

2025 C 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time Feb. 9

We have three “call stories” Jaw-dropping moments in God’s work of salvation. In our 1st reading, Seven and one-half centuries before Christ, Isaiah one day had an encounter with God and his only response seemed appropriate: “Woe to me, for I am ruined.” What stirred such a reply?

The answer is found in the thrice-repeated words of the seraphim: **“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord almighty.”** Repetition, in Hebrew, performs the work of our highlighter. A tool of emphasis. God is not Holy. He is not Holy, Holy. He is Holy, Holy, holy.

The Hebrew word for holy is *qadosh*, which means cut off or separate. Holiness speaks of the otherness of God. His total uniqueness. Everything about God is different from the world he has made.

Isiah finds his call to be a prophet. **“Here I am, Lord, send me,”** he said. For the rest of his life, he will show God at work not just in the temple, but also in individual lives and in the events of world history. This is the truth about God that Isaiah carried in his life.

Christian song writers found inspiration in this passage for two familiar hymns: “The Holy, Holy, Holy” which we say in every Mass or sing often and the hymn, “Here I am, Lord.”

In our 2nd reading, Paul remembers his encounter with risen Christ and calls himself as **“an abnormally born.”** On the dusty road, his life changed. A persecutor became a preacher. He became of all things, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

He experienced forgiveness, redemption, and mission. And it was all free. There was nothing he had done to deserve it. It was a gift, a grace. **“By God’s grace, I am what I am.”** Paul would never forget that. That was the truth that Paul carried in his life.

And in the gospel, Simon Peter and his crew failed to catch any fish the whole night. Jesus comes along and tells Peter to go into deep waters and cast the net. Peter acts on the word of Jesus and miraculously gets a catch of fish he couldn’t believe. Here at the seashore, he finds his call for a mission to be a **“fisher of man.”** Whatever his limitations, later on, as the head of the Church, Peter remembered his power comes from the fact that he was obedient to Christ to further His kingdom. That is the truth about the Lord that Peter carried in his life.

Jesus is calling us as well as Peter. **“Don’t be afraid,”** he says to us, from now on **you will fish for people.”** Whatever work you are doing, whatever hobbies you have, wherever you are, your primary purpose now is to bring people to God. Your primary purpose in your home, in

your workplace, in your school, in your passions, in your relations is to share the love and the truth of Jesus Christ with others. That is the new vision God has for our life.

What is the truth about God that we carry in our life? Can we speak of His forgiveness, His mercy, His justice, His patience, the unifying power of His love in our vocation, marriage, religious life, the saving power of God's law in our life? Maybe we know with special insight about God's providence. Whether it be His majesty or His mystery, there is an important truth about God that we have for others.

When we hear the word "**covenant**," we usually think of someone who goes from belonging to one faith to joining another. But "**conversion**" has a wider meaning that applies to every believer. That is the sense of a spiritual life changing "**awakening**."

Our spiritual life can drift along in a kind of spiritual lethargy. And something happens to wake us up. Our readings today capture three such moments of spiritual awakening in three different places: a temple, a highway, a seashore.

Spiritual awakening can come in different forms. Our culture tends to put us into a spiritual coma. Then something happens such as an illness, a death of a loved one, the birth of a baby, the discovery of a lump on our body, and we have a spiritual awakening to a deeper part of life that we call from God.

Isaiah, Paul, and Peter, three different types of people. Each experienced a different aspect of the majesty of God. What they learned of God from that moment marked their lives forever and was something they brought to the others.

Before Thomas Merton found Christ and followed, he followed money, fame, and society. He shocked many when he exchanged it all for the life of a Trappist monk in Kentucky monastery. His colleagues wondered what he must have become. They envisioned their friend dutifully sludging through silence, suffering and penance. After 13 years, a colleague, Mark Doren visited him and reported back to the others: "He looked a little older, but as we sat and talked, I could see no important difference in him, and I interrupted him laughing and joking. 'Tom,' I said, 'you haven't changed at all.' 'Why should I? Here,' he said, 'our duty is to be more ourselves, not less'"

God never called you to be anyone other than you. But he does call on you to be the best you can be. The big question is, at your best, who are you?