

# SHORT TALK

## LENT 2024

Good morning/evening everyone and thank you [priest's name] for giving me this opportunity to speak for CAFOD, our Catholic Agency for Overseas Development.

Can you remember the first question Jesus asked his disciples when he appeared on the beach after the resurrection? [Pause] Jesus calls to them: "Do you have any fish?" "No", the disciples answered from their boat.

Jesus helps them make a huge catch and John shouts, 'It is the Lord!' John recognises who Jesus is by this act of loving care, just as Peter did when Jesus saved him from drowning and calmed the storm.

In Liberia, staying safe at sea and making a catch is still a challenge today.

James lives in a poor coastal suburb of Monrovia, Liberia. James told us that when his family had no food, he faced a terrible choice: stay home and stay hungry or put everything on the line to go out onto the water in his small canoe. Five fishermen a month – many he called 'brothers' – were dying in storms at sea. Just like him, they couldn't afford the life jackets, compasses, and other equipment they needed to stay safe at sea and get a good catch.

When he came back home 16 hours later, aching, exhausted, hungry, he would often be empty handed.

Even for a skilled fisherman like James, making that journey to sea and back alive without the right tools or safety equipment was difficult enough; getting a catch was almost impossible.

James' wife Cynthia told us: "Sometimes there wasn't any food at all to eat. Sometimes we hoped that if there was no food in the morning, we would get food in the evening to eat. But when the evening comes, there is no food. My son was five at the time."

It is thanks to support from parishes like ours that James now has the equipment he needs to fish safely and sustainably – a compass, life jacket and a GPS tracking system – to find good fishing spots and return home safely. He also has a way of storing fish he catches, so he brings more to shore for Cynthia – his wife and business partner – to sell.

**[Insert gospel reflection paragraph here]**

*Family Fast Day* is on Friday 23 February. Please join in by eating simply and giving what you can. Collect a CAFOD envelope to Gift Aid your donation or give online. If you can set up a monthly gift, you'll help more hardworking people like James to return home safely and feed their families for good.

Thank you for your support this *Family Fast Day*. Thank you for listening, for your generosity and your prayers.

## **GOSPEL REFLECTIONS**

### **For use on the First Sunday of Lent – Mark 1:12-15**

In today's gospel reading, Jesus goes out into the wilderness for 40 days. Like the fishermen out at sea, he knows what it is like to be alone in dangerous conditions, to be hungry and maybe even afraid. But he is never abandoned. We hear that the angels looked after him. Let us then, not abandon our sisters and brothers when they are in need of help, and stand alongside them as they work to feed their families.

### **For use on the Second Sunday of Lent – Mark 9:2-10**

In today's gospel reading, Jesus goes to the mountain with Peter, James and John, and a wonderful change comes over him. The disciples are able to see him in all his glory as the Son of God. When we face struggles, it can be difficult to see clearly what our next step should be, at sea it can be difficult to navigate and find fish to catch. Let our eyes be opened today then, to the glory of God and the reality of life that so many people face. And let us "listen to him", loving our neighbours and supporting them wherever they are in the world.

*See overleaf for Short Talk >*