

Thought for the Day – Thursday 4th March 2021

By Revd John Marshall

Song of the Fisherman by Wu Li

On Sunday (7.2.2021) I listened to the morning service on Radio 4, it was a wonderful service, thinking of the Chinese New Year from the Chinese Church in this country. There was an emphasis on hospitality.

Wu Li was a poet and painter, he converted to Christianity and became a Jesuit priest in 1688. His effort to express his new faith poetically has earned him praise as the first Chinese to find a poetic vehicle for Christian doctrine. This poem the song of the Fisherman is translated from the Chinese by Jonathan Chavez, from Divine inspiration – the Life of Jesus, in World Poetry Oxford.

It is based on Matthew 4 !8-21

Song of the Fisherman Wu Li

From patching rips in tattered nets

his eyes have gotten blurred;

he scours the river, does not disdain

the tiniest fish and shrimp

selecting the freshest, he has supplied

the feast of sovereigns;

all four limbs exhausted now,

does he refuse the work?

Spreading nets he gets confused

by water just like sky;

Song lingering, still drunk, approaches
dragons as they sleep.

Now hair and whiskers are all white
His face has aged with time;

He's startled by the wind and waves
and fears an early autumn.

Some friends of his have changed their job;
they are now fishers of men;

he hears, compared to fishing fish,
this task is tougher still.

Of late he finds the Heavenly Learning
Has come into the city:

to customers now happily add families that fast.

Wu Li Song of the Fisherman

The fishermen showed hospitality to Jesus, may we be hospitable too.