

The Gospel of John comes to an end in chapter 20, with the profession of Thomas' faith *My Lord and my God*, and the remark that what has been written is only a selection of all that Jesus said and did, made for the founding of our faith.

Then (in our New Testaments) there appears chapter 21, written in a different hand, and quite clearly tacked on to the end of the original book.

The end of the Gospel proper took place on the first Sunday after Easter in the upper room, that is, in Jerusalem. Suddenly chapter 21 is back in Galilee, and Simon Peter announces his intention to go fishing as if nothing had (yet) happened. Fishing apostles in the Gospel tradition belong *before* the Lord calls them, and this commercial fishing expedition after Easter is therefore entirely unique.

It also contains the story of the miraculous draught of fishes, which only appears elsewhere in Luke's Gospel, where it is the real reason for Simon Peter's agreement to follow Jesus. He leaves behind all things in Luke, including a sinking boat, some tearing nets, and more fish than he had ever seen in one place before. It is also worth noting that the last words of Jesus to Peter in chapter 21 will be *Follow Me*.

What is happening? Has someone got the whole Gospel out of order? Was it all written on separate pieces of paper, which someone accidentally shuffled?

I think the explanation may lie in the exchange at the Last Supper, where Jesus told the disciples: *Where I am going you cannot come*. Peter asks *Where are you going?* And is personally told: *You cannot follow me now. You will follow me later*. This places the theme of discipleship, and the call to follow Christ, *not* at the start of the story, but after the Resurrection. We remember that when the story begins in John, it is the disciples who seek Jesus, not Jesus who seeks disciples. Only when the teaching is over, and the hour has come, does Jesus say: *You have not chosen me. I have chosen you, and commissioned you to bear fruit, fruit that will last*. Peter's journey to the point of the Passion has been an apprenticeship, not a fully-formed following. His behaviour during the Passion will display the weakness of his understanding: *Now you do not understand what I am doing to you. Later you will understand*. Perhaps we should also recall that the Holy Spirit is not available to the disciples *until the Lord is risen from the dead*. When the blood and water pour from the pierced body, when Jesus *yields up the Spirit* - then is the time for grace to enter the world and for disciples to be sent as apostles. Until then, they can have no idea what they are proclaiming.

So this story fits perfectly into the theme we have followed in these days of the Easter Octave, days which the Church ranks alongside Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension and Pentecost. We have reached the moment where our lives can be transformed by the power of the resurrection, and we ourselves can rise with the Lord out of the dark world of the past, into the blessed life of eternity. This is what Peter is called to, and so are we.