, Master!' says Peter, with his eyes wide open.

Jesus smiles and is silent.

'Heave ho! Heave ho!' Peter orders his assistants. But the boat lists to one side, where the net is: 'Hey there! James! John! Quick! Come Quick! With the oars! Quick!'

They rush, and the joint efforts of the two crews succeed in hauling in the net without damaging the catch.

The two boats draw closer. They are now united. One, two, five, ten baskets. They are all full of wonderful fish, and there are still so many wriggling in the net: live, silver and bronze, struggling to escape death. There is only one thing to be done: to empty the net into the bottom of the boats. They do that, and the bottoms become a turmoil of agonizing lives. And the crew are up to their ankles in such abundance, that the boats sink below the water-line because of the excessive weight.

'To the shore! Steer! Quick! The sails! Watch the depth line! Have the poles ready to prevent a clash. We have too much weight!'

As long as the manoeuvre lasts, Peter thinks of nothing else. But when he gets ashore, he begins to realise. He understands. He is frightened. 'Master! My Lord! Go away from me! I am a sinner! I am not worthy of being near You!' He is on his knees on the damp shore.

Jesus looks at him and smiles: 'Get up! Follow Me! I will not leave you any more! From now on, you will be a fisher of men, and your companions with you. Be afraid of nothing. I am calling you. Come!'

'At once, Lord.' And he says to some of the others: 'You look after the boats. Take everything to Zebedee and to my brother-in-law. Let us go. We are all for You, Jesus! Blessed be the Eternal Father for this choice.'

And the vision ends.