

HOMILY SUNDAY 5-C (Homily 02)

“God Is Calling You”

(Is 6:1-2, 3-6; Psalm 138; 1 Co 15:1-11; Lk 5:1-11)

\*\*\*\*\*

Have you discovered your vocation, your calling in life? How have you responded?

One thing is certain: God has called you, or is still calling you, to follow him in a particular vocation.

The word vocation comes from the Latin word, *vocare*, which means “to call”. It makes sense that words like *vocal* and *vocabulary*, would derive from that Latin word.

A vocation is more than a job, or a particular employment by which one makes a living. Regardless of how you are earning your livelihood, God has called you and perhaps is still calling you to a particular vocation.

Traditionally in the Church, we speak of four or even five basic vocations. They are priesthood and religious life, of course, but also marriage, and the single life, or perhaps the consecrated lay state.

In short, every baptized believer and follower of Jesus is called to serve God and the people of God in one or other of these vocations: to be a priest, a brother or a sister; or to be married, or to live an exemplary single life, perhaps as a consecrated lay person.

The readings today are all about the vocational call, first to the prophet Isaiah, then to the apostles. They are also strikingly similar in revealing a certain pattern in God’s call

Let us examine the call to the prophet Isaiah. He first of all has a vision of the grandeur and glory of God. He actually sees the Lord sitting on his throne, the angels attending to him, smoke filling the house and voices shaking the foundations.

The response of Isaiah is immediate repentance and contrition for his sins and the sinfulness of his people. God then sends an angel to extend forgiveness and healing

to Isaiah, to blot out his sins and take away his guilt. Isaiah then responds with a resounding yes to be sent on mission: “Here am I; send me!”

The pattern set by this call to Isaiah is fourfold: first, an overwhelming experience of God’s love; second, a response of repentance; third, the experience of forgiveness and healing and then a sending out on mission.

It is not surprising that the same pattern is present, though in a different way, in the gospel account of the call of the apostles. The difference is that while Isaiah experienced a vision, Peter and the others experienced a real life event, the extraordinary in a very ordinary way.

Their overwhelming experience of God’s love was through their trade as fishermen. Because the people were pressing in on him, Jesus got into Peter’s boat and taught the people from the boat. Then he invited Peter to go fishing again even though they had caught nothing all night. Peter humbly obeys and the miraculous catch fills their two boats to sinking point. The glory of God was manifested through simple teaching and a miraculous catch of fish.

That spoke to Peter the fisherman as nothing else could, and as the vision of God had to spoken to Isaiah. Peter immediately was aware of his human limitations, his mistakes and sins, and cried out to Jesus for mercy and forgiveness.

Jesus responds with forgiveness and healing. As the angel touched the lips of Isaiah with a live coal, so too Jesus touched Peter’s heart and soul and transformed his life with the simple words, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” Peter felt accepted as he was. He was forgiven and healed.

Then like Isaiah, who blurted out, “Here I am; send me,” Peter and the others beached their boats and left everything, even the miraculous catch of fish, to follow Jesus. They became disciples, would soon become apostles and ultimately, our ancestors in faith.

It is still the same today. God is calling each of us to one of these vocations. We simply need to allow ourselves to be aware of God’s unconditional love for us first and foremost. Then like Isaiah and Peter, we need to be aware of and admit our need for God’s forgiveness and healing.

There is a saying, the stronger the sun, the sharper the shadow. So it is with spiritual life: the closer we come to God, the sharper we see our own shadow, our

ungodliness and need for forgiveness and healing, readily available to us especially through the sacrament of reconciliation.

For those in the 12 Step program whose struggle is with addiction in their lives, that would be a genuine working of Steps Four and Five of the program of AA. Step Four is a searching and fearless moral inventory. Step Five invites us to admit to God, to ourselves and to one other person, the exact nature of our wrongs.

How wise the Church has been over the centuries to encourage the faithful to celebrate a face-to-face humble confession of sins at least once a year. I realize there is some resistance to this in some areas that takes the form of a preference for general absolution. Though I can understand this preference as it is so much easier and convenient, it concerns me. I fear that it is also avoiding some important elements of reconciliation which are humble honesty and the experience of being accepted by another person.

Here are two thought provoking quotes from some very wise persons to encourage us to move in the direction of a humble experience of the sacrament of individual confession ideally within a communal celebration of reconciliation.

Fr. Peter van Breeman, in his book *Bread That Is Broken*, has this to say: “Herein lies the psychological root of the sacrament of penance. If we do not verbalize our sin in a conversation with another, and hear the absolution spoken in the name of God, the forgiveness may not reach the heart.”

For his part, Fr. John Monbourquette, in his book *How To Forgive*, quotes Carl Jung: “Those who cannot reveal their conscience to another are destined to spiritual isolation.”

To put forward this vocational call has never been more important than it is today. We not only have a shortage of priests, brothers and sisters in the world. We also have a shortage of marriages, of marriage commitments, of weddings and wedding anniversaries.

There is also a critical shortage of parenting; of couples willing to have children as the normal part of faith life and married life. Our western world is actually on a path of slow suicide – we are not bringing enough children into the world to sustain our population. We have a crisis of monumental proportions on our hands that only a response of radical faith will redress. It is time, and high time that we

take this call of our God more seriously and encourage especially our young people to respond in faith as did Peter and Isaiah.

Scott's experience fits in here. He was a workaholic too busy for his two sons. He always had excuses, and was hard on his sons. A tough disciplinarian, he tried to raise them the way his army father had raised him. One day he lost his job, became unemployed, and was even tougher on the kids. His wife suggested they pray, and she found a part time job. Now he was angry and confused - this wasn't what he had prayed for.

Then the family talked him into coming to LSA ... There, during the blessing of the water, he thought of how his grandmother always had time for him, became aware how he was not like her, and too busy for his boys. He decided to take more time for them.

Then, he heard a homily on the two sides of love (discipline and affection) in which the presider asked the parents when they had last told their children that they loved them. He realized he had never done that, and resolved to do it right there and then, at LSA, in their tent that night during a family meeting. He apologized to his family for his mistakes and asked their forgiveness. His kids were blown away, hugged him and cried. He went away from LSA a changed man, a pilgrim of the heart. He spent the rest of the summer doing things together with his wife and kids and they developed into a close family over the years.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is itself the fruit of a vocation to priesthood, made possible only by the response of a willing heart to God's call to the ministerial priesthood. However, we all participate in this Eucharist by right of our own baptismal priesthood. We all receive the forgiveness and healing of Jesus through it, and are all missioned at the end to go out and live the Eucharist.

So let us resolve today to respond to God's call to us in the same spirit as Isaiah and Peter that we might be willing to be sent as they were, to live out our own particular vocation in the Church.