

The Miraculous Draft of Fish - 1971

There were two small companies working the fisheries on the Sea of Galilee in the time of Jesus. One was Jona and sons, the boys Simon and Andrew joining their father in the family business; the other was run by old Zebedee and his sons, James and John. The boys, now grown up, had formed a partnership and worked together.

They already knew of the great words and works of the new Rabbi. Had not John the Baptist already pointed Andrew and John saying, "Behold the Lamb of God?"

Following Jesus and staying with him that day they were so impressed that Andrew told his brother Simon, "We have found the Messiah" (Jn 1:41). It happened then, when Jesus had preached to a large crowd from Simon Peter's boat, that he said to him, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." (Lk 5:5) And they enclosed a great shoal of fish. Simon Peter, seeing it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Jesus replies, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." (Lk 8:10)

The painting was originally designed and executed in tempera on brown paper for the celebration of the silver jubilee of the Seminary, in January of 1957. Afterwards it was stored in the Seminary attic.

Fourteen years later, Abbot Eugene wondered if it might not be resurrected but it appeared to be much the worse for wear so a new wall of wood panel was set up behind the rector's table. Painted now in flat oil colors, it shows Peter at the knees of Jesus seated in the stern of the boat, while Andrew, James, Zebedee and John haul in the nets full of fish. The silver sail billows with the wind of the spirit and hastens the apostolic labours till the end of time.

by Father Dunstan Massey, OSB