“Put out a little from the shore,” he said to the six men as they climbed aboard the boat on the edge of the sea. Two were brothers, and another too. One worked the money post. All were disciples of this man Jesus. Sitting on the bow he watched them untie the lines, push the boat out, scramble to put up the sails to catch the puffs of air that would blow them from the crowds on the shore into the solitude of the ever-mysterious, deepening waters of the sea. He watched more than simply the movement of their arching backs and the stretching of muscled arms and weather-worn hands. He watched the movement of their hearts.

Jesus watched the boat and the men move further from the shore and the noise of the crowd. He watched the conversation quieting down and the solitude of the sea lolling the six men back and forth in the hypnotizing roll of the waves. All the time he is watching the movement of their hearts below.

Jesus knows each of them by name – Martin, Joseph, Michael, Gordon, Stephen, and Pierre, like other disciples before them – Peter, Andrew, Philip, James, John, and Bartholomew. Whether it be the Lake of Gennesaret in the spring of 33, or the shoals of Nantucket Sound in the summer of 2003, the Master waits and watches both the lives and hearts, both the outer and inner movements, of those who are his disciples.

When, I wonder, will the moment come when their eyes meet his, and in the whisper of the heart each will hear in his own particular and personal moment of solitude, “Put out into deep water and lower the nets for a catch”? I too sit on the bow of the boat and watch with Jesus these friends of mine on this Sunday morning on Cape Cod in Massachusetts.

Two of the six disciples have left behind – for the little while – the care of a disabled son and daughter.

Brian is just turning nine in chronological years, but is endlessly turning numbers and days and objects and ideas in the obsessive cycle of the autistic child’s mind. His father is turning his head now into the wind and surveying the contours of the growing distant shore. Perhaps he is also, and always, surveying the stretch of a distant future for his son, and the resources he needs to provide after he and wife have gone.

Jesus is watching this man closely and parting his lips – and somewhere deep in his being the disciple turns, slightly disturbed by something he knows not what – “Is that the wind, or did I hear the whisper of a voice in my heart: ‘Do not be afraid’?”

Another one of the disciples has a daughter, Michaela, who also is close to nine years old, far beyond the expectant age of survival from a rare congenital disease that robs the innocent young of this earthly life. The disciple and his wife back on the shore already have walked through the agony in the garden as they handed back young Michaela’s older brother Kevin, who suffered the same disease, into the arms of a God they hold in trust with expectant hearts of faith.

And this disciple now jumps up, takes off his shirt, and to the taunts and tease of playful laughter dives into the deep water, surfacing with a hold on the rope as the boat carries him through the cleansing and refreshing waters of this immense sea. Perhaps he is also, and always, holding on to a faith, to a Church, that will pull him through a time of handing back a part of his heart with a daughter he loves so well.

Is that the wind, or did I hear the whisper of a voice in my heart: “Do not be afraid”?
Luke 5 is a story that will push us to go out further and deeper from what is crowding our lives.