February 10, 2019
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2019: “GOD Is Calling Me”
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Reading 1 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!”

Reading 2 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
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.

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.
HOMILY

Speaking of fishing, little Johnny came to Sunday School late. His teacher knew that Johnny was usually on time and asked him if anything was wrong. The boy replied no, that he was going fishing, but then his dad told him that he needed to go to church instead. Being quite impressed, the teacher asked Johnny if his dad had told him why it was more important to go to church than to go fishing. Johnny replied, “Oh, yeah, my dad told me that he didn’t have enough bait for both of us.”

How many have ever heard or seen the commercial about a credit card where the announcer asks, “What’s in YOUR wallet?” The announcer then goes on to tell about all the great things you can do with the card, all the fun and excitement you can have, all the things you can buy, life is great, yadda, yadda … Life doesn’t get any better, does it, especially when you use this card. “What’s in YOUR wallet?” Keep all that in mind as we continue on here.

In our First Reading and our Gospel Reading today, we hear a common theme of being called by God, and a feeling of humility and genuine unworthiness from that call. Isaiah described his calling while he sat in the temple – he painted a very artistic picture of the whole event. He described angelic creatures worshiping the Almighty, and then he sensed the presence of God with the cries of their worship, together with a door shaking and the smoke-filled room: “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!” Isaiah acknowledged his sinfulness before God, his sin was cleansed by the ember, and he then accepted the call of God, the call to do God’s Will among the Jewish people, becoming one of the greatest prophets.

And then, there’s Simon Peter’s calling, as described in our Gospel story. Up all night fishing with his friends and others, and then coming into shore empty-handed – literally, with nothing at all – and Jesus came along and wanted to preach to the crowds following Him, a short distance from the shore … from Simon Peter’s boat! Picture poor Simon Peter, tired, frustrated, probably more tired and frustrated by the time Jesus finished preaching, and then Jesus told him to go out into deep water and continue fishing. Fishing in deep water? And during the day? … Simon Peter probably thought this rabbi Jesus might know something about the Jewish faith, but very little about fishing. But they caught so many fish that their nets were tearing, so many fish that both boats were filled and in danger of sinking, so many fish because God’s response was huge! These were commercial fishing boats, typically about 25 feet long, 7 feet wide and 4-1/2 feet deep – that’s a lot of fish in two boats! This was so unbelievable that Simon Peter “fell at the knees of Jesus and said, ‘Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.’” He no longer called Jesus Master, or rabbi, but Lord – Simon Peter sensed the presence of God. They brought their boats to shore, left everything – including the boats, the equipment, even the fish … everything – and followed Jesus.

When we look at our Second Reading, Paul doesn’t directly talk of his calling in the passage to the Corinthians. But, listen to his words when he called himself, “the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” Persecuted the Church? That’s putting it a bit mildly – remember that Paul was responsible for the deaths of many Christians, before Jesus appeared to him, “last of all.” Sensing the awesome presence of God, Paul recognized his unworthiness for all of the wrong he had done, and accepted his calling to become one of the greatest missionaries for the Church.

Notice the pattern – God calls, or lets His presence be known, the person senses God’s presence, recognizes their own sinfulness and unworthiness, God forgives and sends them to spread God’s message of love … and mercy … to others. Do we all sin? Of course we do – we know that we shouldn’t, and God certainly doesn’t want us to, but He forgives us when we genuinely and humbly ask for His
forgiveness. Are we worthy of God’s love and mercy? One of the first things we are told in diaconate formation, “You probably think you’re not worthy to be doing this.” The second thing we are told, “You’re not! Get over it! But if God is truly calling you to be here, then what will you do about that?”

In any vocation, the discernment process is all about trying to answer God’s vocation calling and understanding what God wants of us. Let me repeat that – in any vocation, the discernment process is all about trying to answer God’s vocation calling and understanding what God wants of us. But, besides vocations, God always wants to talk with us, God is always calling us and always waiting for us to talk with Him … about major decisions in our life, about trivial matters, about anything and everything – God is there to listen to us. And, God wants us to listen to Him when He speaks to us. That is prayer – communicating with God. At Christmas time, St. Louis handed out the Matthew Kelly book, “The Biggest Lie in the History of Christianity,” as a gift. I’m not going to give the story away, but I want to bring in a couple of thoughts from the book – and I do encourage you to read it – borrow it from someone if you need to. Mr. Kelly talks about times that are called “Holy Moments,” times when we talk with God or we feel encouraged by the Holy Spirit and then we go and do something, say something, something that helps those around us, sometimes extraordinary, but more often just an ordinary “something,” which will also add to the happiness in our own life – all according to God’s Will. God wants us to be happy, in this life and the next, and God wants us to share His Good News, His Gospel message of love and mercy, so others can be happy also. Do you feel like you are too young to hear God, or maybe too old? Mr. Kelly has an interesting few pages near the end of his book that list some incredible feats accomplished by people of all ages – keep in mind that these are not necessarily based on listening to God, although I might believe that at least some may have been. I’ll name just a few from the book and elsewhere that might be worth noting:

- Christian Heinecken is reported to have read the first 5 books of the Bible … at age 1
- Mozart was 3 when he taught himself the harpsichord and 8 years old when he wrote his first symphony
- Joan of Arc was 18 when she led the French army to victory
- Mother Teresa was 40 when she founded the Missionaries of Charity
- Tolkien was 62 when he published the 1st volume of Lord of the Rings, with others to follow – remember that the writings have Christian overtones
- Michelangelo was 72 when he designed the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica
- Nelson Mandela was 75 when he was elected president of South Africa – he did great things afterwards for the people
- Frank Lloyd Wright was 91 when he finished his work on the Guggenheim Museum

No matter how old or young we are, no matter who we are, God is always calling us, always wants to talk with us, always wants to hear us, always wants us to listen to Him – always.

“What’s in YOUR wallet?” There are business cards in the pews that I would ask if you could put in your wallet, or your purse, or even your shirt or pants pocket – cards that say, “GOD is Calling Me.” I would encourage you to keep the card with you, take an extra one, or two, or more, for someone else, someone who may have gone fishing or stayed home instead of coming here with you today, someone who could use a chat with God, someone who might need to know that God is there to chat with, someone who may have forgotten that God is always there to provide His love and mercy for them. As for yourself, whenever you hear that credit card announcer’s voice say “What’s in YOUR wallet?”, or whenever you open your wallet, purse or whatever and see that card, or whenever you sense the presence of God in matters large or small, remember that God is ALWAYS calling you. What are you going to do about that?
When you answer God’s call, think about all the great and wonderful things you can do, all the fun and excitement you can have, all the people you can help by sharing God’s mercy and love … Life doesn’t get any better, does it … especially when you answer God’s call.

[Note: extra cards may be found at the church entrances, or just write the words on a small piece of paper and put that in your wallet.]