

Homily of Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

The first reading is about the call of Isaiah, the second reading about the call of Paul and the Gospel about the call Peter.

The first reading narrates Isaiah's vision and encounter with the Lord: Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord and his angels. He acknowledged his sinfulness, "Woe to me ... For I am a man with unclean lips." To sanctify Isaiah, one of the angels took an ember from the altar fire and touched Isaiah's lips saying, "your wickedness is removed, your sin purged." The Lord said, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" Isaiah replied, "Here I am, ... send me."

Like Isaiah, Paul acknowledged his sinfulness. Paul said, "I persecuted the church of God." On Paul's way to Damascus to persecute the Christians, "a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and was blind for three days. When Ananias prayed for him, "Immediately, things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight." Thereafter, he became a chosen instrument of evangelization (Acts 9:1-19).

Peter, like Isaiah and Paul acknowledged his sinfulness. He said, "I am a sinful man." The Gospel narrated Peter's experience: "[Jesus] said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.' Simon said in reply, 'Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.' ... When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, 'Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.' For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.'"

Isaiah, Paul and Peter, by their own judgement were unworthy to answer God's call. God called them despite their unworthiness. Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets. Paul was the greatest evangelist; and Peter, became the head of the Church. God may be calling someone to priesthood, or to the religious life, or serve in any of the ministries of the Church. The person may have all kinds of excuses. Someone can even go to the extent of wanting Jesus to depart, and leave him/her alone. Sometimes, we forget that when God calls, he gives the grace. All we need to do is put out into the deep water with faith and lower the nets for a catch. God does the rest.

God's call is not only to serve in the Church. God calls us to serve him and humanity in various assignments, responsibilities, and professions. We are, also, to accept these calls with faith. God calls us to various areas of life; he wants to make us his chosen instrument; he wants to make us fishers of men and women. All we need to do is to put out into the deep with faith and lower our nets for a catch. God does the rest.

There are several reasons why some people do not respond to God's call. Some people have a phobia feeling of inadequacy. Their feeling and expression are always "I can't." There are people who are afraid of failure. Putting out into the deep is too much a risk. There are people who settle for less or settle for mediocrity. They are unable to put out into the deep because they lack aspiration. They set the bar so low for themselves. There are people who are very comfortable in their comfort zone. Putting out into the deep will disturb their comfort. There are people who are lazy. They lack energy to put out into the deep. There are people who are easily frustrated and discouraged. They are unable to endure and triumph over the hitches and difficulties that go with putting out into the deep. There are people who lack the will power to pursue their vision. They remain at the level of dreams. They are unable to put out into the deep. There are people who are unable to put out into the deep because they live in the world of their ugly past. They must transcend their past for them to move forward and put out into the deep.

Psalm 42:7 says that Deep is calling each one of us to deep. May the angel of the Lord touch us with ember of fire to ignite us. May the light of Christ shine upon us to lead us. May we become God's chosen instruments. Amen.

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