

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
 Trinity V
 July 20, 2025
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...nevertheless, at Thy word
 I will let down the net.

You've heard me say that the Trinity Season is a Summer Survey
 of Essential Christian Doctrine.

A time for us to wander through Christian Thought
 For the improvement of our minds and souls.
 We celebrated and considered Saint Peter three weeks ago.
 We return to Peter today, and in fact
 The Propers for today give us a double dose of Peter
 His writings and the story of his calling.

We live in a world of tension.

Tension between faith and science
 Belief and doubt
 Stalwart Christian doctrine and scathing atheism.
 However, it is nothing new,
 Perhaps fueled at the dawn of the age of enlightenment
 A time since the 17th century
 When brilliant men, we would later call "scientists",
 Began to inquire into long held Christian beliefs.
 Devout men, who had inquiring minds.
 Who were trying to learn the natural order of the universe.
 To try to figure out how God did it all.

As time went on, they developed empirical data
 Facts that they saw with their own eyes
 Undeniable truths
 Which contradicted some of the literal scripture of the Bible
 Especially the accounts of creation.

They came away with the conclusion that Holy Scripture
 Was incorrect.
 That the Bible could not be a trusted document.
 Some lost their faith.
 Some lambasted the church and Christianity.
 They asserted that there was but one pathway to truth:
 Science.
 Sound familiar?

However, almost a thousand years before,
 Beginning with St Augustine of Hippo
 And continuing through St Thomas Aquinas
 And on to the present day,
 The matter was clear.

Reason must always inform our faith.
 Put another way:
 Holy Scripture must be understood in accord with reason.

Anglicanism, from its inception
 Adopted the metaphor of the three legged stool
 In which the legs are
 Holy Scripture, the inspired word of God,
 Sacred Tradition:
 the wisdom and practices of the church
 throughout history, and
 Reason, a gift of God to humanity.

The three legs are dynamic and interact with each other
 To produce a balance of understanding and faith.

So, for example as Augustine concluded 1200 years before the
 Dawn of the scientists,
 The objective and empirical facts of creation did not clash
 With Holy Scripture.

Rather, he wrote, the First Creation Account of Genesis
 Must be a symbolic cosmogony
 Rather than a scientific description.
 Holy scripture was certainly not demonstrably false.
 Mankind was still learning how to understand it.
 Reason must inform our faith.
 Holy Scripture and sacred tradition
 Examined in the light of reason
 Informs our faith.
 The three legged stool, Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition
 And reason
 Has shaped Anglican theology and practice.

In our time, the tension between faith and doctrine
 And the enfolding discoveries of science
 And objective data
 Is played out almost daily
 As secularists tout science as the sole means
 By which to discern truth.

St Luke's account of Peter's selection as one of the 12 Apostles
 Gives us guidance in the resolution of that tension;
 The tension between faith and rationality.
 You see it in play in this scene at the Sea of Galilee.

Peter and the others had finished a toilsome night of fishing;
 A night that was frustrated by the fact that all their work
 Was for nothing.
 They often fished at night,
 rowing their heavy boat
 Casting, pulling in and re-casting the water soaked nets.
 They had worked themselves to the bone but caught no fish.
 They were exhausted.

We can picture Peter, bronzed by the sun
His hands gnarled by the calluses burned into them
By the ropes, the nets, the oars of his trade.

It is hot under the Galilean Sun
Peter smells of the fish that are his trade
His sweat soaked clothes stick to him.

But after a full night's work he is only almost done
he must still care for the nets that catch the fish
They must be mended and hung to dry
for another night's work.

Just as they are finishing their toil
This itinerant preacher asks to use their boat
As a platform from which to preach,
Because the crowds have pressed Him to the shallow water at
the shore.

Peter relents and lets Jesus use his boat

When Jesus has finished His sermon,
He suggests they let down their nets one more time.
A reward?
Or a demonstration?

Peter reacts and almost snaps at our Lord,
Calling Him Master,
Peter says, look here,
We have been out all night long
And caught nothing.
Leave it to us who know our trade.
There are no fish to bring in.

Peter is rational, if just a bit irritable,
on edge.

Maybe perturbed by the suggestion.
In his mind, he knows his trade
He knows to a certainty that if the fish had risen
 He would have caught them.
Everything he knows factually, objectively and intellectually
 Tells him: there are no fish.
He and the others are exhausted.
The last thing he wants to do is to reload the heavy nets
Cast them into the sea, especially near the shore
 Where the fish never gather.
And have to repeat the work that he knows will
Yield nothing.
To prove to this unusual man
 That there are no fish.

But herein lies the struggle, the tension.
There is something about this priest.
Something his mind cannot fully grasp.
Something nagging in his heart.
 A seed of faith was kindled and begins to glow.

Peter pauses.
 He ponders it.
Everything he knew was true, was clear and right before him.
So why was he doubting it?

He struggled with the tension between mind and heart
 Between rational thought
 And growing faith.

The same struggle that we all encounter at times in our lives.
We can't deny the logic of facts and rational thought
But neither can we deny the faith that disputes it.

Peter drags the heavy nets to the boat again
He shoves off
And casts them as Jesus has suggested
And there is this miraculous draft of fish
So great that it threatens to break his equipment
Swamp his boat.
He shouts to John and James to help bring in the catch.
It fills both boats to overflowing.

Peter's faith is redeemed.
And the ember flames to life;
a raging fire.
He forsakes all
The miraculous catch,
The boats, the nets, everything
And fatefully follows Jesus for three years
to a martyr's death.
He becomes a fisher of men, just as Jesus had proclaimed.

The lesson for us is this:
There will be times on our journey to God
When we will face the contest between mind and heart
Between the world as our eyes see it
And the world as we see it through faith

In those times remember Peter
and his first encounter with our Lord.
Recall his choice
And the consequence of it.

And so as we leave this little miracle church building this morning
With the written wisdom and the example of Peter.

In the sorting out of the tensions playing upon our lives these days:
Examine and understand the data,
The challenge
But apply to it the discipline of that three legged stool.
You know Holy Scripture
You know Sacred Tradition
And apply your God given talent of reason
To the challenge.

And like Peter
Fall at the feet of Our Lord

And nevertheless
at His word,
let down the net.