



# Boston Catholic Journal



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DEDICATED TO MARY MOTHER OF GOD

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## GOING ONCE AND LEAVING TWICE:



## THE NET WORTH OF A CATHOLIC

**“They left everything and followed Him”**

(Saint Luke 5.11)

**The Biblical narrative** tells us that Simon Peter, James, and John, having been invited by Jesus to become “Fishers of Men”, made no preparation whatever to follow Christ. They left everything ... *immediately*.

Later, however, we find St. Peter and St. John fishing *once again* in an episode almost identical with the first. <sup>1</sup>

Each time St. Peter is fishing and each time he comes to recognize Christ in the middle of his work. He was still simply a “Fisherman” on both occasions — he had not yet become a “Fisher of Men”. Likewise, on both occasions, St. Peter’s response in recognizing Christ is *immediate*: the first time he throws down the net at once and leaves everything, and the second time he leaps into the water since the boat cannot carry him fast enough to Jesus.

Eventually St. Peter did indeed leave everything. He tells the man who begs money of him, “**Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise, and walk.**”<sup>2</sup> — and heals the man.

That was after St. Peter gave up on fish and went after bigger things.

We, too, are called to leave everything and follow Christ — and, like St. Peter, to pursue greater things: *the salvation of souls* ... most especially our own! Most of us are reluctant to do this, for we have little faith.

It really is a matter of practice. **Even now we should be preparing to leave everything** ... and, hopefully, to follow Christ — at the hour of our death.

**One thing is absolutely certain: sooner or later we *will* leave everything.** Even the most obdurate atheist knows this. Whether we will leave it *before* we leave it — in other words, whether we will *choose* to die **to** this world *before* we die **in** this world — die and leave we must, and will.

Like Peter the “Fisherman”, we will most likely be engaged in other things when Christ comes along out of nowhere and calls us to follow Him. St. Peter did not expect to encounter the Son of God while mending his nets. Neither will we in the middle of a stock trade, while preparing dinner, or as we pull up the covers for the night. **“The Son of Man will come at an hour that you least expect.”** Do you doubt it? Ask St. Peter ... if you could ... or simply look at today’s obituaries, which you can.

Duns Scotus, the great medieval philosopher, theologian, and Franciscan, has engraved on his tombstone the following:

*SEMEL SEPULTUS, BIS MORTUUS* ... “BURIED ONCE, DIED TWICE.”

THINK ON IT

He died *before* he died — to the world, to the flesh, to the devil, to his own willfulness and selfishness, to his vanity and to his pride. The physical burial, in a sense was a formality. He was already living in Christ — and while *in* the world, was *not of* the world. Alike, he knew the City of Man and the City of God.

He *also* knew that he could not hold this dual citizenship indefinitely, so he renounced the one altogether. Learning to die, he learned to live. It is the quintessential paradox of which Christ spoke: **“he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose**

his life for My sake, shall find it”<sup>3</sup>

Death was no thief in the night to St. Peter or Duns Scotus. Why? There was nothing to steal. They gave up everything and followed Christ. **You cannot rob a holy man. His only possession is God.**

Peter had no practice. He just dove into it — at least once, quite literally.

For the rest of us, it would seem wise to bone up on it while we have time, to *practice leaving* before we leave, and to renounce — at least with our will — everything that *cannot* and *will not* accompany our leaving to follow Jesus Christ. After all, our faith is little. Perhaps even less than our time.

In other words, when He comes, and when we leave, will we be *mending* the net ... or *caught* in it?

This is a very real consideration. Consider it while still you may.

Geoffrey K. Mondello  
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<sup>1</sup> St. John 21.3-14

<sup>2</sup> Acts 3.6

<sup>3</sup> Saint Matthew 16.25

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