

Our readings during these weeks of Ordinary Time continue to explore the relationship between God and God's people: how deeply God loves us, and how much God wants us to let him into our lives. Today's gospel makes three points in this regard.

The **first point** is that **Jesus teaches**. "The crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God." This particular gospel doesn't tell us exactly what Jesus was teaching to the crowd. But from other places in the gospels, we know that it was always about God's love, or some aspect of it. That's what *all* of the gospels are *always* about – some aspect of God's love for humankind. Jesus came to earth to announce the coming of the kingdom of God; the heart of God's kingdom is love – a love which makes it possible for all who accept the kingdom to be saved: to be saved from all evil, to be saved from all sin, to be saved from death itself.

The **second point** of today's gospel is that **the response** to Jesus' teaching is going to be huge: the huge catch of fish is a symbol of this response. The carpenter was better at fishing than the fishermen: they had nothing to show after a long night of fishing; Jesus had a net-breaking catch to show – by the simple power of his word. After 2000 years of preaching, (according to recent estimates) from 1½ to over 2 billion people worldwide identify themselves as Christians – as followers of Christ. This is 25 to 33 percent of the world's entire population – by far larger than any other major religious denomination. Indeed: a huge catch!

The **third point** of today's gospel is in **the exchange between Simon Peter and Jesus.**

Simon Peter says: "Depart from me for I am a sinful man," and Jesus says: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." This is where the gospel touches you and me. In the face of the powerful action of Jesus, Peter recognizes his own unworthiness and inadequacy to be a disciple of Jesus. The same is true of us: none of us – not a single one – is worthy to be a disciple of Jesus. Like Peter, we are all sinners; we are all unworthy; we are all inadequate.

But Jesus says to us what he said to Peter: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching" others. Jesus calls each of us to be fishers of others – to catch others for the Kingdom. Not in the sense of entrapping or forcing them into something they don't want; but in the sense of bringing them into the kingdom by the power of example, by showing and sharing the meaning and importance of our faith. The call to be fishers has never been limited to priests and religious; it's a universal call that includes everyone who has ever been baptized. It doesn't mean that we preach on the street corners or proselytize door-to-door. It means being fully aware at all times, and faithfully committed in all we do, to our parish mission: to live as He lived, to love as He loved, and to serve as He served.