

Readings Isaiah 6: 1-8; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5: 1-11



Fr Michael says:

The call of the first Disciples

The calling by name has great meaning in the Hebrew culture, the name is an indication of the person and who he or she is and is called to fulfil this calling – our name is the most personal gift we have after life itself, it defines us and enables us to develop and respond to the call we have received. At the same time the one calling reveals himself to us: the All-holy One for Isaiah; the role of Peter in his links with Jesus. The miraculous catch shows him, Jesus' holiness and his own unworthiness. He has yet to understand the wonderful calling by Jesus to all sinners, but opens himself up to Jesus' call.

Peter has been fishing all night and got nowhere! He is fed up as he tidies things away. Like us, he had tried his best to no effect. How often does this not happen to us in the course of our own lives, and we can still feel something of that anguish even yet! Jesus responds by encouragement and by making a suggestion – to launch into the deep (although the experience of the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, was, that the early morning was not the time to do so! Jesus is aware that the last thing a person wants who has not succeeded in something is to have his face rubbed in his failure! Rare is the person who can draw hope from such a situation. Most of us need encouragement, belief in us and a gentle challenge – failure needs to be seen only in the fact of us not getting up from it to carry on!

Success is not everything, by winning an argument we might alienate a friend; by competition and promotion we may move forward in our career, but often at the expense of our relationships with others. Jesus is not blaming Peter, but wants him to move on to new things: hence the invitation: "launch out"! Each of us has an area within ourselves, which has never been opened, to discover it we need challenges to go beyond ourselves. Jesus is aware of Peter's weaknesses, but that does not stop him from realising he has the potential for greatness. We all need someone who accepts us for what we are, but who believes us capable of more and invites us to reach out for it. As a Jewish saying has it: "From success to failure is one step – from failure to success is a long road!"

Nelson Mandela borrowed these words from an anonymous source: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate, but that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light – not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God – your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking, so that others won't feel insecure around us. We are born to make manifest the Glory of God that is within us. It's in everyone. As we let our light shine, we unconsciously allow others to do the same, as we are freed from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others."



Homily by Fr Robert Henshaw AA for 5th Sunday Year C 2007

The first reading today describes an awesome vision of the Glory of God that the Prophet Isaiah saw when he was praying in the temple of Jerusalem. Isaiah is overcome by the sheer majesty and power and holiness of God. He falls to his knees. He is dismayed by his unworthiness, his uncleanness. "What a wretched state I am in", he says, "I am a man of unclean lips". If we turn to the Gospel reading, the scene described there seems entirely different. It describes one of the miracles of Our Lord when he told St. Peter and the other apostles to launch their fishing boats out into the deep and make one last cast of their nets. Peter says, "Master, we were working hard all night and caught nothing at all. But if you say so, at your word, I'll let down the nets". The rest, as they say, is history. They made a huge catch of fish. They had to get other boats to help them. As they come ashore, another remarkable thing happens. Peter is overcome by a sense of Our Lord's holiness and majesty. He falls on his knees before him and says, "Leave me, Lord, for I am a sinful man". Almost the same words that the Prophet Isaiah used in the first reading, the same sense of unworthiness.

The other day, Thursday, was a bright, sunny morning. As I got into my car, the sunlight was shining directly on the windscreen. It showed up just how dirty the glass was and how dusty and grubby the inside of the car was. I felt ashamed of it. Well, it's something like when we let the light of Christ fall on our souls, how pure, how loving, how utterly truthful he is, and how grubby, selfish, and unworthy we feel. It's all summed up in those words we recite before Holy Communion. "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you". But, if we just got stuck in that attitude, beating our breasts about our unworthiness, then we wouldn't be fit to do anything. A truly humble person will not only admit their sinfulness, but they will go on to accept God's help, to let God wash it away and heal them of it. "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed". All of this is beautifully expressed in an old poem in the form of a dialogue between Our Lord who invites the poet to share a meal with him. We could well apply the words to ourselves as we approach Holy Communion.

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back, guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack from my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning, if I lack'd anything
A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here; Love said, you shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my Lord I cannot look on thee.
The Lord took my hand and smiling did reply; Who made the eyes but I?
Truth, Lord, but I have spoiled them: let me shame go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame? My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down (says Love) and taste my meat: So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert (1593-1633) adapted by Fr Robert