



The Holy See

JUBILEE OF THE ARMED FORCES, POLICE AND SECURITY PERSONNEL

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

Saint Peter's Square

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 9 February 2025

[Multimedia]

Jesus' actions at the Lake of Gennesaret are described by the Evangelist with three verbs: *he saw, he went aboard* and *he sat down*. Jesus saw, Jesus went aboard and Jesus sat down. Jesus is not concerned with showing off to the crowds, with doing a job, with following a timetable in carrying out his mission. On the contrary, he always makes it his priority to encounter others, to relate to them, and to sympathize with the struggles and setbacks that often burden hearts and take away hope.

That is why Jesus, on that day, *saw, went aboard* and *sat down*.

First, *Jesus saw*. He has a discerning gaze that, even amid the great crowd, makes him able to spot two boats approaching the shore and to see the disappointment on the faces of those fishermen, now washing their empty nets after a night of fruitless labour. Jesus looks with compassion at those men. Let us never forget this: the compassion of God. God's three attitudes are closeness, compassion and tenderness. Let us not forget: God is near, God is tender and God is always compassionate. Jesus looks with compassion at the expressions of those men, sensing their discouragement and frustration after having worked all night and caught nothing, their hearts as empty as the nets they haul.

Excuse me, I will now ask the Master [of Liturgical Celebrations] to continue reading due to my

difficulty in breathing.

Seeing their discouragement, *Jesus went aboard*. He asks Simon to put out a little way from the shore and he climbs aboard the boat. In this way, he enters into Simon's life and shares in his sense of disappointment and futility. This is significant: Jesus does not simply stand by and watch as things go wrong, as we often do, and then complain bitterly. Rather, taking the initiative, he approaches Simon, spends time with him at that difficult moment and chooses to board the boat of his life, which that night had seemed fraught with failure.

Then, once aboard, *Jesus sat down*. In the Gospels, this is typical of a master, of one who teaches others. Indeed, the Gospel states that Jesus sat down and taught. Glimpsing in those fishers' eyes and hearts the frustration of a night of fruitless toil, Jesus boards the boat in order to proclaim the good news, to bring light to the dark night of disappointment, to tell of the beauty of God even amid the struggles of life, and to reaffirm that hope endures even when all seems lost.

Then the miracle happens: when the Lord gets into the boat of our lives to bring us the good news of God's love that constantly accompanies and sustains us, then life begins anew, hope is reborn, enthusiasm revives, and we can once again cast our nets into the sea.

Brothers and sisters, this message of hope accompanies us today as we celebrate the Jubilee of the Armed Forces, Police and Security Personnel. I thank all of you for your service, and I greet all the Authorities present, the military associations and academies, and the military Ordinaries and chaplains. All of you have been entrusted with a lofty mission that embraces numerous aspects of social and political life: defending our nations, maintaining security, upholding legality and justice. You are present in penitentiaries and at the forefront of the fight against crime and the various forms of violence that threaten to disrupt the life of society. I think too of all those engaged in relief work in the wake of natural disasters, the safeguarding of the environment, rescue efforts at sea, the protection of the vulnerable and the promotion of peace.

The Lord also asks you to do as he does: *to see*, *to go aboard* and *to sit down*. *To see*, because you are called to keep your eyes ever open, alert to threats to the common good, to dangers menacing the lives of your fellow citizens, and to environmental, social and political risks to which we are exposed. *To go aboard*, because your uniforms, the discipline that has shaped you, the courage that is your hallmark, the oath you have taken — all these are things that remind you of the importance not only of seeing evil in order to report it, but also of boarding the storm-tossed boat and working to ensure that it does not run aground. For that too is part of your mission in the service of the good, freedom, and justice. Then, finally, *to sit down*, because your presence in our cities and neighbourhoods to uphold law and order, and your taking the part of the defenceless, can serve as a lesson for all of us. They teach us that goodness can prevail over everything. They teach us that justice, fairness and civic responsibility remain as necessary nowadays as ever. They teach us that we can create a more human, just and fraternal world, despite the opposing

forces of evil.

In carrying out your work, which embraces your whole life, you are accompanied by your chaplains, an important priestly presence in your midst. Their job is not — as has at times unfortunately happened in history — to bless perverse acts of war. No. They are in your midst as the presence of Christ, who desires to walk at your side, to offer you a listening and sympathetic ear, to encourage you to set out ever anew and to support you in your daily service. As a source of moral and spiritual support, they accompany you at every step and help you to carry out your mission in the light of the Gospel and in the pursuit of the common good.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are grateful for what you do, at times at great personal risk. Thank you because by boarding our storm-tossed boats, you offer us protection and encourage us to stay our course. At the same time, I would encourage you never to lose sight of the purpose of your service and all your activity, which is to promote life, to save lives, to be a constant defender of life. And I ask you, please, to be vigilant. Be vigilant against the temptation to cultivate a warlike spirit. Be vigilant not to be taken in by the illusion of power and the roar of arms. Be vigilant lest you be poisoned by propaganda that instils hatred, divides the world into friends to be defended and foes to fight. Instead, be courageous witnesses of the love of God our Father, who wants us all to be brothers and sisters. Together, then, let us set out to be artisans of a new era of peace, justice and fraternity.