

Weekend Readings & Reflections

February 5-6, 2022 – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection: *Simon Peter, the fisherman, is the first to be called personally by Jesus in Luke’s Gospel. His calling resembles Isaiah’s commissioning in the First Reading: confronted with the holiness of the Lord, both Peter and Isaiah are overwhelmed by a sense of their own sinfulness and inadequacy. Yet each experiences the Lord’s forgiveness and is sent to preach the good news of His mercy to the world. No one is “fit to be called an apostle,” Paul recognizes in today’s Epistle. But by “the grace of God,” even a persecutor of the Church—as Paul once was—can be lifted up for the Lord’s service. In the Old Testament, humanity was unfit for the divine—no man could stand in God’s presence and live (see [Exodus 33:20](#)). But in Jesus, we’re made able to speak with Him face-to-face, to taste His Word on our tongue. Today’s scene from Isaiah is recalled in every Mass. Before reading the Gospel, the priest silently asks God to cleanse his lips that he might worthily proclaim His Word. God’s Word comes to us as it came to Peter, Paul, Isaiah, and today’s Psalmist—as a personal call to leave everything and follow Him, to surrender our weaknesses in order to be filled with His strength. Simon put out into deep waters even though, as a professional fisherman, he knew it would be foolhardy to expect to catch anything. In humbling himself before the Lord’s command, he was exalted—his nets filled to overflowing; later, as Paul tells us, he will become the first to see the risen Lord. Jesus has made us worthy to receive Him in the company of angels in God’s holy Temple. On our knees like Peter, with the humility of David in today’s Psalm, we thank Him with all our hearts and join in the unending hymn that Isaiah heard around God’s altar: “Holy, holy, holy . . .” (see also [Revelation 4:8](#)).*

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome our discussion on the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, let us begin by praying a prayer for vocations:

All: Almighty Father, You have created us for some definite purpose. Grant us the grace to know the path You have planned for us in this life and to respond with a generous “Yes.” Make our archdiocese, parishes, homes and hearts fruitful ground for Your gift of vocations. May our young people respond to Your call with courage and zeal. Stir among our men a desire and the strength to be good and holy priests. Bless us with consecrated religious and those called to a chaste single life, permanent deacons, and faithful husbands and wives, who are a sign of Christ’s love for His Church. We commend our prayer for vocations to You, Father, through the intercession of Mary our Mother, in the Holy Spirit, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: Today’s Scripture Readings focus on Jesus’ call to Peter to become a “fisher of men” and God’s call to each of us. Let’s begin our study of this week’s readings by watching this short video.

(Play the video on [FORMED.org](https://www.formed.org) - [Opening the Word – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time \(Year C\)](#))

Digging Deeper Power in Weakness

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.’”—1 Corinthians 1:25,27-29,31

FIRST READING ~ Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8 ~

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple. Seraphim were stationed above. They cried one to the other, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!” At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said, “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember that he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it, and said, “See, now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” “Here I am,” I said; “send me!”

Isaiah shares his vocation call from God. His response of feeling unworthy ‘I have unclean lips’, God’s healing response ‘your sin is purged’ and his response ‘Here I am, send me!’. Call, resistance, healing, acceptance, is the common pattern of vocation.

- *What is your personal vocation story and what ‘stage’ are you at? What fear would have to be dissolved before you could genuinely say to God; Here I am.... Send me!?*

SECOND READING ~ 1 Corinthians 1-11 ~

I am reminding you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, Christ appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not fit 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 to me has not been ineffective. Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me. Therefore, whether it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

St Paul is writing to the Corinthian community which was beginning to practice a selective Christianity. They discarded teaching which they did not like. Some could not accept the teaching of the resurrection because they thought matter was evil and spirit was good. They are reminded that Christian teaching can be traced back to Jesus, from the scriptures, from the Apostles – and Paul himself is faithful to their teaching.

- *Are there elements of the Church’s teaching which you want to be selective about? Who could you talk to find out more about the why of the Church’s teaching?*

Paul says of himself that he was ‘abnormally born’. It took a while for Paul to be able to meet and share faith with the apostles. They were possibly afraid of him (he did persecute Christians!) and he was a little uneasy if he and his teachings would be accepted.

- *Have you wanted to share your faith journey with a friend or spiritual director? Studies have shown people who share their faith grow more deeply in their discipleship journey. Who would you be willing to share with?*

GOSPEL ~ Luke 4:21-30 ~

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he 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 they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. 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." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Simon was using reasonable thinking suggesting to Jesus that it was not a good idea to go fishing. He had plenty of evidence that it wasn't going to work. But he moved beyond reason to risk.

- *Is there a word, experience, invitation from God recently which you need to be obedient to? What is the fear that stops you from taking a risk?*

Isaiah, St Paul, and Peter all share their human experience of frailty, guilt, unworthiness. Paul even refers to his feeling abnormally born! God uses this painful self-awareness positively and it is important to notice that God is not afraid of our human weakness.

In God's eyes, only those who have tasted personal frailty are ready for pastoral leadership.

- *Consider what it would be like to live and make decisions not based in fear. What would you do, how would you live?*

In the greek, the text hints at catching people alive. The special use of words points to catching people to lead them into the fullest life.

- *Do you consider leading people to Jesus as joyful and life-giving? Do you presume people will come to you rather than having to go to them in the deep water? Where is the deep water for you at the moment?*

Luke inserts a particular word more than the other gospel writers. 'Everything'. He will repeat this phrase 8 times.

- *What would it mean for you to let go of 'everything' so that you are free to follow him?*



5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him. - Lk 5:10-11

MEDITATION

Why did Jesus perform the miracle of the great catch of fish? No doubt the great crowd of people who had pressed upon Jesus had something to do with this miracle. They were very hungry for God and were eager to hear his word. Jesus wanted to use this occasion to teach his disciples an important lesson. Although Simon was wearied from a night of fruitless toil, he nonetheless did what the Lord Jesus told him to do: *At your word I will let down the nets*. When you meet disappointment and failure, do you press upon the Lord, like Simon, to hear his word and to receive his command?

This incident tells us an important truth about how God works in and through each of us for his glory. God expects of us greater things than we can do by ourselves. When we cooperate in *his* works, we accomplish far beyond what we can do on our own. Therese of Lisieux, a Carmelite nun who died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four, wrote to a friend: "Jesus has so incomprehensible a love for us that he wills that we have a share with him in the salvation of souls. He wills to do nothing without us. The Creator of the universe awaits the prayer of a poor little soul to save other souls redeemed like it at the price of all his Blood."

When God's word is spoken his kingdom is revealed and his power is released. When people respond to God's word with faith and obedience they are changed and made "a new creation" in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God chooses ordinary people, like you and me, as his ambassadors and he uses the ordinary circumstances of our daily lives and work situations to draw others into his kingdom. Jesus speaks the same message to us today: we will "catch people" for the kingdom of God if we allow the light of Jesus Christ to shine through us. God wants others to see the light of Christ in us in the way we live, speak, and witness the joy of the Gospel. Paul the Apostle says, "*But thanks be to God, who in Christ Jesus always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing*" (2 Corinthians 2:15).

- *Do you witness to those around you the joy of the Gospel and do you pray for your neighbors, co-workers, and relatives that they may come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and grow in the knowledge of his love and truth?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing, let us pray for guidance to help in spreading the Gospel to those around us:

ALL: Lord Jesus, fill my heart with love and compassion for those who do not know you or follow you. May I be a good witness of your truth and salvation to my family, friends, and co-workers. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by www.maristlaitynz.org, were shared with permission from www.livingtheword.org.nz.]

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