



My Beloved Ones,

Just as we have begun a new season, we will also commemorate the First Sunday of Luke. Therefore, it seems appropriate that this Sunday's Gospel is also about beginnings; specifically, Christ calling His Disciples to their ministry. In the small village of Gennesaret, the size of the multitude made it necessary for Christ to speak to them from a fishing boat. Perhaps the fishermen at work were only half listening to Him, but it is to them that Christ wished to speak most of all. When He finished teaching, our Lord turned to Simon, the owner of the boat, and suggested that Simon put down his nets. Having worked all night, and without catching anything, Simon was tired. Even so, something made him obey...

The catch was miraculous, and though Simon was a man of little education, when the nets began to break and one of the boats started to sink, Simon was so overcome with feeling, that his first words to Jesus were

*“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8).* Jesus did not leave Simon, or Simon's partners, James, and John. Instead, He simply told them, *“Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.” (Luke 5:11)* Christ's words to them were so inspiring, that it is easy to forget James and John left their father, Zebedee. When we speak of what it means to be a follower of Christ, we are constantly faced with the notion that we must deny ourselves. However, it is one thing to abandon worldly pleasures—but how many of us would be willing to abandon our homes, families, and friends as the Disciples did? Indeed, when we think of the ascetics of the world, there are only a few who will be able to answer such a call.

We read in St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians that the life of a true Christian means that *“...we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh... But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—‘I believed, and so I spoke’—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence” (2 Corinthians 4:11; 13-14).* Though we may not face persecution and death, it is important to remember that as Christians, we are not only asked to death our worldly desires, but also to live so that *“...Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh...”*

Christ will call to each of us in different ways, and as the Disciples saw, often when we do not expect it. I pray that as we enter fall, we ask ourselves how do we witness Christ to the world? I do not mean to preach; do we act with kindness, compassion and understanding, so that all who see us will sense that Jesus truly lives in us?

**+ALEXIOS**

Metropolitan of Atlanta