

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
February 6, 2022**

SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 6:1-8	The Lord chooses Isaiah to be prophet.
Psalms 138:1-8	Men and women join the angels in praising the Lord.
1 Corinthians 15:1-11	The preaching of Paul is the foundation of our belief.
Luke 5:1-11	Jesus chooses the apostles who will call other disciples.

BIBLE BACKGROUND:

Luke:

Once again, this author takes “lakeside events” from various times and locations in the ministry of Jesus and places them in one event. John will have some of this miraculous catch of fish occur after the resurrection of Jesus (John 21:1-11). Luke needs to unify those scattered events to emphasize the call and the mission of the disciples.

Jesus exercises all this power through his *word*. He has exercised demons through his *word* (Luke 4:33-36); he has cured Peter’s mother-in-law through his *word* (Luke 4:39); he amazed people in the synagogue through his *word* (Luke 4:22); Peter hears the *word* of Jesus and puts out the nets. Luke is very much aware that this same *word* of Jesus still operates in the community of those who believe in Jesus. That *word* will accompany those who have been called to gather – in people for the kingdom of God. That *word* still works miracles of salvation.

Remaining seated, he continued to teach... He is still the Teacher, the rabbi who instructs his disciples from his position and posture which indicate *authority*.

Catching men... in the Greek language, the word used means *bringing them in alive*. The harvest is one of living persons, fully alive, with potential for becoming gatherers themselves also. Not only does Jesus empower the powerless Peter and friends, he also wants them to bring in living beings for further empowerment of his word. Those *caught* must become *catchers*!

Peter and his friends were doing simple, ordinary work when they were found, called, and empowered by Jesus. He finds us, calls us, and confers miraculous powers at our daily work. We were not called because we were doing great things! We were called so that we might do the great things of God’s kingdom. The greatness of our vocation does not come from us in the first place. It comes from the greatness of the One who has called us and sent us to do his work.

I have always seen a bit of humor in the phrase, “They left all and followed him.” Surely, owning a couple fishing boats must have constituted some measure of wealth for Peter and his associates. Their families, too, were of immense value to them. Those are the things and persons they left to follow Jesus. Not a whole lot in terms of possessions as we would measure them today. Yet, later, Peter will boast to Jesus: “We have left *everything* to follow you!” Old, leaky fishing boats and rotting nets? And a mother-in-law who had a tendency to get sick!

How do we measure what we have put aside in comparison to what we have received?

Isaiah:

The “year King Uzziah died” was 742 BCE. The southern Kingdom of Judah lived on the same brink of disaster as the northern Kingdom of Israel. In just 20 years, Israel would be conquered by Assyria; its capital in Samaria would be destroyed. That kingdom would never again exist. One hundred fifty years later, Judah too would fall. A prophet is chosen by God to bring a message to

Judah. He was a priest of the Temple in Jerusalem, a person of the educated and wealthy classes. He was committed and devout. He had no political ambitions. His encounter with God takes place in a scene that is like a Temple in heaven, one designed like the Temple at Jerusalem. The majesty and the “glory” of God envelop him. Throne, robes, shaking doorframes, smoke are all signs of God’s awesome presence. Glory is a word that means *weight or importance*. Like those chosen before and after him, Isaiah is aware of his profound unworthiness. But the same God who calls also cleanses, forgives, and empowers.

1 Corinthians:

Paul, too, has been called despite his unworthiness. Once having responded to the call, he becomes the agent of God, God’s messenger, a bearer of the Good News. His authority now is God’s own. His word is the word of God. All would do well to listen! These Greek-Gentile Christians at Corinth had a problem with accepting the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. They were inclined to interpret the resurrection as merely a spiritual event that did not necessarily involve the physical body of Christ. Paul insists that the same Christ who died is the one who was raised. The God-given dignity of our human bodies invites us to a sense of sacred reverence for our bodies as vehicles of the divine, destined to resurrection and glory, too.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Compare the protests of Peter with those of Zechariah in the Temple, those of Mary with the angel. Each begins by admitting unworthiness. Is this, then, a requirement for acceptance by God? Do you have a sense of your own personal unworthiness in having been called by God to do the will of God in this world? Do you suppose that God calls only those who feel unworthy so that God will be given the credit?

2. Notice that God takes the initiative in calling people to service. Share with others how God has found you, called you, and empowered you for service. Even if you came from a very worthy family, what was so worthy about your own accomplishments before God found you? Describe how God has taken the initiative in your own life.

3. Take a look at the people who are just waiting to be *caught alive* in the places where you are. Who will bring them to the Lord if you do not? Do you have a sense that God is asking you to witness somehow? Who are the *real, live people* all around you whom God has placed there so that you might catch them for God? How can you best become a witness to them?

PRAYER

**Almighty God,
your Son told us
to pray for vocations
since the harvest is great
and the laborers are few.
May all of us accept
this mission from Jesus
with the determination
that comes from faith.
We ask this
through Christ our Lord, Amen**

Bishop Elden F. Curtis

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE:

Vocation means calling. Everyone on the face of the earth has a vocation. Each of us is called to intimacy with God through fellowship with Jesus Christ. Moreover, each has several more callings from God during a lifetime. God invites us into the community of the Church. That, too, is our vocation. In the Church, each is called to a particular ministry in collaboration with others. Some have the vocation of marriage and parenting. Some have a vocation to the single life in secular society. Some are called to a special witness of celibate living to proclaim what the kingdom of God will be like in its ultimate fullness. There are vocations within vocations when we hear the call of Jesus Christ to become his followers.

The mysteries of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ stand at the heart of God's calling us to himself. "If I am lifted up above the earth, I will make everyone want to come to me" (John 12:32). Our discipleship involves the death and resurrection of Christ applied to our lives and lived out in our everyday experience. We cannot be called to follow Jesus and not follow him all the way to Calvary and to Easter morning. There will be suffering in following Jesus. But there will also be new life, life everlasting.

The Church has been called together by God. The Church has a vocation. The Church community is not self-assembled. Not by human willing does the Church come into being but by God willing it, and each of us within it.

Many Christians have not come to believe in a practical way that their work in this world actually functions in response to a divine invitation. God has willed that the world be developed and enhanced by the work of human hearts, human minds, human hands, by our bodies and souls at work in the universe. We choose a place in life, based on the gifts God has given us and on the attractions that God has placed within our hearts. The work we choose, the state in life (single or married), the obligations we assume all function to accomplish the work God intends that we do. That is our vocation.

The holiness of our humanity becomes the agency by which God transmits holiness into creation. The world was good as it came from the hand of the Creator. The goodness of creation continues to be built up as human beings, themselves the summit of all creation, pass on their God-given goodness onto the children they co-create with God, into the work that they do in the world -- the work we call secular, too.

There is a special holiness that comes from the work of those who have died with Christ and been raised to new life. The sacredness of the Risen Lord is present in our work.

See: *The Catechism*: #542-546

© 2017 Rev. Clement D. Thibodeau. All rights reserved