

Reflections

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Apostle, Instrument for Someone Else

From his first encounter with Jesus, Peter knew he could not continue living as he had been until then. A testimony for this are his confusion, his fear and his humiliation in certain moments of his apostolic vocation.

Before meeting Jesus, Peter had a good opinion of himself. He trusted in his resources and he affirmed himself naturally as a leader. But giving way to Jesus robbed him of his self-love. Since he met the Lord, he began to know himself: He knew he was nothing and that he was destined to continuously face his personal insignificance with the glory and the power of God.

Jesus prepared him for the dignity of a supreme head of the Church through the revelation of his incompetence, his impotence and his weakness. He, so impetuous to assume the responsibility and to hear the word first, begs the Lord to leave him, acknowledges his unworthiness, he empties himself of self-importance and conceit/vanity.

It is true that later on he would still need other painful experiences, like failures and losses, before learning in depth that lesson.

But being an apostle cannot be reconciled with pride. Through defeats and shame he would have to learn humility, he would have to completely empty himself of self in order to be able to be an instrument for someone else.

It all began on the shore of the lake, one morning in which the Lord borrowed his boat, when his listeners crowded together, desiring to hear Him.

And while Jesus spoke, Peter listened to him with interest and approval. He noticed the effect the words of Jesus had on his listeners. Jesus spoke well, much better than all the others he had heard in the synagogue or in other places. But the sermons were not Peter's concern. His trade was to fish and he fished well.

Therefore, when He stopped speaking, Jesus approached Peter and said: "Peter, now we are going to fish." Peter was surprised. The Lord had precisely touched his weak point. "It is useless – he responded – we have been fishing all night without catching anything. I know the lake well. There is nothing to do today."

"Let's go regardless," said Jesus. And the miracle took place. Peter was then totally confused. There, on his turf, on a matter in which he was competent, Jesus had toppled him. He had made him see that he also had need of the Lord, that he was nothing without the Lord, not even in those things in which he thought he knew it all.

Peter was converted by a fishing trip and not a sermon. Jesus cornered him in his last hiding place, emptied him of his last satisfaction of self, made him confess his total inconsistency before HIM: "Lord, leave me for I am a sinner."

That is how all true apostle vocation begins. In certain moments we have to hand over our place to another, we have to pray, we have to receive help, we need a helping hand.

Just as Peter knew that he needed nothing less than the presence of Christ in his boat so that he could even learn to fish, we also know that without HIM we can do nothing. If we want to be true apostles, we have to allow another to act in and through us.

To be an apostle is to be sent, it is to be an instrument for someone else. To be an apostle is to empty ourselves of self, of pride, of self-sufficiency. It is to place ourselves, in all humility, into the hands of someone greater, it is to trust and to surrender oneself to HIM.

Dear brothers and sisters, if we want to be apostles, then we also have to go through this same transformation of St. Peter. We have to make ourselves humble and small so that Mary and God can use us as instruments at each moment, so they can send us wherever they want to.

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