

1st Reading: Isaiah 6:1-2, 3-8 [Here I am, Lord, send me!]

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 138 ["In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord]

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 [By the grace of God I am what I am.]

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11 [They left everything and became his disciples.]

*♪ I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest wheat I will provide Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?
Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart. ♪*

You sang that refrain with me. *"I will go, Lord.... I will hold your people in my heart."* Are we ready to do that in our lives, the way Isaiah the prophet did? The way the first followers of Jesus did? We are praising God in this Eucharist from beginning to end, and that is good and right, but we are called to praise God with our lives by following the one who called Peter, James and John. Jesus did not ask to be worshipped, he asked to be followed.

St Augustine puts it this way, *"Let us give praise to the Lord, my brothers [and sisters], in life and in speech, in heart and in voice, in words and in actions. For God wishes the 'Alleluia' to be said in His honor in such a way that there will be nothing discordant in the one giving praise. Therefore, in ourselves above all let speech accord with life, tongue with conscience. I repeat, let our words agree with our actions so that beautiful words will not bear testimony against evil deeds."*

The song and the scriptures for today are about following God's call. Isaiah had a vision of angel and responded, *"Here I am, send me!"* Simon Peter heard a call from Jesus in today's Gospel reading, and he and James & John left everything and became his disciples.

What did they give up when they left their nets to follow Jesus?

In today's story, they had just won the fishing lottery. They had become rich! And they made a choice to follow someone who lived from day to day, supported by the people who listened to him. They made a choice that put God's call ahead of being rich and powerful. That is a rare thing today, and perhaps in any age.



I heard a call to become a priest & a friar when I was a sophomore at Siena College in 1964, over 50 years ago. 15 years later, after I was professed & ordained & living at a house of prayer, God was still calling me. On the feast of the Annunciation I had a dream while I was at a workshop on healing in Philadelphia. In the dream I was fishing in a stream - and I caught a *huge* fish. But when I landed it, the fish became a person. I heard two sets of voices: some said, loudly, *"Keep it. It will make a nice trophy to show off!"* Another whispered, softly, *"Throw it back, let it live and grow."* After a moment, I threw the "person" back into the creek. It turned back into a fish and swam away, upstream [trout always swim upstream, against the current].

Almost immediately after I woke up, I saw meaning in the dream as I wrote it down. **I** was the fish. And, like Isaiah in the first reading, God would catch me by some experience of faith or love or beauty. But God would not let me stay on the mountain and build a tent, God would always throw me back into the stream of my own life - to swim upstream, like a trout.

On another level, I was the angler in the dream, like Peter in the Gospel. I would fish for people, but could never hold on to them. I would always send them back to their own stream so they could grow and be caught by Jesus again through someone else. I felt like a parent releasing a son or daughter, even though there is a temptation to keep them safe as they go off to Kindergarten, or college, or to begin a new household.

I'm still listening for God's call, & still dreaming of new ways to follow Jesus. Sometimes I ask myself, *"Why do I stay in this ministry when it seems so impossible to change a world that worships money & power and is so full of injustice & violence? Why do I keep on doing the ministry of a priest when there are problems and conflicts in the Church I love?"*

I stay because Paul's words are as true for me now as they were when I first thought of becoming a Priest, & chose to become a Franciscan: *"By God's favor, by the grace of God I am what I am"*. And the words of the Responsorial Psalm are still true for me personally, as I pray to the God who loves me, *"When I called, you answered me, you built up strength within me."*

I continue to work at living like St Francis & to serve as a priest *because* there are conflicts and pain in the church and in the world, and Jesus is calling me to do what little I can to make *his* church a sign of unity and an instrument of peace, as I will pray in the Eucharistic Prayer in a few moments.

When I was growing up in the 1950's I thought the **only** way for me to serve God in the church was to be a priest or religious sister like Sr. Anna. Serving as a priest has been, and still is **MY** way to follow Jesus - and my life has been full of joy. But now I know that my life as a priest and friar & Sr. Anna's calling as a sister are rooted in the call of the Baptism that we share with all of you.

I know now that for all who are baptized, ministry is not optional, only the form that ministry may take. It may be the ministry of religious life or priesthood, but it also may be the ministry of parenthood and married life.

It may be serving the poor in some form, in fact it must include some service to the poor or it is not faithful to the Gospel. It may be a ministry of sustaining a parish, even when pastoral leadership is in transition. It may be challenging an unjust structure which oppresses God's people.

The Scriptures today ask **all** of us,
"What is God calling you to be and do?"



As I reflect on the truth that all are called to ministry, I am brought back to the importance of listening to the specific call each of us receives from God every day. Sometimes it feels overwhelming, but I have come to believe that:

Even though I can't do everything **I** want to do, I can do EVERYTHING God wants me to do.

I ask to know what God wants every morning, even when I have my schedule & plans already made, & on my phone [which my doctor calls "My other brain"]. I pray, "*Lord Jesus, open the doors you want open, close the doors you want closed, place me in the center of your perfect will.*"

Sometimes I feel peace in following through with my plans [like coming here to celebrate with you] but sometimes the Spirit of love takes me on an entirely different path, and I am only at peace when I follow that path.

Just recently I prayed that prayer about what I was called to do this very weekend. This time God called me to postpone a gathering on Sunday afternoon because it was what I wanted to do, not what God was giving me the energy to do after celebrating a funeral on Saturday AM and 3 Masses here. From one point of view, I had an attack of sanity, but the deeper reason we changed our plans was because the Lord was calling us to do it.

God's dream for us and for the Church of this new millennium is expressed by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, over 50 years ago, which states that "*All of Christ's followers ... are invited and bound to pursue holiness.*" [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, c. V, #42].

And God does not give a call without giving us what we need to follow it.

Like Isaiah, like Peter, Like Paul, like Mary, the mother of Jesus, like St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Pope Francis & Deacon Joe, each of us is caught by God's grace in some way and invited into intimacy with the Lord, before being sent on mission into the stream of our own lives.

I sing the song we began with now with different words, because I believe to the depths of my heart that God WILL lead me and show me where the Spirit is calling me now and to the end of my days. So, instead of "I will go, Lord, **IF** you lead me", I now sing: "I will go, Lord, **where** you lead me." Would you join me in singing those words?

*♪ Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, where you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart. ♪*

I would like to leave you with some questions to reflect on
so you can take the message of the Spirit deeper into your hearts:

Have I listened for God's call in my life?

Have I heard it?

Am I ready to follow God's call even if it means I have to stop what I'm doing to follow it?

Am I ready to say "I do" with my life to the call of my Baptism?