

I'm constantly amazed by the Gospels.

Although I might think I'm familiar with every incident narrated in them I still come across bits I don't think I've heard before.

More frequently, though, I meet a passage that's familiar, but some completely unexpected truth stands out from it.

I suppose that is why the Gospels are special to us, enshrined and fussed-over by the Church.

They don't just encapsulate the biography of our Founder.

They reveal him for our own time.

Not only are the episodes brought into our own time, but the Lord himself calls and challenges *us*.

So we are not safe with the Gospels.

Through our reading of them things fall into place and we are changed.

We are not dealing with mere history, but with the call of God to people in every age, the call of God to *us*.

So when I read through today's reading, what stood out was the radical effect of the call of Jesus on Peter, James and John.

It began when Jesus came and sat in Peter's boat and taught the crowds.

When he'd finished he told them to put out into deep water and pay out their nets.

Doubt met this suggestion, but they complied.

There was a miraculous catch of fish.

Then, Simon Peter fell at the knees of Jesus and confessed his lack of faith.

Jesus replied that this catch was only a foretaste.

Future catches will be of people: people who would share the good news of the Kingdom.

Simon Peter, James and John all left everything and followed Jesus.

Nothing's changed.

God still uses fallible human beings to convey his truth and to challenge others with the demands of discipleship.

And, come to think of it, is using us, yes, all of us, as the growing edge of his Church.

We underestimate the extent of our responsibility for the transmission of the truth on which the life of the Church rests.

And we have a low opinion of our capacity ever to make any progress in this field: it is an impossible task without God; for without God the Church will fall into a slow and graceful decline.

So first of all, we have to acknowledge the grace of God, which makes it possible for us to move forward.

‘Leave me, Lord: I am a sinful man.’

Isaiah too: ‘What a wretched state I am in! I am lost.’

It was only when they admitted their utter inability to achieve anything on their own that the grace, the power of God, could take over.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians says ‘by the grace of God I am what I am.’

So it is by allowing God to take over that we become the messengers that God wants us to be.

It was only when that admission was made that the episode in the boat began to make sense.

The images: deep water; a massive catch so that the nets began to break, fall into place.

But it is only faith, trust in this man Jesus that makes anything possible.

Nothing’s changed.

We are still faced with the overflowing love of God as it is revealed in Jesus of Nazareth.

As Paul says, this Jesus rose from the dead and is still present with us.

So the Church exists not to keep alive the memories of when Jesus was alive, but to proclaim him as alive and loving us now.

And not only that, but we ourselves are called to acknowledge his presence and respond to his call to follow him.

A community that's been around as long as ours has is bound to collect a lot of baggage.

All manner of things crowd in to distract us from our very basic life.

Often the things that really matter are obscured by the excess baggage

We have to focus again on what is distinctive, unique about the Church, and reflect on what is expected of us as christian disciples.

We probably never will have to leave everything and follow Jesus in the way the first disciples did.

But we are still asked to put our pilgrimage with Jesus at the centre of our lives.

And since it is the mystery of God's love for us that has brought us together, we have to make time to acknowledge that mystery, to celebrate it.

Worship is the heart and centre of our life.

Our commitment to it is what demonstrates the seriousness of our response to God's love.

It is a sign of our faith.

But not only that.

From the Eucharist flows our sustenance, our food for the journey.

For this service isn't just something dreamed up by our ancestors, and which happens to be fashionable in the Church at the moment.

It is a gift from God and part of the way to him.

It is a vehicle of the presence of Jesus with us now.

And it will change us.

Yes, that was it.

Those first disciples became open to transformation.

They were freed from the checks and balances of so-called normal life and invited to risk everything for this man in whom they saw God himself alive and active in their world.

We have to hang on to our conviction that we are still the same community.

So it's back to the Gospel.

Let it speak to us.

And yes, the process remains the same: our admission of sinfulness in the face of a loving God leads to openness to his Spirit.

In Isaiah's vision of God, God asks 'whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?'

Isaiah, the one who believed that he was a sinful man of unclean lips replied, 'Here I am, send me.'

Peter, who had asked the Lord to leave him because he was a sinful man, James and John, left everything and followed him.

Then anything could happen.

It did.