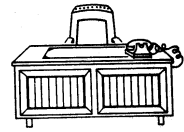


5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 10, 2019



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Today's readings present three men, Peter, Paul and Isaiah whom God called to special missions for their times. They all appeared to be unlikely choices to perform the mission entrusted to them. They all expressed a sense of unworthiness for the mission due to their self-awareness as sinners. God was quick to reassure them.

In the first reading, Isaiah reveals a vision of God seated on a high throne surrounded by seraphim. As the angels cried out, 'Holy, holy, holy ...,' the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke, underscoring God's majesty and evoking a feeling of awe in God's presence. Isaiah was filled with awe because he was conscious of himself as a sinner, unworthy to stand before the Almighty. He says, "Woe to me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips." An angel reassured him by touching his lips with an amber from the altar to cleanse him of sin. Unfortunately, the sense of awe or mystery seems to have diminished in our time. How do we recover it?

However, after his cleansing, Isaiah volunteers to be God's emissary. When the mission-call came, he responded enthusiastically, "Here I am," "send me!" Many priests and religious see their vocations as responding to a divine invitation similar to that of Isaiah. The same is true of those called to secular vocations as parents, teachers, doctors, et cetera. The response should be no less enthusiastic, "Here I am, send me."

The second reading presents the story of Paul who previously persecuted the Church. Those shameful memories brought him low and led him to declare, "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." True contrition begins with humility before God. Humility leads to the awareness that all is grace. No one deserves anything from God based on one's personal efforts and accomplishments. Even when we have done everything well, salvation is still dependent on the grace of God. Moreover, even the ability to do everything well is dependent on grace. When it comes to our relationship with God, there is no such thing as entitlement.

In the gospel, Jesus preaches from Peter's boat to an open congregation gathered on the shores of Lake Gennesaret. In appreciation of Peter's kindness, Jesus performs a miracle for him and his friends after they fished all night with nothing to show for it. With Jesus' intervention, they caught a great number of fish that their nets started coming apart. Realizing it was the Lord, and conscious of his own unworthiness, Peter pleads with Jesus to leave their company. "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man," he said. Rather than leave them to their own devices, Jesus transformed them into evangelists. Their new occupation will now involve fishing for disciples. They left everything and followed Jesus. How challenging and liberating it must have been to embrace this kind of transformation! Unfortunately, the world presents measurable obstacles to material detachment and radical dependence on God's providence. Nevertheless, we need to strive mightily to respond to whatever vocation God is calling us and work to overcome whatever obstacles on our path. We can do neither without the grace of God.

Have a great weekend.

Fr. Romanus