

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

If you were given the job of choosing twelve people to save the world, whom would you choose? My guess is that you would probably consider those people who have outstanding and visible gifts of leadership. People with gifts that inspire others to follow them and buy into their policies for the salvation of the world.

These leaders will probably have distinguished themselves in business or politics, where they have gained recognition and proven their successfulness. As it stands today, there are people making their mark in the world and the news is about what they are doing. For instance, there is Donald Trump going about making America great. There is Elon Musk, one of the most successful businessmen. Mario Ramos has this week been made the chairperson of one of the big banks. Would you put the Pope and Archbishop Thabo on your list. The new president of Argentina is busy transforming the policies of that country so that the poverty and unemployment from which they have suffered is now being changed to promote a more productive and wealthy way of life for the people of that country.

In the Isaiah reading he replies in answer to the question from the heavenly body, "whom will I send?" "Here I am, send me!" Are you the one who will stand up and give that answer to transform our land from poverty and unemployment into a wealthy state that practices righteousness and justice?

In this morning's gospel we are told that Jesus did not search for the people who would guide the world towards salvation, from the distinguished and prominent leaders of his day like the chief priests and the Pharisees. He certainly didn't ask Herod or Caesar to do his work.

No, he went down to the Lake of Gennesaret and looked for the people who he wanted to fulfil the task, amongst the simple, uneducated, peasant folk, who lived in the district. A probable reason for this was that they were the ones who understood the needs of the people. They understood how difficult it was to make ends meet, to have food on the table and to pay the rent. They felt the oppression of unjust taxes.

When he came down to the lakeside a huge crowd followed Jesus, and so he asked a fisherman, Simon Peter, whether he could use his boat as a platform to address the crowd. Now we are told that Peter had been fishing all night and had not caught a single fish. He was also very busy cleaning his nets.

I would imagine that by the time that Jesus approached him, Peter was probably very tired, very irritable and very frustrated with his unsuccessful night's work. And no doubt not in any mood to allow a stranger to interrupt him and to get in his way. Peter, however, graciously allowed our Lord to use his boat. That was

probably a miracle in itself. But isn't that what Jesus does, he changes our tiredness and suffering into blessings. That is when, like Peter, we say yes Lord, I will do as you suggest.

After addressing the crowd, our Lord told Peter to sail into deep water and to lower his nets. Those of you who are experts in your field, will know, that one doesn't feel good, to be told by a "rookie," how to do your job, or in this case to be told by a carpenter, how to catch fish. And so loveable Peter, answers, *Master, because you say so, I will let down the nets.*

We know that through his obedience, Peter reaps the reward of a catch of fish, so large that it fills two boats to overflowing and just about sinks them. What was it that Peter saw in Jesus that allowed him to inconvenience himself for a stranger and made him so obedient to Jesus' requests? What was it that made him say, Master, to a mere carpenter? Perhaps it was intuition, or perhaps a certain aura about Jesus, that led Peter to surrender his boat; to throw out his nets in the place the Jesu directed him to do. He didn't say I know better I'll throw my nets where I've always caught the fish.

Peter trusted and put his faith in Jesus' words because he saw that Jesus was more than just an ordinary person. He listened, he believed, he obeyed. And so he was blessed with an abundance of fish, together with a promise of something still more wonderful in the future.

Yes, we can learn a lot from Peter's behaviour that day, who through careful listening, learnt that he was in the presence of the Almighty and so he humbly obeyed every request or instruction that was directed to him.

This same dedication was to inspire Peter, in due course, to confess to Jesus, *you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.* (Matt. 16: 16) The tests Jesus put Peter through that day, may be described as an illustration of the practical expositions to the question God asked of Isaiah. *Whom shall I send?* Peter's obedience, may be likened to Isaiah's response, *here am I Lord. Send me!* (Isaiah 6: 8). Perhaps we can also say, "Our Father, your kingdom come, and I shall be the one to do your will that your kingdom will be present all over the world."

Jesus himself lived a life of obedience, as confirmed in his prayer to the Father, *I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.* (John 17: 4.)

As we consider today's gospel, the first question that comes to mind is, whether, we too, are fully obedient to the will of the Father. In order to know his will we need to listen to Jesus' teachings, which illuminates the darkness of our ignorance.

It is a teaching that shows us the folly of devising our own personal interpretations and agendas of what we think is expected of us. Like learning to avoid the mistakes that people like the Jews made, in the practice of their

religion. They made a god of religion and failed to worship God.

The whole Bible is filled with Jesus' teachings, and in order to know in what way it affects us individually, we need to devote time to reading and digesting the contents of the Bible, so that we can be obedient to the will of God the Father.

We spend a great deal of time gaining academic qualifications that help us in our jobs, but we seem to allocate such a little time to help us in our quest to secure our spiritual well-being and of course eternal life for ourselves. I would suggest that the time allocated to learning the facts about what should be the most essential goal of our being, is completely disproportionate to the benefits we wish to enjoy by being Christians.

For instance, how much better might we be in our jobs and achievements; in our families; in our education and sport and our leisure if we were to build a healthy spirituality for ourselves. One that places God firmly as the essence of our lives.

The greatest desires of most of us, are to live truly peaceful lives in freedom and happiness and enjoy the love of God and the love of those around us. It's strange that we know that the secrets to such an existence are found in Scripture, yet most of us seldom open the Bible.

Scripture teaches us that God is a God of love. Those who are obedient to his will, enjoy his blessings and experience his love.

David was greatly blessed because he lived on the premise that *In God I Trust* (Psalm 56: 11). He lived with that assurance because he was obedient to the will of God, who consequently kept all his promises, the benefits of which were experienced by David.

God is willing to forgive those who see the errors of their ways and wish to return to his fold. In fact, his love for humanity is so great that he sent his only Son, Jesus, to destroy the works of the evil one, which leads us into disobedience, and separates us from the God of love. In him is redemption and the blessings of the abundance which Peter received in his catch of fish; the abundance that the five thousand enjoyed when Jesus fed them by breaking five loaves of bread and two fish; the abundance that the bridal couple enjoyed when their water was turned into wine.

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for human disobedience, so that we might be reconciled to God. Jesus died so that our sins might be forgiven. Such forgiveness allows us to return into God's fellowship.

When we continue our studies of Scripture, we gain the understanding that despite any difficulties that we might encounter along the way, God's way allows us to overcome those difficulties and simultaneously experience peace and joy in doing so. Problems that we face, are changed into opportunities for growth and for experiencing a greater awareness of his presence. Especially when we hand those problems over to the Lord.

Paul's life of obedience to Jesus' command to spread the gospel is testimony to these statements. He faced persecution, abuse, illness and all sorts of hardships, yet he experienced great peace in the love of God.

Yes, the time that we spend in our studies of scripture is rewarded by the experience of Jesus, because our studies turn into prayer, and we then encounter Jesus, in the same way that he came into Peter's life. Peter met Jesus in the busyness of his daily work. Jesus is around us everyday, during our busy times and also at those times when we are feeling tired and would just like to have a quiet rest.

When he then asks us to do something for him, please do not say, sorry Lord, I am busy at the moment, if you will just be patient I'll see you in Church on Sunday. That is when I have diarised to meet you, so that we can enjoy each other's company for the hour that I am there. But leave me alone at the moment, while I am doing my own thing. By the way, Lord I am a sinful man, go away.

Its amazing how creative we are at dismissing Jesus when we feel that the time is inconvenient, yet what we should do, is to obediently follow through, on what he asks of us. That is to be like Peter and graciously do the will of God. Which is to follow the pattern set by Jesus and Peter, whose goal was to glorify God, through being his obedient servants. That should be our goal too, and in the process, to enjoy life in all its abundance.

Jesus says to each one of us, you will be fishes of people. In other words, you are being sent to change our land, to remove its poverty and to ensure that the people will have everything in abundance. By promoting Jesus' policies wealth and prosperity is available to everyone and not only to a few fat cats.

May the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.