

The scene from our gospel this weekend reminds me when my brother and I were kids. We had a cabin and liked to fish. However, we were wimps when it came to touching the worms. And if we caught a fish, my goodness, we didn't like touching them. In fact, we would bring a little washcloth with us and wrap the cloth around the fish in trying to get the fish off the hook. I can't imagine what Peter would have thought of us!

We have a beautiful little scene this weekend with Jesus getting into Peter's boat. In light of our Cana dinner this weekend, I thought I would look at this scene in light of marriage and family life. Whether or not you are married, we all have families.

Luke tells us that the crowds were pressing upon Jesus, such that **He decided to get into Peter's boat**. In the Scripture, oftentimes a boat symbolizes the Church as a whole or it can symbolize your own life. Of course, we like being the captain of our own boats. We find comfort in control.

In pursuing marriage, what happens is that someone else's boat (i.e., their person, their life) catches your attention. And you think, "I want to get to know him or her. In exchanging vows, a man and woman essentially say, "Let's share a boat together. We will paddle together and support each other through all kinds of weather – sunny days, cloudy days, storms, etc.

But let's be honest. Sharing a boat together is *not* easy. Sometimes you want to throw your spouse overboard. "I'm sorry. Did I do that?" Without Jesus, this is understandable. However, when Jesus is the captain of your boat, a husband and wife look to Him, asking for His gifts of patience, forgiveness, newfound love, etc.

Luke then says that Jesus tells Peter to **put out into the deep**. In the year 2000, St. John Paul II invited the Church "put out into the deep" to catch new fish for Jesus in the new millennium.

Here at St. Therese, we can say the same thing. We just eliminated our debt. We are tempted to just sit back and relax. But we can't do that. Jesus wants us to "put out into the deep" – to deepen our union with Him, learn more about our faith, build new friendships, find new ways to serve, and bring in new fish for Him. A parish never stands still. It is either growing or dying.

The same is true for a marriage – it either grows (becomes stronger) or slowly dies. You must work at it. Each day a spouse can ask, "What can I do for my marriage today? What can I do for my children today? How can I make my marriage stronger?" Marriage is hard work, but it is also sanctifying work.

While hard, marriage has the potential to make great saints. Soon, we will be putting statues of two married saints in our entryway: Louis and Zelig. They remind us that marriage makes saints.

Oftentimes, Jesus will ask a husband and wife, "Put out into the deep. Let's deepen your love." Like wine, married love has the ability to become more and more rich over time. Every now and then, I will hear a husband say, "Fr., I love my wife more today – 50 years later – than the day I married her." And I will ask, "What is the secret?" "Do what she tells you," he replies. In other words, when done well – marriage has the ability to deepen and expand your ability to love.

Luke then tells us about the **great number of fish**. In fact, it is so overwhelming that the nets are tearing and the boats are sinking. Has this ever happened to you? God blesses you so much that it actually feels overwhelming? There are times when you can even feel "over blessed!" Notice that the other boats share in the blessing.

The same is true for families. The family is the domestic church, or the place where we encounter Jesus. But families do not just exist for themselves. God bless parishes, communities, and even countries through the little building blocks of life called families. The healthiest and happiest families are those that do not just exist for themselves, but share their faith and life with others.

In America, we have nuclear power plants that provide lots of energy. Families are like little "life power plants." They can be sources and instruments of God's life, peace, love, and joy for others. Vibrant families ask, "What can we do to bring Jesus to others?"

Next, Luke tells us that in the face of such a miracle, Peter feels the **burden of his sinfulness**. “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” One of the paradoxes in growing closer to Jesus is that you see our faults and sins more clearly. And yet, Jesus says to you, “Do not be afraid.”

The same is true for marriage. Every now and then, someone will say to me, “I didn’t realize how selfish I was until I got married.” For some, their spouse feels like a mirror reflecting their impatience, weaknesses, and failures to love. Thank goodness for forgiveness.

While difficult, marriage and family life are meant to purify you. God meets you through your spouse. He sanctifies you through your spouse. And it is through your spouse that He helps you grow in love.

Again, while not easy, God has given us a beautiful gift through marriage and family life! It is difficult, but good! Please accept my gratitude for all you have given and continue to give in your “yes” to loving Jesus in marriage and family life. May God strengthen you in your vocation as you grow in love, and God willing, become great saints one day!

In the words of St. Paul: May the good Lord “who began a good work in you continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6).