

PETER'S CLOAK

Back in his fishing boat, back with his nets,
Peter, the boaster-denier, forgets. . .
Or tries, as he fishes for catches that fail
Like canvas that droops after wind leaves a sail.

But stripped of his cloak and entirely bare
To labor in sunshine and warm morning air,
With naked skin wet by occasional spray,
He feels readjusted to fishing today.

Those three years with Jesus are almost a dream:
The trials, the teachings, the traveling team,
The healings, the miracles, all of the signs,
Seem distant, as once more they pull in the lines.

Again, there is nothing, no fish in the net,
The same as all night, since the evening sun set.
But then from a stranger on shore comes a cry,
“Throw out on the right!” So they give it a try.

The fish that are caught are too much for their boats.
“It must be the Lord,” is what one of them notes.
Those words jostle Peter, reminding him when
Christ promised to make him a “fisher of men.”

He stares at his friends with their tawny bare skin,
And then at the catch which they try to haul in.
No shame to work nude with a net in your hand,
But preachers must dress to catch people on land.

So Peter jumps into the water with haste,
But not without tying his cloak round his waist.
He swims to his Master who stood on the shore,
And rarely goes fishing for fish anymore.

— *David L. Hatton, 12/3/2008*