

Sunday February 6, 2022  
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
**Parishioner Reflection**

*By: Sandra Fortini*

In the readings today we are reminded that God goes to great lengths to find the unworthy and with His grace make them great. Human sin and failure are never obstacles to God's call. He calls those who are weak and imperfect and with His transformative love, changes them/us, giving what is needed to do His work.

In the first reading Isaiah is called to do God's work after the death of King Uzziah. In his visionary experience he is aware of standing in the very presence of God, and is faced with his own unworthiness. "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips: yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" In this frightening experience Isaiah realizes that God is not out to kill him but rather to forgive him and is overwhelmed with gratitude for his gift of life. Isaiah hears God's question to the heavenly council and without hesitation replies "Here I am, send me"

*Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.* These are the words that we say at Mass prior to receiving the living Christ. They are words that resonate deeply with all of us who recognize our own inadequacies and failures in the midst of the gift of grace we are about to receive. These words are both humbling and uplifting. Christ in the Eucharist meets us where we are, heals and nourishes us. After receiving this we are sent out to "go in peace to love and **serve** the Lord." We are given the grace we need to return to our daily lives in His service. This is our call each time we celebrate Eucharist.

Being or feeling unworthy is an interesting paradox for Christians. In Baptism we have been given sanctifying grace that makes us worthy, but our human frailty prevents us from realizing this and claiming the gift we have been given. These feelings of unworthiness often hamper our ability to serve the Lord and love Him fully.

In the second reading, Paul reminds his audience that those who have become family through Baptism and the gospel have been saved, but that if they do not persevere in that same gospel, their conversion will have been in vain. He addresses, at the end of the gospel, the grace which he received and the resulting transformation. "For I am the least of the Apostles, unfit to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am and His grace towards me has not been in vain." Paul (which means the least) becomes one of the greatest apostles of the

Church. Again we are reminded of God's consistent effort to reach sinners, and use their failings to glorify Him.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 12 St Paul summarizes this sentiment beautifully.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

In this week's Gospel Jesus calls the fisherman. Unlike Mark's version of the story, Luke focuses on Simon (Peter). The other fishermen present are not named, and do not interact with Jesus. This story is of great importance, obviously because of who is called, and the role he will play in Christ's church, but also because it is a beautiful example of Christ's love and mercy for us, and the saving grace that faith in him bestows.

In this gospel story, we can assume that Simon already has a relationship of sorts, or is at least familiar with Jesus. We can assume this because it was with relatively no resistance that Simon agreed to take out the boat and lower the nets yet again after a long, unsuccessful night of fishing. He most likely had some thoughts that the request would be in vain. He might have even thought the request a bit ridiculous, but he grants it because he clearly holds Jesus in high regard as a great teacher. "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so I will let down the nets." What follows is a miraculous catch that nearly breaks the nets and requires help from the others nearby.

In the light of the miracle that takes place, Simon is now called Peter "the Rock" for the first time in the gospel, and his eyes are opened. He is aware of the distance between himself (a sinner) and Jesus who he then identifies as "Lord" for the first time. Peter's reaction is a natural awareness of unworthiness in the presence of the holy. "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man."

The beauty of this story is the gentle way that Jesus reaches Peter. He does not judge or chastise. God calls the imperfect Simon to follow Him and do His work. He also calls us. Imperfect people like you and I who are very often aware of our own shortcomings and failures. Us who so often feel unworthy. He goes to great lengths to find the unworthy and through His grace, make us great. Christ takes and strengthens our weaknesses so that we can do the work of his ministry. He meets us where we are in the ordinary aspects of our lives, even in the difficult moments, and transforms us with his love and saving Grace. Just as He transformed the two saints Peter and Paul who

became the founders of the Church of Rome. May we have the same faith, courage, and obedience to follow Him.

Christ calls Peter, with all his flaws, to be the Rock of the church while busy at his daily work. He is clearly telling us he will meet us where we are, and that He has come for sinners. All He asks is that we trust in Him. Jesus consoles Peter with the words “Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people.” We are told that after this event, the fishermen left everything and followed Jesus.

Think about the ways in which we are “called” in our everyday lives. The reality is that the majority of us are not called to undertake grand gestures. To leave our homes or to give up our possessions and livelihoods and become missionaries. For most of us our call is to reorder our priorities and to use our God given gifts in service to others. We are called to live life in the smaller moments, to do kindness, and meet the needs of those we care for within our homes, workplaces, and communities. By the grace of God, we too will be catchers of men.