

5th Ordinary Sunday
February 10, 2019
“God’s Unlikely Choices”

Is 6:1...8

1Cor 15:1-11

Lk 5: 1-11

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

It is truly amazing how some of the truly great people in the world started out so terribly disadvantaged with almost no hope for success. History has shown that some of the greatest leaders and innovators came from very humble and un-noteworthy backgrounds. Even some of the greatest minds started out with serious handicaps or disabilities. Ludwig van Beethoven, Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, and Helen Keller are just a few of those who overcame great obstacles to accomplish their life’s work!

So often we excuse ourselves from some difficult task because we judge ourselves to be unfit, unqualified, or unworthy of what we have been asked to do. However, very often God has other plans for us than our own plans for ourself – And when God calls us, we should respond with trust and courage.

Isaiah lived in the Promised Land prior to the Chosen People’s exile to Babylon. The people and their leadership had lost their way. They turned away from the Lord, broke the Covenant, worshiped false gods, and were hedonistic and materialistic. Nevertheless, Isaiah was given a vision of God in another dimension – in the realm of the spirit. That vision was so overwhelming that Isaiah felt doomed. He realized his own sinfulness and human failure. He wondered how he could go on living, having witnessed such extraordinary things.

However, God purified him and wiped out his wickedness and sin. Isaiah was deeply moved by God’s love and mercy. Consequently, when God asked whom He could send to challenge the Chosen People, Isaiah, overcome with gratitude, volunteered himself! Subsequently, Isaiah became one of the great prophets of the Old Testament!

Saul of Tarsus was a self-righteous Pharisee who believed that he was doing God’s work. He saw the Christian disciples as a threat to God and to all the sacred traditions of Judaism. Saul actually guarded the cloaks of those who stoned St. Stephen. Then he went about serving subpoenas and bringing Christian disciples before the Jewish courts for imprisonment!

But God intervened! God wanted Saul. Saul would become Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles – to the pagan nations. And, today, Paul tells us just how unworthy he was of that great calling and work. Jesus appeared to him as the last one on a list – as one who was born of a miscarriage – as one who persecuted the Church of God! Nevertheless, God wanted Paul – And Paul was forever grateful for the grace he received as part of God’s merciful plan!

In the Gospel, we learn of the call of Peter, James, and John – the core of the Zebedee Fishing Company. They had fished all night long without success. Jesus asked to use one of their boats as a platform on the water to address the great crowd that had gathered – and Peter complied.

Afterwards, Jesus rewarded them with a miraculous catch of fish. Moreover, when Peter confessed his personal unworthiness, Jesus surprised them by inviting them all to join him in the ministry to which the Father had called him. Henceforth, instead of fish, they would catch men and women in the net of God!

Brothers and Sisters, God calls each of us to something unique and special. God has created us and sustained us with His providence. But He has also saved us and delivered us from eternal death! He has placed us in this world – in this culture – in this place – to witness to His mercy and love for everyone without exception! Our vocation is to respond in awe like Isaiah, in wonder like St. Paul, and in humility like Peter, James, and John.

Only we can touch the people we meet and encounter. Only we can bless them with our kindness. Only we can be parents, children, spouses, workers, bosses, teachers, and students to those in our particular circle.

So, let us pray, that like Isaiah, Paul, Peter, James, and John we can say “yes” and respond to the grace we will be given despite our own unworthiness!

Amen.

February 10, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra