



1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Luke 5:1-11

***“And it came to pass, that as people pressed upon him to hear the word of God ... he entered one of the ships ... and he taught people out of the ship”***

**From Friday Reflection:**

*Jacob:* What happened with the fish? The Gospel does not tell us what happened. The fish appear many times in the Gospel: in the abundance of food in the wilderness when Jesus feeds the hungry.

That’s where it went. It also appears on the shore,

when Jesus prepares a meal after the Resurrection for his disciples. And he eats the fish to show them he is not a spirit.

*Eliana:* When I think about the fish, I think about the food truck that comes to the mission, and how we don’t have enough volunteers to help with the amount of food we receive. In the Gospel it’s fish, but for us it could be milk, or any food we receive in abundance. That’s what I think of when I hear about the fish in the Gospel.

*One volunteer:* the apostles worked all night and caught nothing. Then Jesus came and gave them a second chance. We all need a second chance in life, an encounter with someone who believes in us, even after we’ve failed. Close to him stood another volunteer, who shared his stories during the day while washing dishes in the kitchen. He said he is going through a divorce and has not seen his children for almost a year. It felt as though some of those words were for him as well.

*Carlos:* The apostles were obedient to him, that’s why they caught the fish. When we act on our own, we catch nothing and work in vain. But when we follow God’s will instead of our own, our lives are fruitful.

*Somebody who stayed after lunch:* The disciples worked all night and caught nothing, and that’s when they met Christ, after their failure. It is the same with us: when we struggle and fail, that is when Jesus enters our lives.

*Tom:* They cast the nets into the deep. For me, that means we need to go deep into our lives to draw closer to Christ—not just live and “fish” on the surface, but deeply repent.

In the depths, in the abyss of our being, that is where the big fish swims. That is where Jesus went, into the depths of hell, to save us from death - "Follow me..."

***"Do not be afraid ... and they left everything and followed him."***

A long discussion during the week with a young person touched on the fear of death and of suffering, our own and that of others. This fear, the root of so many other fears and anxieties, weighs heavily on the heart of the new generation. They search for meaning in a world we have emptied of compassion. They are not spiritually dead (as St. John Climacus says: those who have no fear have either attained perfection or are spiritually dead). Rather, they long for perfection in life, for a path of truth that does not deceive them, a way that does not inevitably lead to the pit, no matter what one does. They want to encounter the One who saves us from death, because the fear they carry is real.

On Friday, Linda shared that her illness now causes her pain. She is in her seventies and has volunteered at the mission for many years, fragile in body, yet always radiant with humor and lightness of spirit. She answers the phone, takes messages, and recently she started serving people at the tables as well. She has chosen to cut back on painkillers because of their side effects.

"Figure this out," she said with a laugh. "I never imagined blood cancer would cause so much pain. But of course, if I had thought more, I should have. The doctors don't tell you anything. They treat only the illness and forget there is a person who has the illness. You know, they told me now that they expected me to die in 2022, and they can't understand why and how I'm still alive. But they didn't tell me that at the time, only now. And I told them, "I didn't die because nobody told me I was supposed to."

Linda laughed heartily as she carried coffee from the kitchen to serve people during the busy lunch hours. "I'll see you next Friday," she said, utterly convinced of it, with all her being and with that indestructible sense of humor.

The young people need to encounter Linda and listen to her. In truth, we all do. What makes her radiant and unafraid? She certainly does not appear spiritually dead, on the contrary. Something in her life has taught her soul compassion, and she has remained faithful to that. It is magnified every Friday when she comes to serve, carrying an illness that the doctors cannot figure out.

In today's gospel the people press upon Jesus, longing to hear him. They desire the Word of God, the Word that gives life, nourishes life, and causes it to blossom within us through the regeneration and renewal of the Spirit. His grace reaches into the depths of our being, casting out the fear of death. People then, as now, were weary of lies that wound the soul like darts, drain our strength, and justify hatred for our brothers and sisters. These false voices create destructive narratives and a culture of death. But the people recognize in Jesus the truth of life, and so they press upon him to speak, to feed them with truth. Like our volunteers, they long to hear that he gives second chances, that he forgives. For only the Word of God searches the heart and calls us into communion: "Follow me."

The gospel is an icon of a community seeking Christ and striving to follow him. It is a community that falls silent when he speaks, recognizing in his voice the truth that heals wounds inflicted by countless lies. It is a community that receives an abundance of food—trucks full, as Eliana says. If not fish, then milk, honey, even a "butter mountain." Food chopped by people with disabilities alongside university professors, week after week. Baskets of oranges pressed into juice to quench the thirst of the hungry. Bread not made by magic, but worked and kneaded over three days by George and the bakers. The community is obedient, because it knows it can do nothing by itself. Without the gift, we are nothing, and we possess nothing. A community that listens to the Word of God and strives to be obedient becomes a community that feeds others. This is a daily reality. Without nourishment, life withers and is ready to die.

The abundance of food, which nourishes both body and soul (for these never exclude but rather fulfill each other), points to its source: Christ himself. After the Resurrection, he showed that the spirit is not disembodied—"a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see that I have." The realities through which he reveals himself in the community, food and truth, both point back to him. He is near. He preaches from the boat. He is with the people, within reach of our daily struggles and labors. The goodness present in our lives points to its source: the Creator himself, who draws close and speaks at a short distance. We not only hear his voice—we can almost feel his breath. And he invites us to a relationship with him: "Follow me." The goodness we receive in our life invites us to a relationship with the only One that is good; Christ himself.

The catch of fish was unlike anything the disciples had ever known. Overwhelmed with joy at such goodness, Peter is driven into the depths of humility, even fear. For the fear of resurrection is deeper within us than the fear of death. We encounter this mystery in communion, where compassion is learned. By following Jesus, we become like John, the

beloved disciple whose feast we celebrated this week. We learn his compassion so that we may lean on Christ's breast when he is betrayed, and stand by the cross when he is abandoned. We are no longer afraid of the lies that betray or the lies that crucify the innocent. In following him, we all become beloved disciples, who care for mothers pierced with grief, who cannot be consoled. This is what it means to encounter the abundance of goodness manifested in our lives when we follow him. That's when we witness the healing wound that was caused by many lies in us. When we

### **Community life:**

When we receive today a blessing from the holy relic of St. John the Beloved, we remembered Pope Francis, who granted us this gift. We remembered his generosity to the poor in Toronto, and all over the globe and we pray that his gesture may be multiplied throughout our city and the whole world—the gift of gratuity to the poor, the genuine love he showed for them and for us, and the kindness he extended to our community by granting us the holy relic of the beloved disciple of Christ.

On Sunday, October 5, we will celebrate the wedding of Michael and Cristina. The service starts at 8:00 am. Please do not be late, so that together we may pray for them and with them, and rejoice in the gift of communion. Kindly keep Michael and Cristina in your prayers during the week.

At 11:00 a.m., we will go outside into the street to keep a silent vigil for Life Chain. Together we will remember the innocents and pray for the mothers whose hearts are pierced, like that of the beloved apostle. In prayer, we will comfort the mothers, as we also listen to the prayer of the innocents: for forgiveness, for mercy, and for communion with one another in Christ.

For two Saturdays in a row now, M. has entered the chapel forcefully early in the morning, with noise, and stopped in front of the icon of the Mother of God. She prays. Sometimes she cries. She goes back, then comes again, and kneels before the icon. I remember seeing M. like this in the past, especially when a member of our community has died of an overdose. This time, we hope that no one has died—or is going to—so that we may repent and ask for forgiveness. Too many have already... now it is the appropriate time for a changing of heart.



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**St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission**

155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9

T: 416-466-1357 E: [info@stjohnsmission.org](mailto:info@stjohnsmission.org) W: [stjohnsmission.org](http://stjohnsmission.org)

**St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission**

193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3

T: 647-358-4105



We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

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