

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Spirit of Apostolic Zeal

“Henceforth thou shalt catch men” (Luke, 5: 10)

The miracle of the abundant catch of fish related in today’s Gospel was evidently performed by Our Lord for the purpose of persuading some of the men He had selected as His first followers to give themselves wholeheartedly to His service. His purpose was accomplished; the miracle of the draft of fishes made such an impression on them that “leaving all things, they followed Him.” He told them that henceforth their chief task would be to preach His doctrines and to persuade men to believe in Him and to enter His Church. “Henceforth, thou shalt catch men.” It is to be noted that this statement was made to Peter individually, to signify that he was designated as the chief of the apostles in the work of continuing the mission of Jesus Christ.

The words of Our Lord committing to men the task of spreading His religion are still effective. They constitute the commission authorising the Catholic Church to preach the Gospel to all men and to conduct the worship established by Christ for the conferring of grace on human souls. The task of spreading the faith is consigned especially to the consecrated ministers of the Church--priests, bishops and especially the Pope, the successor of St. Peter whom Our Lord appointed as head of the Church. This task the Church fulfils, not only by ministering to the spiritual needs of Catholics but also by preaching to those who are deprived of the faith, with the hope of bringing them into the true Church.

However, the task of leading souls to the true faith is not confined to priests and bishops. The members of the Catholic laity should regard themselves as also bound to participate in this work. This can be accomplished in many different ways, in accordance with each one’s circumstances.

Thus, a Catholic married to a non-Catholic should attempt to lead this person to the truth, not by nagging and pestering, but by a logical presentation of the arguments for the Catholic religion and by good example. Similarly, Catholics who have frequent association with non-Catholics should seek opportunities of explaining the teachings of the Catholic Church. Of course, one cannot perform this apostolic task properly unless he has a good knowledge of the Catholic faith, which can be acquired only by diligent study.

Practical Application

If you have the opportunity of spreading the faith to non-Catholics, consider it your duty to exercise this act of zeal and charity. But live the faith properly yourself, and frequently pray for the conversion of those who do not possess the great privilege of membership in the true Church.

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