322 Net (*Rethe*)

Christ wishing to show the mystical sense of nets said, Luke 5[:4]: “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.” The waters are the people, the sea is the world, the ship is the Church, the deep is the heavens, the apostles are of the power of one, that is, Peter is called the leader in the deep. But more often it is said, Let down, let down, that is, preach. And just as the sea is always bitter and turbulent, so in the world. There is no peace, security, or quiet, but fear, labor, or sorrow. For according to [1] John [5:19]: “The world is seated in wickedness.” And laughter is mixed with sorrow whereas in the sea the greater ones devour the lesser ones, Psal. [13:4]: “Who devour my people as they eat bread.” And in Eccli. [13:23]: “The wild ass is the lion's prey in the desert: so also, the poor are devoured by the rich.” And the poet,[[1]](#endnote-1) Whatever folly the kings commit, the Achaeans pay the penalty.

¶ Again, just as a net is woven with many and various threads and strings and nodes, so a sermon is woven from diverse authorities, reasons, examples, figures, similitudes, and senses. It proceeds now simply, now subtly, now about pains, now about rewards, now about vices, now about virtues, it speaks so that now that may be true, singular, and the place selected properly. Wherefore Bede says in his *Homilia*,[[2]](#endnote-2) what else are nets if not certain complex sayings of sermons, because of this they are called nets as if a recollection. For just as fish in the sea are captured by a net, so men in the world by a sermon. Wherefore Ezech. 32[:3]: “I will spread out my net with the multitude of many people, and I will draw you up in my net.” But it is to be noted here what the Philosopher says, book 4, *De animalibus*, c. 10,[[3]](#endnote-3) that when a net is new and not smelling, fish freely enter when they do not flee, so it is concerning the preacher when he is of good fame or evil. Wherefore Luke 5[:2]: “The fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets.” Because it is necessary that preachers for the acquaintance of his listeners, humiliate themselves, and wash from their sins, and then capture men for salvation, Matt. 4[:19]: “Come after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men.” But it is read concerning Nero that he did not wish to fish except with golden nets and purple lines, so many today preach unless with curiosities. And however perhaps thus they catch fish as well with a common net as a golden net. In figure that prelates in the Church ought to have nets, that is, the word of God. The pillars which Solomon made in the temple had capitals in the manner of nets, 3 Kings 7[:17].

Concerning nets in evil, see below chapter [359] Temptation (*Temptacio*).

Note also that nets capture three kinds of living things, namely, fish but in the water, birds but in the air, beasts but on the earth. So, the voluptuous are recalled by preaching to continence, the proud to humility, and the violent to meekness.

1. Cf. Horace, *Epistles* 1.2.14 (LCL 194: 262-263): quidquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.

   Whatever folly the kings commit, the Achaeans pay the penalty. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bede, *Homilia* 5: In Dominica Quinta post Trinitatem (PL 94:278): Quasi enim quaedam retia piscantium sunt complexae praedicantium dictiones, quae eos quos ceperint in fide non amittant: unde et retia quasi [H]retinentia sunt vocata. Sed haec retia modo laxantur in capturam, modo lota plicantur, quia non omne tempus est habile doctrinae, sed nunc exerenda lingua doctori, nunc suimet cura gerenda. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 8.13 598b13-15 (Barnes 1:936): In the neighbourhood of Byzantium, the fishermen are particularly careful to cleanse their nets, as the circumstance is so singular and exceptional. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)