

## FIFTH SUNDAY OT

All three of our readings today present us with towering figures in salvation history who experienced an extraordinary manifestation of the divine presence:

Isaiah in the Temple, Paul on the road to Damascus, and Peter in the boat with Jesus.

And each of them respond by declaring their unworthiness:

"Woe is me, I am doomed! For I, a man of unclean lips, have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!"

"I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

"Leave me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

However, their sense of being unworthy was not, as they supposed, an obstacle to God extending to them the call to serve.

Indeed, you could say it was because of their humility that God chose to use them to carry out his divine plan.

The Lord purified Isaiah's "unclean" lips with an ember from the fire burning on the altar.

Jesus caused Saul's blindness and then cured it so that he might gain new vision when he was baptized as Paul.

And to the trembling Simon Peter who had fallen to his knees before the demonstration of divine power, Jesus spoke those life-changing words: "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men."

Because of God's grace each man is given courage:

Having been touched by divine fire, Isaiah declares: "Here I am. Send me!"

Having regained his sight, Paul can say: "By the grace of God I am what I am!"

And having received the call from the Master, Peter and the other fishermen with him leave everything behind and follow Jesus.

This pattern can be found throughout Scripture and throughout the history of the Church:

God calls someone, the person professes their unworthiness, and God grants them the grace they need to carry out the mission given to them.

Of course, we are all unworthy, we are all sinners.

But it is the beauty of God's plan: God uses the weak and makes them strong, as St. Paul writes in another one of his letters.

And in another poetic passage Paul explains: "This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us."

All of this makes one thing very clear: We have no excuse to not answer the call of Jesus to service.

### 3

Being a sinner, being "too young" or "too old," or being "too busy" is no excuse for actively joining in the mission of Jesus.

As we heard St. Paul say with great conviction a few weeks ago, we have all been given gifts to be shared as members of the Body of Christ.

We all have a part to play and every part is needed.

I don't know how many times someone has told me: "I don't feel worthy to be a minister of Holy Communion."

Guess what? None of us are "worthy," not on our own!

But what do we pray before receiving Communion?

"Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but say the word and my soul shall be healed."

It is only by grace that we are made worthy to serve.

I'm certainly not worthy based on my own "merits."

I'm a sinner just like everyone else.

I have many faults, quirks, and bad habits.

I go to confession often!

When Simon Peter says to Jesus, "Leave me Lord for I am a sinful man," Jesus didn't tell him: "Go away; you're not worthy."

Rather, Jesus responds: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

It's almost as if Peter's admission of his sinfulness makes him a good candidate to become a fisher of souls.

"Like attracts like." People in need of God's mercy respond best to people who have experienced God's mercy.

Wherever we find ourselves, whatever we might be doing, let's remember our vocation to be "fishers of souls."