

*“Master, we have worked hard all night & have caught nothing, **but**, at your command, I will lower the nets.”*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, several decades ago, a mother in Nashville, TN gave birth, prematurely, to a tiny, baby girl. Shortly afterward, the baby caught pneumonia. Next, the poor thing caught scarlet fever. Finally, she contracted polio. She survived it all, but the polio left her one leg badly crippled and her foot twisted inward.

*When the little girl reached the age of **five**, she hobbled about on metal braces while the other kids ran and skipped rope.*

*When she reached the age of **eleven**, the handicapped girl (should I say, ‘physically challenged-?’) would have her little sister ‘stand watch’ at the bedroom door, while she practiced walking without the braces. She didn’t want her parents to catch her without the braces on.*

*For a whole **year**, she continued her secret walks—the little sister her cohort in crime. At some point, she began to feel guilty, sneaking around like this, making her sister a co-conspirator. So, she told her doctor what she had been doing. He was flabbergasted. However, he allowed her to continue, but only for ‘short periods of time.’*

Well, as you might imagine, the girl’s notion of a ‘short-period of time’ was quite different from what the doctor’s was. Interestingly though, to her periods of walking without the braces, the girl added periods of prayer.

At any rate, to make a long story short, that girl, eventually, threw away her braces... forever!

*I share that true story with you because it fits beautifully with today’s Gospel, which I/deacon just read to you from St. Luke. It illustrates the point that **perseverance, or persistence, is one of the greatest powers in the world.***

*Look, Peter and his friends had fished all night—they had been ‘hard at it,’ without success. Had it not been for Jesus’ words to them, that’s the way their labor would have finished...useless. **BUT**, Jesus persuaded them to try ...one-more-time. They did ...and we all know what happened. That extra ‘try’ made all the difference between success and failure.*

Now, the story of Peter and his friends illustrates another point. It is this: Jesus became involved in the process ...and that’s when things began to change.

*The previous castings of the net—perhaps 30 or 40 times in the course of the night—were done on their own. **BUT**, in the final casting, Jesus was involved. And that’s when everything changed!*

Keeping that thought in mind, I now return your thoughts, please, to that little, premature girl born in Nashville, TN.

What ever happened to her, you ask?

I am glad you asked that question!

*The girl began to, not only walk without the braces, **BUT** ...even to run. And she ran, and she ran, and she ran.*

At age **sixteen**, this incredible girl won the Bronze Medal in the women's 400-meter relay for the U. S. in the 1956 Olympics, held that year in Melbourne, Australia.

Four years later, in the 1960 Olympics at Rome, she became the first woman in history to win three Gold Medals in track and field. That girl was none other than ...Wilma Rudolph!

Wilma came home to a ticker-tape parade and a private audience with President Kennedy. She was given the Sullivan Award, naming her the nation's top amateur athlete.

Wilma is a living example of the power of perseverance ...a tribute to the power and potential of the human spirit. Her life dramatizes that no handicap, no physical challenge —no matter how great—is a match for perseverance and prayer.

Put those two things together, and the result can exceed our wildest dream, just as it did for Peter and the boys that day on the lake of which we read in today's Gospel. Other fantastic things would happen with water and Jesus, too. We'll save that for another time.

Today's gospel invites us to do two things:

1st it invites us to do what Peter and his friends did ...to persevere in our efforts in life. After recasting the net 30 or 40 times, Peter could have given up on catching anything. **BUT**, he didn't give up. He recast the net one final time, and that spelled the difference.

2nd today's Gospel invites us to involve Jesus in our efforts in life. It was only when Jesus entered the picture that Peter and his friends succeeded. They not only succeeded. They succeeded beyond their wildest dreams.

It was just the same for Wilma Rudolph.

It can be the same for every person in this room and within the sound of my voice!

I will now close with a prayer authored by, perhaps, the model of perseverance and prayer, St. Ignatius of Loyola. You should be getting familiar with his wonderful 'Prayer for Generosity.'

**“Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not count the cost;
to fight and not heed the wounds;
to toil and not seek to rest;
to labor and not ask for reward...
except to know
...that I am doing your will.”**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.