

# ***THE CALLING OF THE TWELVE GOD'S MESSENGERS***

**September 22, 2013**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Luke, 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**Revision F**

**Gospel: Luke 5:1-11**  
**Epistle: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24**

In the West, today's Gospel lesson is used either on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost or the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. In the Eastern lectionary, today's Gospel lesson from Matthew 4 is used also for the Second Sunday after Pentecost.

This Sunday's Gospel is about the calling of four of the Twelve and concludes with them leaving everything to follow the Lord. To understand some of the details, we need to understand what fishing was like on the Sea of Galilee and also what it meant for them to leave everything.

## **Background: The Life of Jesus and the Twelve**

This was not the first contact Jesus ever made with Peter, Andrew, James and John. James and John were Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins and had known Him since they were children. Many of the Twelve were with Jesus at the wedding feast at Cana, which occurred just before Passover earlier in the year, which was 27 AD (John 2). They were there when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the One he came to announce (John 3). At that time, Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John, where Jesus' disciples actually did the baptizing (John 4:2). Prior to that, some of the Twelve had been disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:36-37). They had recently traveled with Jesus back and forth from Galilee and were there with the Samaritan woman by the well in Sychar (John 4). The reading from Luke 5 is set late in the year 27, the first year of Jesus' public ministry, which began just before Passover at Cana. The Twelve were not necessarily full-time disciples yet. They were still working at their trade, perhaps to earn enough that they could travel with Jesus part-time. After they made their decisions to follow Jesus full-time, some of the Holy Women pitched in to help support them (Luke 8:2-3).

## **Background: Fishing in the Sea of Galilee**

Fishing on the Sea of Galilee changed very little between the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. By the 1950's, synthetic fiber nets replaced cotton and linen, motors replaced oars and sails and electronic fish-finders came into use. Not surprisingly, fish hauls increased and indigenous species began to be depleted; new species were introduced.

## **Types of Fish Present**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, four species of fish were common. The first was a catfish, which was of no economic importance because it was "unclean". From Leviticus 11:9-12, seafood must have fins and scales to be kosher; catfish have no scales.

Copyright © Mark Kern 2005

The second species was the sardine and represented about half the yearly tonnage taken from the lake. In the story of the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:9-10) and of the 4,000 (Matthew 15:34-38) the fish that were multiplied were sardines. The city of Magdala on the Western shore of the Sea of Galilee was the center of the sardine pickling industry in the region.

A third species of fish was the barbel, a member of the carp family. The largest of the barbels, the Long-headed Barbel, is a nice looking fish resembling a trout that feeds on small fish and mollusks. The barbel can reach 30 inches in length and can weigh 15 pounds.

The fourth species of fish is called the musht today (meaning “comb” in Arabic) and has a long dorsal fin resembling a comb. The musht feed on plankton and congregate in shoals, especially as cold weather approaches. Since the musht is the only large fish found in shoals, this has to be the species involved in several New Testament accounts. The musht can reach 18 inches in length and can weigh 5 pounds.

The musht is a flat white fish and is often prepared by frying (compare John 21:9). The skeleton consists of an easily detached backbone and relatively few small bones, thus making it easy to eat. Since it is one of the tastiest fish in the lake, it has been called St. Peter’s fish from an account in Matthew 17:24-27. Peter paid the Temple tax for Jesus by catching a fish (with a baited hook) and taking a coin from the fish’s mouth.

There are two different opinions on why a fish might have a shekel coin in its mouth. Gower stated<sup>1</sup> that the fish involved was the tilapa, also called the musht today. Tilapa carry their eggs and later the young fish in their mouths. Even when they go in search of food for themselves, the young still return to the protection of the mother’s mouth. When the mother fish wishes to keep them out, she will pick up an object (a bright one, preferably) and keep it in her mouth to prevent their return. In this case, Gower suggested that the fish had picked up a shekel coin.

However, Peter caught the fish with a baited hook; musht eat plankton and wouldn’t respond to bait. Mendel Nun therefore suggested<sup>2</sup> that Peter must have caught a barbel, which is a trout-like fish that would respond to a baited hook. Local traditions, he said, later applied the name “St. Peter’s fish” to the more popular eating fish. Nun doesn’t mention what a barbel would be doing with a coin in its mouth. This miracle was so great that it would be a small extra feature if it were a musht that responded to Peter’s hook.

### **Fishing Methods**

Three types of nets were referred to in both New and Old Testaments. These types of nets have been used for thousands of years and require much different techniques.

The first type, a dragnet (Greek *sagaynay*), is the oldest type and is shown in Figure 1. Typical dragnets or seines were up to 1,000 feet long and 25 feet high. It was spread out by boat 100 yards or more from shore and then hauled to shore by a team of 16 men. Sinkers kept the bottom of the net down and floats kept the top on the surface. When the net reached the shore,

---

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, Moody Press, p. 131, Chicago, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Mendel Nun, “Cast Your Net Upon the Waters”, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Nov./Dec. 1993, pp. 46-56.

the fish were sorted and the catfish were thrown away. This is the type of net referred to in Matthew 13:47-50. This net couldn't be used if the shoreline was rocky or had kelp growing near the shore.

A second type of net is a cast net or bag net (Greek *amphilblestron*) and is shown in Figure 2. This type is circular, about 25 feet in diameter and has lead weights all around the outer edge. After the net is thrown and sinks to the bottom, it is either retrieved by a system of cords or by a diver. When Peter and Andrew were called (Matthew 4:18), they were using this net, perhaps catching sardines. When Peter and Andrew left their nets (Matthew 4:20), they left the third type of net: their trammel nets.

A third type of net is called a trammel net (Greek *diktuon*). This type of net has three layers as shown in Figure 3 and was used only at night. It was not useful during the day because the fish could see the weaving and avoid it. Modern synthetic fiber, which is invisible under water, has made trammel nets useful today in the daytime. The trammel net was spread in a crescent shape roughly parallel to the shoreline. The boat that laid the net then quietly maneuvered toward shore between the net and the shore. All of a sudden the fishermen in the boat started making racket by beating the water with oars or stamping on the bottom of the boat. The frightened fish headed for deep water — right into the net and became entangled.

The trammel net was lowered and hauled up perhaps a dozen times during the night. Early in the morning the net was washed, repaired and hung up to dry, thus preparing for the next night's work.

A variation of the trammel net usage is called the veranda method<sup>3</sup> and is used during the daytime.

**Gospel: Luke 5:1-11, Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20**

### **Implications of the Miracle of the Fish**

The type of net referred to in Luke 5 is the trammel net. Peter, Andrew, James and John had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. Jesus arrived early in the morning while they were finishing up using bag nets (Matthew 4:18) and He taught from Peter's boat for a while. After Jesus stopped teaching, He said to Peter, "Launch out to deep water and let down the (trammel) nets" which had already been washed and hung up to dry. Peter protested that this was pointless: the nets weren't useful in deep water, or in the daytime and this would require re-washing the nets; but he did so anyway. Having done so, Peter encountered such a catch that (1) the net started to break, (2) the boat almost sank due to the weight of the catch, and (3) Peter had to call James and John over to help, and filled both boats. The Gospel lesson account was especially remarkable because the fish can see the nets during the daytime and can easily escape entanglement.

Comparing a similar catch they encountered under similar circumstances following the Resurrection, they caught 153 large fish (John 21:1-12). These fish from John 21:11 were

---

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see [Biblical Archaeology Review](#), Nov./Dec. 1993, pp. 46-56.

probably the musht since they were caught near shore (100 yards out); the haul was then around 600 pounds of fish, figuring an average of four pounds each.

Since the catch in our Gospel lesson was taken in deep water (Luke 5:4), it was probably a school of large barbel. In John 21, the 153 fish are referred to as “a multitude of fish” (Luke 5:6) and “full of large fish” (Luke 5:11). The quantity of the catch is referred to as “a great number of fish” (Luke 5:6). The net did not break in John 21 (although the catch was large) but the net did start breaking in Luke 5. If there were also around 150 fish in the Luke 5 catch, this would represent about a ton of fish, figuring 10-15 pounds per barbel. To get a better idea of the quantity of fish, these boats were the same ones that the Twelve rowed across the Sea of Galilee during a storm in Mark 4:36-38. In order to work at night to lay nets that are hundreds of feet long, the boat was a larger-than-average rowboat. There was probably room for at least six adults plus space for Jesus to sleep. This means that the boat could probably carry over 1,000 pounds of fish plus two crewmembers. Since both boats were filled to the point of almost sinking (Luke 5:7) this represented quite a haul! Especially since a good night’s catch (working all night, letting down the nets 12-15 times) was only about 200 pounds.

Peter, Andrew, James, John and the rest of the crew were understandably astonished at the size of the catch especially coming in the daytime. Peter’s remark “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!” is reminiscent of that of Isaiah after having seen the Lord in His temple (Isaiah 6:1-7). Many times, the closer we get to the Lord, the more we realize our own sinfulness. From the Lord’s reply, “Do not be afraid”, there was more than just simple surprise but some fear and trembling also at the magnitude of the Lord’s miracle. One might note Peter’s progression over the course of the Gospel lesson from calling Jesus “Master” (Luke 5:5) to calling Him “Lord” (Luke 5:8).

Some of the Twelve had been called earlier, but as disciples, not as Apostles. From the Gospel account, they wouldn’t just go out into deep water and let down their nets for a stranger, especially being tired after fishing all night and just having finished cleaning their nets. We get some insight into the earlier calling of these same four Apostles by Jesus (John 1:43-51), where they were still part-time fishermen at that time. After the calling of today’s Gospel lesson, they left everything (Luke 5:11) and were soon sent out by themselves to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-10). The earlier calling (John 1:43-51) is used in the Eastern lectionary for the First Sunday in Lent and focuses on the calling of Nathanael. The calling of the rest of the Twelve Apostles took place shortly after today’s Gospel lesson where the Lord put His team all together (Luke 6:12-16).

Tertullian pointed out<sup>4</sup> that the Prophet Jeremiah had predicted the calling of the fishermen as Apostles. When the fishermen left their nets, they understood that this was what Jeremiah had predicted.

“Out of so many kinds of occupations, why did Christ have such respect for that of fishermen, as to select from it for Apostles Simon, his brother and the sons of Zebedee? For this account was not written down just to bring out Peter’s trembling at the very large catch of fish, where the Lord’s response was, ‘Do not be

---

<sup>4</sup> Tertullian, The Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 9.

afraid! From now on you will catch men' (Luke 5:10). By saying this, He suggested to them the meaning of the prophecy, that it was He who by Jeremiah had foretold, 'Behold, I will send many fishermen; and they shall fish them' (Jeremiah 16:16), that is, men. When they left their boats and followed Him, they understood that it was He who had begun to accomplish what He had declared by Jeremiah".

### **The Humility of the Apostles**

The beginning of the work of the Twelve Apostles was characterized by a deep humility and awe at what the Master could do. This kind of humility was also characteristic throughout the Early Church where people did good works without seeking credit for it. John Chrysostom described<sup>5</sup> Peter's humble words, "Depart from me" (Luke 5:8), as the foundation of a blessed walk with God. As we apply this attitude to all aspects of our life and work, we will find ourselves praised by God and man.

"Let us beware of saying anything about ourselves, for this renders us both odious with men and abominable to God. For this reason, the greater the good works we do, the less let us say of ourselves; this being the way to reap the greatest praise both with men and with God. Demand not a reward that you may receive a reward. Confess yourself to be saved by grace, that He may profess Himself a debtor to you; and not for your good works only, but also for such rightness of mind".

"For when we do good works, we have Him debtor not for our good works only; but when we do not think we have done any good work ( ), then this disposition itself is equivalent to good works. For should this be absent, good works will not appear great! In the same way, when we have servants (Luke 17:10), we should most approve them when, after having performed all their service with good will, they do not think they have done anything great. It was in this way that the centurion said, 'I am not fit that you should enter under my roof'; because of this, he became worthy, and was 'marveled at' above all Jews (Matthew 8:8-10). In the same manner, Paul said, 'I am the least of the apostles' (1 Corinthians 15:9); because of this he came to be regarded first of all. So likewise John the Baptist: 'I am not fit to loose the latchet of His shoe' (Mark 1:7). Because of this he was the 'friend of the Bridegroom' (John 3:29), and the hand which he affirmed to be unworthy to touch His shoes, this did Christ draw onto His own head<sup>6</sup>. So Peter said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man' (Luke 5:8); because of this he became a foundation of the Church".

"For nothing is so acceptable to God as to number one's self with the last. This is a first principle of all practical wisdom. For he that is humbled, and bruised in heart, will not be vainglorious, wrathful, envious of his neighbor, and will not harbor any other passion. For if a man, by mourning for things pertaining to this life, drives out all the diseases of his soul, much more will he, who mourns for sins, enjoy the blessing of self-restraint".

---

<sup>5</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Alluding to the laying on of hands at Jesus' baptism from Matthew 3:14-15.

John Chrysostom also stated<sup>7</sup> that our life is like living in a foreign country, where the Lord's Presence is our real home. If someone were to repay us a debt, it would be better for us to receive it at home, not away from home. Yet even in this life we will receive a hundred-fold. The Apostles gave up everything, and the result was that the world opened their homes to them.

“If anyone were to owe you gold, while you were staying in a foreign country, and you had neither servants, nor any means to convey it across to the place of your abode, if he were to promise to pay you the loan, you would ask him to have it paid down not in the foreign land, but at home. In the same fashion, do you think it would be right to receive those spiritual and unutterable things in this world? This would be madness! For if you received them here, you would have them corruptible certainly; but if you wait for that time, He will repay you them incorruptible. If you receive here, you get lead; but if you get them there, it would be refined gold. Still He does not deprive you of the goods of this life. For along with that promise He has placed another also, to the following effect. Everyone that loves the things of the world to come, shall receive ‘a hundred-fold in this life present, and shall inherit eternal life’ (Matthew 19:29). If then we do not receive the hundred-fold, it is ourselves that are to blame for not lending to Him, Who can give so much; for all who have given have received much, even though they gave but little. For what great thing did Peter give? A broken net (Luke 5:6, 11), and a rod and a hook only! Yet still God opened to him the houses of the world, and spread before him land and sea, and all men invited him to their home. Or rather they sold what was their own, and brought it to the Apostles’ feet, not so much as putting it into their hands, so great was the honor they paid him”.

The significance of the Twelve Apostles is brought out by the question the Twelve asked Jesus: “What shall they have after having left all to follow him?” (Matthew 19:27) Jesus replied that they “will sit on twelve thrones judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

When Jesus first called the four Apostles (John 1:42), He prophesied that Peter would be called Cephas, meaning a rock or stone. Cephas is a name that comes from the Chaldean word “*kafē*” meaning rock; “*petra*” is the Greek counterpart meaning a large rock.

A little over a year after the four were called, following the death of John the Baptist, Jesus made His famous statement about the Church and how the Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). This was in response to Peter's confession (Matthew 16:17), which is the “rock” that Jesus had spoken of earlier. Jesus went on to say that He would give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Twelve. Whatever they bind on earth shall be, having been bound in heaven. And whatever they loose on earth shall be, having been loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). The Twelve, who have established the foundation of the Church (Revelation 21:14) with Christ as the Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20), have already begun to judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel and have been doing so now for almost two millennia. The Church today is responsible before God to maintain the connection with the Twelve and the Cornerstone in order

---

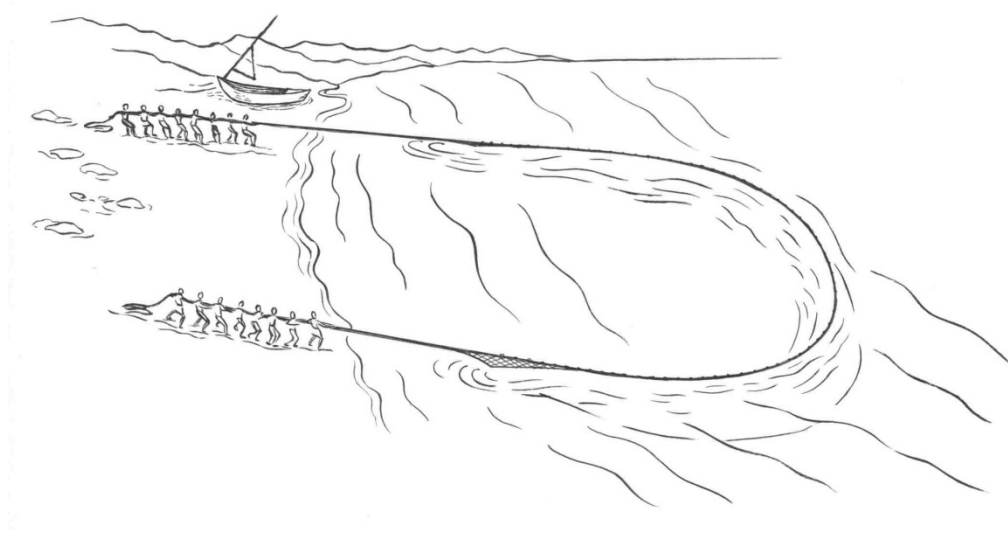
<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, VII, v. 31.

that this just judgment may continue for our benefit<sup>8</sup>. In doing this, the Church helps us to focus on loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength, and our neighbor as our self. And by doing that, we will obtain a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ as we pray in the various services.

---

<sup>8</sup> This theme occurs again in mid-July when the Orthodox lectionary remembers the Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils.

**Figure 1**  
**Use of a Dragnet or Seine**

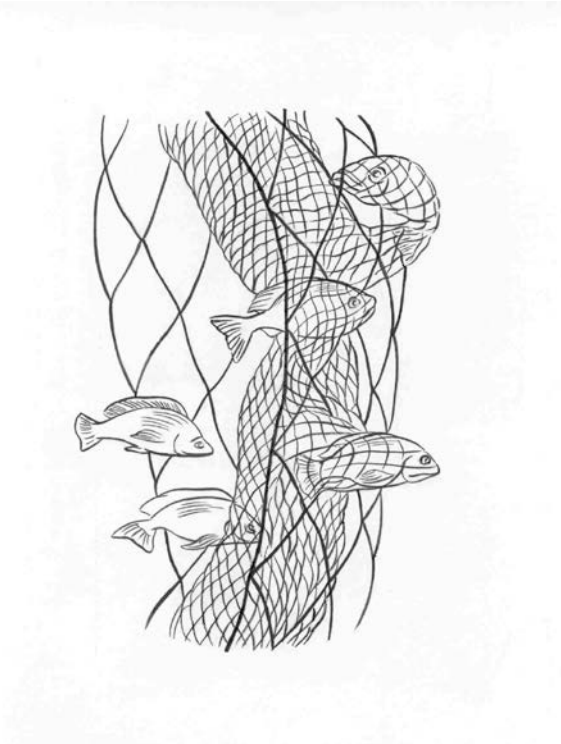


**Figure 2**  
**Use of a Cast Net**





**Figure 3**  
**The Webbing of a Trammel Net**



# ***GOD'S MESSENGERS***

**September 22, 2013**  
**13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Revision C**

**Epistle: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24**

Today's Epistle lesson is not used in the West at all.

## **Background for the Church in Corinth**

Paul founded the Church in Corinth about 51 AD toward the end of his Second Missionary Journey and stayed there a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Silas was traveling with Paul at the time along with Luke, Timothy and Andronicus, where all but Paul were of the original Seventy. Luke was left behind to oversee the Macedonian Churches. (Note switch in tenses from "we" to "they" and back to "we" in Acts 16:16, 17:1, 20:6). Silas was left behind in Corinth and was later Bishop of Corinth. (Note that we never hear from Silas again traveling with Paul after he arrived in Corinth, Acts 18:5).

Before Paul arrived in Corinth for an extended stay again in late 55 AD, he wrote four letters to Corinth (two of which are lost) and paid the Church one brief visit. For more details on this sequence of events, see the Epistle lesson for the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. In the interval from 52 to 55 AD, Apollos and the Apostle Peter visited Corinth. Apollos was one of the original Seventy, but must have been back home in Alexandria at the time of Pentecost. He knew only the baptism of John in 53 AD when he came to Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28). Aquila and Priscilla, the overseers Paul left in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19), straightened Apollos out and also wrote to the Churches in Achaia (Athens and Corinth) to receive Apollos when he arrived (Acts 18:27). Apollos proceeded to help out by vigorously refuting the Jews publicly showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:28). In 1 Corinthians 3:8, Paul said that he and Apollos are one; that is, of one mind in the work of establishing the Churches.

The same can be said for the relationship between Paul and Peter. Peter visited Corinth in the early 50's on his way to Rome. He obviously made a big impression in Corinth since there were factions that had developed by 55 AD (1 Corinthians 1:12) centered around Paul, Apollos, Peter and none of the above (i.e. Christ!!) On Peter's way to Corinth, Paul met him in Macedonia and together they ordained four bishops:

Olympas	Philippi
Jason	Thessalonica
Silas	Corinth
Herodion	Patras (SW Greece)

Thus we can definitely say that Peter and Paul were one in the work also.

From a detailed study of Paul's Missionary Journeys (Appendix A), we see that Paul worked with at least 60 of the original members of the Seventy at some point. Many of them like Luke, Timothy, and Titus traveled with him a lot. In addition, Paul had some contact with Peter, John, Andrew and Philip.

### **Examples of God's Messengers**

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul had some major issues to deal with. Among them:

- **Factions:** Four rival groups competing (1 Corinthians 1:12ff)
- **Immorality:** Incest worse than the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 5:1ff)
- **Quarrels:** Virgins vs. Married (1 Corinthians 7:1ff)  
Food offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8:1ff)
- **Heresy:** Gnostics denying the resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12ff)

Since communication and travel was much slower than today, Paul had to depend on messengers to tell him what was going on and to bring some words of correction and instruction back. Among these messengers were Timothy (4:17; 16:10, 11), Apollos (16:12), and Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (16:15-17). All of these except Stephanas were members of the Seventy (Luke 10:1-24). These messengers played the same role as the servants in the Gospel lesson whom the Lord sent to the vineyard to receive the fruits of it.

The Epistle lesson is the conclusion to a long letter that covered many things. Paul summarizes this by reminding us that one of the messages we carry is the love of God and that we should do all things out of love (16:14) as he had mentioned earlier in the Epistle (13:1-13). John Chrysostom commented on this as follows:

“For if this had not been neglected, they would not have been puffed up, they would not have said, ‘I am of Paul, and I of Apollos.’ If this had existed, they would not have gone to law before heathens, or rather they would not have gone to law at all. If this had existed, that notorious person would not have taken his father's wife; they would not have despised the weak brethren; there would have been no factions among them; they would not have been vain-glorious about their gifts. Therefore it is that he says, ‘Let all things be done in love’” (Homily XLIV on 1 Corinthians 16).

From there, Paul gives an example of love in the household of Stephanas. Paul had baptized Stephanas' household (1:16) and referred to them as the firstfruits of Achaia (16:15). Achaia was a large area and included Corinth and Athens. Epaenetus, another of the Seventy, was also mentioned as the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ (Romans 16:5) in the Epistle to the Romans that was written perhaps a year later. If Stephanas' household and Epaenetus were both firstfruits of Achaia, then it may be that Epaenetus was part of Stephanas' household, that this was a beginning monastic community, and the Fortunatus and Achaicus had joined them. They had “devoted themselves to the ministry (literally the Deaconate) of the saints” (16:15) in a

church where remaining a virgin was strongly encouraged (7:1, 25-38). Paul had to write to tell them that it's really okay to marry – as if some thought it was sinful (7:28).

In addition to using Stephanas' household as an example of love and good works, Paul asked the Corinthians to submit to them and to others who work in the apostolic ministry with them. This is in contrast to the vinedressers in the Gospel lesson who beat, killed and stoned God's messengers. Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, on the other hand, "refreshed Paul's spirit and that of the Corinthians by supplying what was lacking on the part of the Corinthians" (16:17-18). Chrysostom stated that "they had chosen to undertake so great a journey on behalf of the Corinthians" and that "they bore about in themselves the whole city" (Ibid).

Paul also recalled old times by saying that "Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord" (v.19). Aquila and his wife Priscilla were some of the first people Paul met in Corinth when he founded the Church there about four years earlier (Acts 18:1-3). They also had been numbered with the Seventy and were well-known to the Corinthians. As Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, the Church was meeting in Aquila's house in Ephesus. A year or so later, Paul wrote to the Church in Rome where the Church was meeting there in Aquila and Priscilla's house also (Romans 16:3-5). They were sent to Rome with a number of others by Peter and Paul to help start the Church in Rome.

To tie this together, Paul said to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (16:20). This is a reference to "the kiss of peace that was used in all the ancient Liturgies of the Church just before and as part of the Holy Eucharist" (Editor's footnote to Chrysostom's Homily XLIV on 1 Corinthians 16).

As a word of warning, however, Paul said, "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed" (16:22). Chrysostom's comment on this is: "By this one word he strikes fear into all: those who made their members the members of a harlot; those who put stumbling blocks in the way of their brethren by the things offered in sacrifice unto idols; those who refuse to believe the resurrection. And he not only strikes fear, but also points out the way of virtue and the fountain of vice. Namely, when our love towards Him has become intense, there is no kind of sin that is not extinguished and cast out thereby; so when it is too weak it causes all kinds of sin to spring up" (Ibid.).

Thus we are God's messengers and we receive God's messengers. God's messengers are there for our benefit and we need to receive them as such. They will refresh our spirit and we need to acknowledge them (16:18). By doing so, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to be with us.