

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time



When Jesus enters our lives, he leads us away from the shallow existence of our addictions and into the spiritual depths of recovery. This is a journey initiated by grace—an unmerited gift which shakes our foundation so that we may be awoken to new life. It is a journey we do not take alone.

Three different spiritual experiences are described in the Church's Mass Readings this Sunday. The prophet Isaiah, Saint Paul, and Saint Peter are each offered a moment of grace at a time when they are powerless. Isaiah, who is met by God in the temple and called out of his wickedness, speaks words that many of us have likely thought or spoken before: "Woe is me, I am doomed." An angel then touches his unclean lips with an ember and heals him. Isaiah's lips and heart are purified so that he may take part in the mission of God, not for the sake of his own agenda.

Furthermore, Saint Paul shares his reflection on the grace of God at work in his life:

*For I am the least of the apostles,
not fit to be called an apostle,
because I persecuted the church of God.
But by the grace of God I am what I am,
and his grace to me has not been ineffective.
Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them;
not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me.*

Paul acknowledges an important aspect of Christian spirituality and 12-step recovery. Namely, the good work we might do can only be accomplished when God moves first. Our cooperation with grace allows Him to work more effectively within us so that we may be transformed. We cannot be the same as we once were if we are to enter into deep spiritual waters.

Finally, this week's Gospel Reading tells of Jesus entering the boat of a fisherman, Peter (at the time named Simon). As Jesus often does, he enters without asking first. He then says, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Peter's response implies doubt that they will find any fish, but follows the will of the Lord anyway. They bring in so many fish that they need help from another boat. Peter's foundation is shaken:

*When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of
Jesus and said,
"Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."*

When we experience the grace of God in our own recovery journey, it may be overwhelming. God brings comfort to the afflicted and calls us to share the message with others, just as He did for Isaiah, Paul, and Peter. In recovery from addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments, we have a unique call to help those who still suffer in a similar way that we once did. This Sunday's Gospel Reading concludes:

*Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."
When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.*

The Lord comes into our lives by way of grace, shakes us at our foundation, forgives us of our sins, and calls us to take part in His mission. Like Isaiah, are we ready to say, "Here I am—send me!" when grace enters our boat?

Reflection Questions

- How do you relate to the experience of either Isaiah, Paul, or Peter?
- What fears or obstacles are permitting you from cooperating with the grace of God?
- What do you do to invite and cooperate with God's grace on a daily, weekly, or regular basis?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11