

**O.T. V: FEB 7: Is.6: 1-2, 3-8; I Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5:1-11**

**“I don’t think I’ll be there.”** Reverend Billy Graham tells of a time early in his ministry when he arrived in a small town to preach a sermon. Wanting to mail a letter, he asked a young boy where the post office was. When the boy had told him, Dr. Graham thanked him and said, “If you’ll come to the Baptist church this evening, you can hear me telling everyone how to get to heaven.” “I don’t think I’ll be there,” the boy said. “Why?” Billy Graham asked him. “Because you don’t even know your way to the post office! How can you show me the way to heaven?” the boy replied. Today’s readings tell us about the calls of the prophet Isaiah, Paul, and Peter to God’s ministry.

The central theme of today’s readings is divine call and human response. It has three steps: 1) The revelation: The miraculous catch of fish described in today’s gospel was a revelation of Jesus’ identity as the one sent from God 2) The recognition and confession of one’s unworthiness and inadequacy: *“Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”* 3) The word of reassurance from Jesus and a call to share in his life-giving mission. Today’s readings are “epiphany-call stories” which tell us that God has His own criteria for selecting people to be prophets and ministers. When faced with the awesome power of God, Isaiah, Paul, and Peter are all struck dumb by their own unworthiness. Peter in today’s gospel and Isaiah in the first reading express their unworthiness to be in the presence of God’s great holiness, and Peter and Isaiah both immediately receive their divine calls. Today’s second reading describes the call of another great apostle, Paul, who judges himself to be unworthy of the name or the call as he was a former persecutor of the Christians. It was by giving these three men a strong conviction of their unworthiness and of their need of total dependence on His grace that God prepared them for their missions.

The Sea of Galilee was the site of many manifestations of Jesus’ divine power. In the incident in today’s gospel, Jesus preached to a large crowd standing right at the water’s edge. When the teaching had ended, Jesus told Peter to pull out into deeper water for a catch of fish. In matters of fishing, Peter was an expert while Jesus was only a carpenter. Hence Peter, not wanting Jesus to look foolish, explained, ‘Master, we have worked hard all night long, caught nothing and already washed our nets’. Instead he said, *“Nevertheless, if You wish it, I will lower the nets.”*

Confronted by the size of the catch, he recognized the presence of God before him and became convinced of his own pride and self-centeredness, his sinfulness, that is. Peter begs Jesus to go away. His simple confession --*“Leave me Lord. I am a sinful man.”*-- marks a turning point in his life, and becomes the model for our response to Jesus. Jesus seized the opportunity to proclaim Peter’s mission, a call Peter was able to receive because he had seen the tremendous power of God. Thus Peter became the first person in the Gospel to acknowledge his sinfulness. He is also the first apostle to be called by Jesus.

Let our encounter with the holiness of God lead us to recognize our sinfulness. The good news of today's gospel is that our sinfulness -- our pride and self-centeredness -- does not repel God. Our God is a God who gives sinners a new start. It is important that we acknowledge our sinfulness. Our response must be modeled on that of the tax collector in the parable: "Lord be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). The recognition of our inadequacy and sin is necessary for us to be willing and able to receive transformation by God's grace. Isaiah, Paul, and Peter teach us that even the greatest ones among us stand in need of conversion. God, who calls us and commissions us for His service, wants us to realize His presence everywhere and in everyone.

Each of us has a unique mission in the Church. This is why God has a different call for each of us. Each of us is unique, so each of us has a mission which no one else can fulfill. God will use all of us, and particularly what is unique in us, to bring this mission to fulfillment. Our response must be like that of Isaiah: "*Here I am, Lord...send me. I'll do it. I'll play my part. I'll speak to that neighbor, that coworker, that friend, that relative. I'll talk to my daughter about the way she is rearing her children. I'll keep my mouth shut and refuse to gossip or criticize my co-workers or my bosses. I'll pray every day. I'll learn to listen patiently to those in need. I'll do it.*"