

**HOMILY ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LUKE (16th Sunday after
Pentecost)**

Father Filip Lommaert

Sunday, September 27, 2020

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

From this Sunday morning onwards, we will be reading Gospel passages from Luke and this right up to the Sunday before Christmas.

Today is therefore called the First Sunday of Luke. Luke's Gospel presents a vision of Christ and the Christian life that is quite radical.

This is not exclusive to Luke, of course, but very much emphasized by him.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus meets Simon whom He will later rename, Peter. Simon is a simple, rough fisherman. He is not wealthy, nor educated.

He would not command much respect in his society if any at all because he was just a fisherman.

But he is one of the people Jesus seems to value most highly in all the Gospels, and especially in Luke's Gospel.

Luke not only shows us our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the friend of the poor but also as a friend of outcasts.

Luke even pushes the envelope. Jesus reaches out to the Gentiles! And, since Luke was Greek, not Jewish, he was onto something.

Jesus Christ had been sitting in Peter's boat and had been teaching the people. The Disciples had worked very hard all through the night, but they had not caught a single fish.

Peter, at the commandment of Christ, lets down the net and then God's blessings came, for "they caught a great number of fish" (Luke 5:6).

What is man's first and foremost duty? It is obedience to God's will.

Man's second most important duty is to carry out His Divine Commandments. The godly man must strive to conform himself to whatever God wishes of him.

Man through obedience to God identifies himself with God, and his will with God's Divine Will.

In his greatest moment of disappointment and depression, the holy Apostle Peter, or Simon the fisherman as he still was then, showed obedience to Christ.

And what was the result? God blessed the work of all those who struggled with honesty. And He still does.

There are moments in our daily lives when we struggle to get through tough times and really feel let down.

And this could not be more true than following the events of the last 6 months. People are struggling more than ever. With the Covid-19 pandemic running amok around the world; with lockdowns being imposed on us and then removed, to be imposed again or amended. No wonder people are stressed and struggling.

Those feelings get worse when things we are hoping for are not turning out as they should. Despair and dissolution overcomes and overwhelms our hearts.

And then we start to ask ourselves questions which we should not be asking ourselves, but we do: "I keep turning to God but why do I not see any results? Is God not hearing my prayers? Are other people more important to Him? Does He not care for us?"

NO?

The answer to these questions is that we must not only turn to God, but we must trust God. Have Faith in God!

Peter did not only accept Christ in his fishing boat, but he also showed absolute obedience to His Commandment.

Without a second's hesitation, he threw his nets into the shallow waters of Gennesaret. Because of that obedience, God blessed his work.

The miracle at Gennesaret came about because of Peter's faithfulness. Peter, as an experienced fisherman, knew very well that there would be no fish in the shallow waters of Gennesaret.

For the sake of Christ, he did not hesitate. He did not say "We are wasting our time if we put our nets in the water here". He just obeyed and trusted Christ's word.

We all work hard trying to earn a living. We all run around trying to build careers and businesses.

Some of us work very long days and very long nights. Some of us even work through their weekends. We all strive to earn our daily bread and have something extra for a rainy day.

Why are we not always successful? We work very hard for many years and put in a lot of time and money, and often there is nothing to show for it.

What is the reason for this? Is it because we are not clever enough? Is it because of a lack of interest or concern for one's work? Is it because evil men sabotage the work of others?

These are all possible reasons, but the main reason is because of a lack of true faith and trust in God.

In modern times man has learned to no longer trust God or anyone else, but only himself. We really do think that we do not need anybody to achieve what we want.

Wherever we look, the world is now full of individualists, people who only think about themselves.

Why do we only believe in ourselves? This is because we do not surrender ourselves to God's Divine Providence and/or because we lack true faith.

That is one of the main reasons why many Christians do not come to Church every Sunday.

Lack of faith is a spiritual illness. It is THE spiritual illness of today's society.

What does it cause us to do? It causes us not to pray every day, and if we do, we do not turn our hearts to God, but we let our hearts wander around.

We just go through the motions, quickly mumble the words we read in our prayer books, without paying proper attention and respect. For many, it is just another tick in the box of things to do.

This lack of faith is the reason why we do not obey God's Commandments and why we do not trust ourselves in His Will.

It is the reason why we do not believe in God and His Teachings. It is the reason why we turn to evil and disobey God's Word.

If we wish to have God's blessings in our homes, in our works, and in our lives, then we have to turn to Him, bow down before Him and trust ourselves to His Divine Providence. Let us please imitate Peter's example.

Let us show trust and faith in Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Let us practice God's Commandments. Let us be obedient to His Divine Will.

This way of life will bring upon us God's blessings. This is the way that will lead to our salvation. This is the way that will lead us before God and that will enable us to surrender ourselves to Him.

The good news of the gospel, however, is that our Lord can bless and transform our humble work. Our Lord can bless the difficult situations we face, and He can bless all the struggles we face.

No matter what we are doing, no matter how well or bad things are, no matter how frustrated we may be, Christ is with us, always. He is inviting and empowering us to make that same old frustrating and boring routine into a ministry of the Kingdom, even when we cannot imagine how that could possibly be the case.

St. Anthony the Great wrote:

"The truly intelligent man pursues one sole objective: to obey and to conform to the God of all.

With this single aim in view, he disciplines his soul, and whatever he may encounter in the course of his life, he gives thanks to God for the compass and depth of His providential ordering of all things.

For it is absurd to be grateful to doctors who give us bitter and unpleasant medicines to cure our bodies, and yet to be ungrateful to God for what appears to us to be harsh, not grasping that all we encounter is for our benefit and in accordance with His providence.

For knowledge of God and faith in Him is the salvation and perfection of the soul.”

Amen.