

Homily **5th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C** (10.2.19)

The three readings in tonight's mass tell us something of three great figures in the history of salvation. Firstly, we saw how the prophet Isaiah became aware of God's presence. He realised his complete unworthiness in the sight of God. But God purified him. He altered his attitude and thereafter he spent his life spreading the good news of salvation. In the second reading, St. Paul is telling the Corinthians about his calling and his preaching. His experience on the road to Damascus completely changed his life. He was converted and spent his life spreading the good news. And then in the Gospel, we see St. Peter coming to realise that Jesus was not just any ordinary man, that he was somebody special, and Peter was aware of his own unworthiness in the presence of our Lord. But Jesus reassured him. He told him that he would make him a fisher of men. And then Peter left everything in order to follow Christ, in order to become an apostle.

The call of the first apostles came very early in the public life of Jesus. Many are surprised that the apostles responded so readily to the call of Jesus. They had only been in his company for a short time. They had listened to his preaching, they had witnessed some of his miracles, but so had thousands of others. But in the case of the apostles, there was a definite vocation, the call of God irresistibly drawing them to Jesus and his teaching. The result was that they left everything, their fathers and mothers, even their wives, their homes and their families, their boats and their nets in order to follow Jesus. They stayed with him until the time of his crucifixion. They learned how to be apostles. They weren't always perfect. They made some mistakes. They showed human frailty.

Yet one of them would betray him, another deny him three times. In spite of all this, 11 of them emerged from the upper room on Pentecost day to go out and become apostles of Christ to the world. When we look at the people chosen by Jesus to be his apostles, we sometimes

wonder and are surprised at the ones he called. They were people of little consequence in their own communities. Most of them were fishermen, but Jesus called them rather than the Levantine scribes of the doctors of the law. A vocation from God has always been more important than any special qualities which people have or have not. Yes, we are all expected to use our talents, to use them as far as possible for the greater glory of God, because, as we know, grace builds on nature. St. Paul says that God called the foolish things of this world to surprise the wise, the weak things of this world to surprise the strong.

Where there is a calling from God, God will always give the grace necessary for that person to be a true apostle, that we know the part we are reflecting on the call of the apostles today, that each one of us by virtue of our baptism is called to be an apostle too. We are not expected to leave our homes or our fatherland in order to do this. We can exercise our apostolate in our own communities.

Some will be like Isaiah in the first reading. They will feel God's calling when they're at prayer. Others might be like St. Paul, whose call was more dramatic on the road to Damascus. And others still might be like St. Peter, who got his calling as he was doing his daily work. And I suppose for most of us, it is more likely to be like St. Peter. In the context of our daily lives and daily work, we are to exercise our apostolate, and we do this by the way we live and behave, by the example that we give.

We don't make the choice ourselves. God chooses us and he tells us his grace is sufficient for us. So responding to the call of the Gospel, the call which we received on the day of our baptism and which was reinforced on the day of our confirmation, we try to live in the world as Christ wants us. We try to live according to his teaching. And if we do, then we are true apostles and our good example will help to bring people to Christ.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.