

2 September 2010  
22<sup>nd</sup> Thursday

“They left everything and followed him.” (Luke 5:11)

This is the story of just about every disciple of Jesus. It is especially evident when a monk makes profession, surrendering his entire life to God. In just two days time, we – God willing – will celebrate the profession of a monk, a solemn profession of permanent vows.

The monk’s *journey* to that solemn profession is remarkably similar to Simon Peter’s own journey.

Let’s look at two moments on Simon Peter’s journey: his first encounter with Jesus (today’s Gospel) and his final commissioning (in the Gospel according to St. John). These episodes highlight characteristics of the monastic journey of discipleship.

In [Simon] Peter’s first encounter with Jesus, Jesus never says: “Follow me.” In fact, the only command that Jesus gives is: “Do not be afraid.” (Luke 5:10) Yet, Simon Peter is drawn to Jesus, so much so that he leaves everything and follows him. This is rather typical of the journey of a would-be monk. He has an encounter with the Lord that draws him in. Whether it is spectacular encounter or as quiet as a whisper, this is the beginning of the call. Often, the one called will react with humble awe and reverence, just like Simon Peter: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” (Luke 5:8) The would-be monk can scarcely believe that he would be called to a close friendship with Jesus. But Jesus, in his gentle way, reassures him: Do not be afraid. And so the man can take the first step towards following Jesus.

Now, this episode, Simon Peter’s first encounter with Jesus, is linked to his final commissioning, on the Sea of Tiberias. This is after the Resurrection, Simon Peter had been fishing all night but caught nothing. In the morning Jesus appears and Simon Peter has a miraculous catch of fish, the net filled with fish. It is here on the beach that Jesus asks Simon Peter three times: Do you love me? Three times Simon Peter replies: Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. It is at *this* point that Jesus finally tells Simon Peter: “Follow me.”

This episode, also, is typical of the monastic journey. Every year of temporary profession, at retreat time, the young monk renews his vows. For three consecutive years, the Lord in effect asks the monk: Do you love me? And three times the monk replies: Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. ... Please, let me make permanent vows. And then the day comes when the monk may make solemn vows, permanent vows. It is now that the Lord issues the command: Follow me. If the monk professes, he commits to a radical form of discipleship... a leap of faith, but also of hope, because it looks forward to the resurrection.

St. Peter, please pray for us, that we may grow in gratitude to Jesus for our redemption and for our vocation. Please pray for us that in following Jesus we may grow in love for him.