

Easter III

¹ *Jesus said to them: Bring some of the fish that you have just caught. So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn.*

The net was not torn and years later Saint John thought that simple fact was noteworthy. We might ask why ? As he neared the end of his long life he must have spent many hours reflecting and pondering on all that happened in those last days of Jesus' time on earth. And perhaps for Saint John the phrase *the net was not torn* echoed back to his memories of the horror of Calvary.

He had stood with Our Lady, watching the soldiers dividing up Jesus' clothing, until they came to his seamless tunic ²*woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another: Let us not tear it.* Now Saint John was a man of prayer, a theologian, a poet and in that simple exchange perhaps he saw a great truth.

The tunic was not torn, and that memory has passed down the centuries to give us an icon of the unity for which Jesus prayed. The net, too, with its large catch of fish, is an icon of that unity, of Christ's Church, rich in its diversity and yet

¹ John 21.10-11

² John 19.23-24

still struggling, two thousand years later, towards communion with one another: towards fellowship in Christ.

If Easter had not been late this year, we would have celebrated last month the memoria of Blessed Gabriella, who offered her life for Christian Unity. In her last days in the Infirmary at Grottaferrata she read and re-read chapter 17 of John's Gospel, so often in fact that the pages of her little gospel book are marked with the sweat of the fever with which she was being consumed.

Jesus had prayed for his disciples: ³ *Holy Father keep them in your name, those you have given to me, that they may be one, even as we are one.* He prayed that neither tunic nor net may be torn, that the Church on earth may reflect the splendour of the unity of the Blessed Trinity.

And how do we unite ourselves with Jesus' prayer? How do we incarnate this ⁴*unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*, a unity that makes every human being our brother, our sister? How? By our fidelity to Him, our fidelity to what He asks of us in our daily monastic living: in prayer, lectio divina and in the common life. So that we might say with Saint Paul: ⁵ *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

³ John 17.11

⁴ Ephesians 4.3

⁵ Galatians 2.20

May we not tear the net, nor rip the tunic, but rather ⁶*wrap ourselves in Him*, stay close to Him, abiding, in the unity of the Spirit: like Saint John, recognising the divine invitation in the simplicity of our daily lives, an invitation to enter ever more deeply into life in Christ. Alleluia.

⁶ Gilbert of Hoyland: Song of Songs
Sermon 14