

FEBRUARY 6, 2022
Sunday of the 5th Week in OT
Isaiah 6: 1-2a, 3-8; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5: 1-11

“HERE I AM, SEND ME.”

“There was a king who owned a large perfectly cut diamond. He was very proud of it and made it the national symbol. Unfortunately, the diamond one day got damaged, and its beauty was ruined by a long hair-like scratch. Its splendor was gone, and its sparkle diminished. The king was very saddened. He gathered all the reputed jewelers for consultation. They all said that it had lost its splendor and value. In desperation the king sent our word throughout his kingdom, ‘Anyone who could repair the damaged diamond would be suitably rewarded.’ Finally, just when the king was about to give up the hope of restoring the stone, a poor lapidary gem engraver came forward to restore it. ‘Sir’ he said to the king, ‘this same scratch which has diminished the diamond's worth will become its most beautiful asset.’ The king entrusted the man with the stone and many weeks passed before his return. Finally, when the lapidary opened his velvet box to display his craftsmanship, the king gasped in amazement. There was the stone - more beautiful than ever, with a beautiful rose carved on it. Only the king could detect that on the rose's graceful stem was the scratch that had once so ruined the diamond. My sisters and brothers, Jesus is the master jeweler, who can transform the scratches, which dim and distort our lives into something that could shine and scintillate.”¹

We have our own call to follow Jesus as our Lord and Master not we are like diamond, but we are imperfect diamond ready to shine. We answered differently and our answers sometimes depends on our way of interpreting the call. By the mere fact that we are called Christians, we can not and must exist without Christ. The last three

¹ fathervalan.org

letters of the word Christian are defined as 'I am nothing.' So, if I put aside Christ in my life, I am nothing. To be a Christian, I must be with Christ and attach to Christ.

"TODAY WE ARE ASKED to consider three interlocking elements of our Christian living — faith, experience and apostleship. The first key word today is faith as trust. The Greek word for faith is *pistis*. The basic meaning of *pistis* is trust. To have faith in Jesus is to put one's total trust in him. A real faith not only accepts the content of God's message but involves a total surrender of oneself and all one has and is into God's hands. A complete letting go. Like those group dynamics games where you let yourself fall back into the arms of another person trusting they will not let you fall to the ground. It will not be enough for them just to say: 'I won't let you fall.' Something more on my part will be needed. This is basically what we see happening in today's Gospel. Peter and his companions are the experts when it comes to fishing in that lake. But even so, after a whole night's work they have nothing to show for their efforts. Then Jesus, after he had finished teaching the crowds (giving them the message to believe), suggests that they go out into the 'deep water' and let down their nets. There is an element of skepticism and even condescension in Peter's reply. 'We [the professionals] spent the whole night in vain, but if you say so, I will let out the nets.' The result was overwhelming and totally beyond their expectations; their nets could hardly hold the catch. It was their first test of faith in Jesus. The same call comes to us: 'Go out into the deep water... Trust me completely... and you will be in for a pleasant surprise.' We really have not learnt to believe until we have reached that level of total and unconditional trust in the Way of Jesus. The second key word today is experience. To be a Christian is first and foremost to have an experience of Christ. It is to find oneself in relationship with him in all the circumstances of one's life. It is to find him challenging us to love, to have compassion, to practise justice, to live in freedom, to be able to forgive and be reconciled, to be kind, gentle and accepting; it is to seek, to find and to respond to him in all things. It is, because

of this, to live lives of joy and peace in the midst of pain and turmoil. This is really more important than being able to give an approved explanation of the Trinity or the Immaculate Conception. It was a medieval writer who said: 'I would prefer to experience repentance than be able to define it.' Our third word today is 'apostleship'. This word should be distinguished from discipleship. To be a disciple is basically to be a follower of some master or guru. The word 'disciple' comes from the Latin verb *discere*, to teach. The noun is *discipulus*, one who receives teaching. One learns from the master, and one tries to incorporate his teaching into one's own life. Obviously, in that sense, we are called to be disciples of Jesus. However, today's readings ask for more than that. We are not only to follow and make Jesus' Way our own. Part of our calling is to become gurus ourselves in the sense of transmitting the message of Jesus to others. After the sensational catch of fish, Peter is absolutely overwhelmed by what has happened. He knows that he is present before the power of God himself. All his arrogance disappears, and he is overcome by his own smallness and unworthiness. 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' It is, in fact, a true sign of an experience with God. Anyone who truly comes face to face with God must become aware of their littleness and what might be called the shabbiness of their lives. It is a reaction which we find in all the three readings today. Isaiah says, for instance: 'What a wretched state I am in! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips... and my eyes have looked at the King, the Lord of hosts.' Paul, not particularly known for his modesty, says: 'I am the least of the apostles... I hardly deserve the name apostle.' In spite of that, all – Peter, Paul, Isaiah – were called to be apostles. The word 'apostle' means a person delegated and sent out to convey a message or carry out a mission on his or her master's behalf. These three men were called and, indeed, every person who wishes to be known as a 'Christian' is called not only to be a disciple, a follower, but also an apostle, a herald, a proclaimer. And it is done not just by words but by the whole witness of what one is and does. 'Here I am, send me,' said Isaiah. 'I have worked harder than any of the others [in preaching the Gospel of Jesus],' says Paul. 'From

now on, it is people you will catch', Jesus tells Peter. And that was the message: if with my help you can catch so many fish, just imagine how many people you will draw to become disciples."²

My sisters and brothers, to be a Christian entails faith and trust to the Lord, be with Him all the time and doing what He did and being an apostle, a proclaimer and living witnesses of the gospel. Like Isaiah, Paul and Peter and all those follow the Lord, let us say 'Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will.' I will be a living witness of your love and compassion. As a Christian, I must share, not because I am told to but because I cannot help doing so. Last February 2, we celebrated World Day for Consecrated Life. Let us pray for those who follow the Lord, our laity, seminarians, priests, bishops and those who consecrated their lives to the Lord and may the workers in His vineyard be plentiful..

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, you call each one of us by name as you know us personally. May I answer your call with deep faith and trust, willing to be with you all my life, become apostles of your Good News and living witness of your truth and salvation to my family friends and co-workers. May I always answer your call with love and humility and say: Here I am, send me. Amen."

² livingspace.sacredspace.ie