



The St Marylebone CE Schools Staff Start of Year Service 8.30am 2nd September 2019

It's a classic reading: the call of the fishermen.

As ever with the Gospels, the writers aren't just narrating events, but weaving threads of meaning, allegory, exposition and observation.

There's lots in this passage for us: about calling – the purpose of our lives; about openness to new adventures; about *people* being what we're all about. But it's that sparkling little phrase 'duc in altum' 'put out into the deep' that I want to chew over this morning.

Literally of course Jesus is speaking about water. Full of fish – a sign of fecundity and promise. But this isn't 1st Century Shipping Forecast - that phrase 'put out into the deep' has fired Christian imaginations ever since.

It may be that we are new staff or are embarking upon new responsibilities, or new working patterns, or juggling new things at home whilst keeping school life going this year. Whatever it is, exciting or daunting, there is something of 'put[ting] out into the deep'.

It may be that we begin this new year in very familiar territory. Perhaps comforting, perhaps slightly fatigued, or whatever. Ss Peter, James and John knew every inch of those waters. They had grown up in them and never left. Every movement of the water, every inch of shore line and change of weather. And Jesus, as is so often the case if we let Him, transforms their experience

and reveals something new and disturbing and engaging. They knew there was nothing to be found in that patch of water. But, there it was: abundant life. They just had to look afresh, to see with Jesus' perspective.

Put out into the deep. Courage in taking the plunge and trusting in God. To allow God to help us see familiar territory, people, tasks, afresh and find new and deep life in them and Him.

And that's where I want to draw this together. To say that as a community we are being invited into something very deep. Being a gloriously technicolour Christian Community as we are means (amongst other things) that we can never just be *place*, or even a group of people that *do something*. But that right at the core of our DNA, being lived out year by year, day by day, period by period is the deep vocation of becoming more human. Our students, us as teaching and non-teaching staff, visitors and passers-through are all becoming more *alive*. At the heart of the Christian tradition is the understanding that a Christian Community is only truly being such if it is where people are becoming more *human*, more *alive* – I am becoming more 'me' and you more the 'real you'. 'Put out into the deep'.

St Irenaeus wrote in the 2nd century that 'the glory of God is a human being fully alive... and to be fully alive is to see God'. The Christian conviction that Jesus is the face of God revealed, is inseparable from the conviction that He is the fullness of our humanity revealed too. As a Community, we seek God by being as human as possible, and a place where the fullness of life in all its various forms is being discovered in abundance – enough to break the nets. 'The glory of God is a human being fully alive and to be fully alive is to see God'. Put out into the deep, that is who we are.