

Preston, Sunday 6th July 2025

4th Sunday after Pentecost

“Master, we have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing¹.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

The well-known miracle of the miraculous catch, performed by Jesus at the beginning of his public life is once more offered to our contemplation this morning of the 4th Sunday after Pentecost. All night, the future apostles worked and caught nothing. They were exhausted by their night without sleep, and perhaps also a bit upset, as all this work has been accomplished, but no fruit was at hand. And at the very end of it, someone, who apparently knew nothing about it, as he was a carpenter, told them to launch out in the deep on the other side, and the miracle happened.

The word of St Peter, just before this moment could be read or understood in several ways, if we wouldn't read the second part - “but at Thy word I will let down the net²”. We could hear some tiredness or disappointment. But I'd like to insist a little upon two words: “all night”. Don't you think the one who was to be the first pope of the church is showing us how to accomplish our actions and duties with a constant perseverance, despite the difficulties, dangers and apparent absence of success? The miracle of Jesus was obviously not known of the apostles before, and He desired that they had some part in it. All their efforts for nothing were also to demonstrate his power and divinity with a brighter and more luminous way. The word of confidence of St Peter, might also be a word of resignation, like a ‘one more time, after all these missed tries, it won't change anything’. But, in reality, this obedience, after all the night of perseverance, prompted the miracle.

We may contemplate in St Peter, the three qualities that St Francis de Sales highlighted to understand the good movement of our soul towards the Lord:

“the three best and most assured marks of lawful inspirations, are perseverance, against inconstancy and levity; peace and gentleness of heart, against disquiet and solitude; humble obedience, against obstinacy and extravagance³.”

Inconstancy and levity: St Peter didn't leave his boat and brothers after a couple of unfortunate tries. Peace and gentleness: despite an apparent tiredness, and his word of weariness, we cannot hear anything, but peace. Obedience: he received with a good heart the suggestion of the Lord, and his prompt obedience was immediately rewarded. This word was the beginning of a love in St Peter's heart, which never ended, and took Him to follow his Divine Master to death and eternal glory. We could also read this short excerpt of the treatise on the Love of God to understand better what kind of fire was lit in St Peter's after this miracle:

¹ Lk., 5, 5.

² *Ibid.*

³ St Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, VIII, 13.

“Our love towards God begins from the complacency which we have in the sovereign goodness and infinite perfection which we know is in the Divinity, then we come to the exercise of benevolence; and as the complacency which God takes in his creatures is no other thing than a continuation of his benevolence towards them, so the benevolence which we bear towards God is nothing else but an approbation of and perseverance in the complacency we have in him⁴.”

And another spiritual author praised for us the benefit of this perseverance:

“It is, this daily endurance in the common life, this toilsome fidelity, that St. Benedict requires of us in this workshop where he distributes our tasks and provides us with the instruments of our sanctification. It is ‘day and night’, ‘unceasingly’, that he would have us use these instruments, without being wearied by the length of the task, without being discouraged by our want of success, without letting ourselves be cast down by our failures. The virtue of fortitude constantly exercised, preserved and sustained until our last day constitutes perseverance⁵.”

Encouraged by these words, and prompted by the example of our first pope, let’s follow the divine inspiration to not let ourselves being discouraged in our spiritual battle, which nourish and strengthen our resolution to be true sons of God. Failures, temptations, and difficulties will always happen, but at the end of the night of our soul, the Lord is coming and says to us all: Launch out in the deep!”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

⁴ St Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, V, 6.

⁵ Dom Marmion, *Christ, ideal of the Monk*, VII, Instruments of Good works, 7.