

# Going fishing

All our 7-year-old ever wants to do is go fishing.

He talks about what kind of bait we should use, how he wants to cast his line, how much he loves his rod, and which ponds and streams he wants to try next.

Even though he has never actually caught a fish, the anticipation and excitement of what could happen keeps him going back for more.

And our family finds we are all carried up in the excitement. I stand near him on the shore, sweating or shivering depending on the day, hoping he'll catch something - while worrying about what I'll do if he does. Do I want to help him take a wriggling, wet fish off the line? Not really. He will be so happy, though, that I'm rooting for him to catch that fish.

Fishing is not an activity I would ever have discovered without our little boy. He has such a desire to connect with nature, a fascination with the equipment, and an enthusiasm for the sport that pulls me in. It draws in everyone.

One day as he is standing in Walmart, holding a fishing rod and peering closely at the lures and bait that come with it, a woman who is about his grandparents' age stops to chat.

"Are you going fishing?" she asks. He launches into a long and detailed explanation of where he plans to fish, what he hopes to catch, and how he will bring it in. She listens, smiling, paying attention to every detail. She doesn't seem to know anything about fishing herself, but she asks questions and nods and says, "Won't that be fun?" at all the right moments.

When he's finished, she is still smiling. She says, "Good luck!" and walks away to finish her shopping.

I can tell that, like me, she's only taking an interest in fishing because this child is excited about it. Watching his eyes light up with wonder and listening to him speak with joy and hope about what he will encounter on his next fishing trip is an

experience in and of itself.

Just as our son has reeled in his family and friends, he also reels in complete strangers. He's so passionate about fishing we have no choice but to follow along – and join in ourselves.

I find myself thinking of how Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew says to Peter and Andrew, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." They leave their nets and follow him. So do James and his brother, John. So do the other Apostles and then disciple after disciple for generations to come.

So do you and I.

But what do I do to inspire others to become fishers of men? Do I ever convey that joy, that excitement, in being a follower of Christ that someone would stop to ask me about Jesus?

Watching how our son gets people around him caught up in the anticipation of all a fishing trip can offer, I think of how every Christian could exude the joy and excitement surrounding Jesus' love for each of us. Even without a rush of wind or being able to speak in tongues, we are filled with the Holy Spirit – and ready to carry the message of the Gospel forward to others. That might be in words, but it might be in other ways.

"Live in such a way that those who know you but don't know God will come to know God because they know you," said St. Thomas Aquinas.

We're going to fail, time and again. But we can still cast our line with optimism and enthusiasm. We can bring our message to different ponds and streams, offer it in sunshine and rain. Some days maybe we'll feel the Holy Spirit truly working through us and know we are the fishers of men Jesus calls us to be.

One day maybe we will look back and realize we played a role in helping draw someone closer to Jesus, just as one day my little fisherman is going to reel in his first catch – and the memory of a lifetime.