

Dear Members of Sacred Heart,

It is hard for me to hear about the fishermen in the Gospel that Jesus called friends and made disciples and not remember the times spent with my father, also a fisherman, with him on his boat. I was certainly no fisherman but those summer days that my brothers and I spent with my father will always be special. He was totally at ease and yet truly alert and focused, casting or dropping his line again and again. When nothing was biting on one place, he would calmly suggest we go to another. Just by watching him and following his example we learned not only patience and perseverance but also how to pay attention and enjoy the gentle waves, the refreshing breeze, and the noisy seagulls flying near. The sights, the sounds and the smells were with us all the way home at day's end and followed us into our dreams at night.

Imagine the humility and trust it took for Simon Peter, an experienced fisherman, to follow the command of Jesus, a rabbi and a carpenter, to head out to the deep waters and try one more time. Picture his amazement when he lowered the nets and pulled up a catch so large that their nets were in danger of tearing and their boats in danger of sinking. This was no bragging, boastful Peter taking credit for the catch that he had made but a simple man brought to his knees acknowledging his unworthiness and the Lord's power. Who would not leave everything behind and follow the Teacher who out fished the "Big Fisherman" and invited him to come and learn what true fishing was all about?

On those summer days so long ago, my father invited us to follow him into the beauty and mystery of all that was around us if we were humble enough to believe and not be afraid. I am so grateful that we were always willing to lower our hearts to fill them with his love trusting that it would be the greatest catch of the day. It always was and will always be.

"O Lord, with your eyes set upon me, gently smiling,  
You have spoken my name; all I longed for I have found by the water,  
At your side, I will seek other shores."

May you catch a summer's dream on this winter's day,  
*Father John*