

## THEME 9

### The fisherman and his wife

#### (Part 1)

(Audio CD Track 11)

There was once a poor fisherman who lived with his wife in a miserable hovel on a grassy cliff besides the sea. Each day he went out fishing on the wild rocky shores near his home. One day he caught a large flounder. Then the flounder said to him, "Hark, you fisherman, I pray you, let me live, for I am an enchanted prince. I will not be good to eat, please let me go."

The fisherman happily agreed, for he was amazed to hear a talking fish. Then he returned to his hovel and told his wife about the flounder.

"Did you not wish for anything before you let him go?" said the woman.

"No," said the man, "what should I wish for?"

"Ah," said the woman, "it is so hard to live in this hovel – it is so cold, and the roof leaks. Go back and tell him we want a small cottage."

The man did not like to disagree with his wife.

So he went back to the sea and called, "Flounder, flounder in the sea,

I would not ask, but my wife sent me."

The flounder came swimming up, and said,

"What does she want?"

When the man explained, the flounder said

"Go, home. She is in her cottage already."

When the man went home, his wife was sitting on a bench before a pretty little cottage. Excitedly she showed him the cosy parlour, bedroom and kitchen; the comfortable furniture; the garden with fruit and vegetables and ducks and chickens.

"Is it not lovely?" she cried.

"Yes," said the husband, "now we will live quite contented."

"We'll see," said his wife.

### The fisherman and his wife

#### (Part 2)

(Audio CD Track 12)

But after a week or two, the woman sighed. "This cottage is so small. I should like to live in a great stone castle; go to the flounder, and tell him to give us a castle."

The fisherman did not want to go, but his wife nagged so much that at last he went back. When he came to the sea, it was dark blue, with white horses on the waves.

He called, "Flounder, flounder in the sea, I would not ask, but my wife sent me."

"Well, what does she want?" asked the flounder.

The man explained, and the flounder said, "Go home, she has her castle."

When the man came home, he found a great stone castle. His wife happily showed him the great halls paved with marble and hung with tapestries, the grand furniture, the many servants, and the beautiful horses and cows in the stables.

"Isn't this beautiful?" she cried.

"Indeed," said the man, "now let us be content."

But the very next morning, the wife woke, and looked out of the high window at the countryside lying before her. She woke her husband and said, "I want to rule over all this land. Go and tell the flounder to make me the king."

The fisherman did not want to do this at all, but his wife shouted until he agreed to go. When he came to the sea, it was quite dark-grey, and the water heaved up from below. He stood by it, and said, "Flounder, flounder in the sea,

I would not ask, but my wife sent me."

"Well, what does she want, then?" said the flounder. The man explained, and the flounder said, "Go to her; she is king already."

So the man went and found that the castle was now a magnificent palace, with soldiers guarding the gates. He went in and found his wife sitting on a high throne, wearing a crown of gold, and attended by thirty maids in waiting.

"Now that you are king," he begged her, "let us wish for nothing more."

But of course the woman was not satisfied. The very next day, she demanded to be made the emperor, and then the pope.

The fisherman thought at last his wife could want no more, but that night she tossed and turned, waiting for the sun to rise.

"Why can't I make the sun rise?" she thought. She woke her husband and said, "Go to the flounder, for I want to be God."

The man fell on his knees, and begged her to have sense, but she flew into such a rage, at last he went. Outside was a great storm, the sky was black and the wild waves were as high as mountains. He stood fearfully on the cliff, braced against the wind, and called,

"Flounder, flounder in the sea,

I would not ask, but my wife sent me."

"Well, what does she want, then?" said the flounder, leaping from the water.

"Alas," said he, "she wants to be God."

"Go to her, and you will find her back again in the dirty hovel."

And there they are living to this very day.