

Sunday Thought

6th February 2022 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

Isaiah 6: 1 - 13

Psalm 138

1 Corinthians 15: 1 - 11

Luke 5: 1 - 11

Step up to Vocation

'Vocation' is spoken of widely today to mean a particular occupation, trade or profession but its original meaning is accompanied by a belief that we are called or chosen to use our personal gifts for a special purpose. Certainly, in Christian terms we know that means an awareness of God calling us to some work he has planned. In the church there's a multiplicity of vocations, from



archbishop to coffee morning washer-up, in which the task is fulfilled as much by guiding the church into God's new ways as by making sure the washed mugs are the cleanest in the kitchen. Today's readings are all about God's calls. They range from engaging in the revival of true faith and worship and the re-birth of national and social life to using natural gifts in a new way, like fishermen netting people with the love of God!

We may ask 'how do I know God is calling me, and to what?' Our readings may help. The sense of call may begin with just a feeling in response to an advertised need or a personal challenge. The calls to Isaiah, to Galilee fishermen and to members of the first church in Corinth all have similar steps to reaching and understanding them. They each begin with a sense of urgent need. Isaiah's visit to the Temple was at the time of the king's death. During his reign King Uzziah had brought good times to Judah with prosperity, and expansion of lands, but now threats from surrounding nations made the future uncertain. Isaiah was aware of the definite need for religious revival and now he was in God's house seeking to know what the Lord had to say. The Galilee fishermen, also living in uncertain times, were eager to learn Jesus' news of the Kingdom and had hopes of a whole new religious and political climate. Paul too is saying to the first churches, *'we are at the beginning of sharing the Gospel of salvation and new life with the whole world' – Jews and Gentiles alike and encouraging them to catch the vision of 'Christ for All'*. Our needs are equally clear today as we hear of international disorder, local political upheaval, falling moral and social standards, climate change, congregations in decline and churches closing

Then comes step two. It's a glorious moment of being ready to see God's purposes in a new way, or perhaps the renewal of a previous vision. Not many will have Isaiah's experience of a place of worship full of white light and winged creatures surrounding a brilliant storm of glory. Some may see God anew with a challenge about his Kingdom possibilities, like the fishermen, having their miraculous haul of fish when local crowds gather to hear Jesus' preaching-inspired dreams. Paul reminds his readers of the facts of Jesus' Cross and Resurrection giving God's gracious forgiveness and new life for everyone, everywhere who will believe and accept what his Spirit has shown and taught us. In every case, catching sight of the wonder and power of God's Spirit leads to the third step – looking at ourselves in preparation for his call, getting ready to respond to the situation in which we find ourselves and the work which shouts out to be done. So, Isaiah cowers before his vision crying, *'I'm a sinful man among a sinful nation!'* Simon Peter kneels before Jesus, among a boatful of fresh fish, *'I'm a sinful man, Lord. Leave me!'* while Paul shares his own testimony to having been unworthy – *'the worst among sinners.'*



The top step is to be convinced of God's call, with fears of what may be involved and wonderful dreams of what will be accomplished. Isaiah will see terrible times with personal rejection of himself and his message, but beyond that a new day. He is shown a felled oak-tree putting out new growth. Peter and his companions are invited to share the good news and see the Kingdom grow, as were Christians at Corinth when they recalled the power of Jesus to change lives and nations.

We need little help with the first step. Every news bulletin and church council remind us of the need for the Christian dream. The challenge of today's readings is to take step two – a new vision of God for our day, a closer walk with Jesus – getting ready for a new vocation or to refresh an old calling. And then? Who knows? Maybe just a new determination to pray for our present situation. *Just?* That could be the greatest vocation of all!!

A Prayer of Thanks (with Psalm 138 in mind)

With my whole heart Lord, I want to thank you for everything.
I think of your constant love which has never failed me,
of your glories in the natural world, and in other people's lives.
I remember all those times when you have answered my prayers,
when I have felt you close in a moment of helpless panic.
I praise you, Lord. You are so great in glorious majesty and power,
yet you care about the lowly; you bring the proud down to size.
You are the great reverser of our troubles. Your promises never fail.
Thank you, thank you, thank you, Lord!