

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

Isaiah's call to prophecy comes during a period of protracted war and the bitterness of defeat. There is great need for a spokesperson for God. King Uzziah's death provides a convenient event for placing the call at a clear point in history.¹ Although Isaiah was called from birth, his prophetic ministry came when he was a mature, wealthy, educated, influential resident of Jerusalem. He was married and had at least two sons.⁴ Isaiah's vision takes place in the Jerusalem temple, but what he sees is a vision of the heavenly temple. God is seated on a throne as the King of the Universe.²

1In the year King Uzziah died, 742 BC. His reign was peaceful and prosperous but then he contacted leprosy for burning incense instead of letting the priests do it.⁴ **I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple.** All of Isaiah's images speak of grandeur and might: God's train fills the temple, God is attended by Seraphim while smoke and tremors attend the divine apparition, and, singing a three-fold "Holy," angels proclaim God's perfect holiness.¹⁶

2a**Seraphim** These were the highest order of the choirs or classes of angels. They form part of the heavenly retinue of Yahweh and sing the triple "Holy" hymn of adoration. They are the fiery ones or burning ones and are sometimes thought of as the winged personification of the tongues of flame in the presence of God. They have three sets of wings with which they shield their faces from the dazzling brightness of God's glory, they shield their feet (or loins) with the second set, and the third set is for flight. They have voices that sing God's praises and speak the words of forgiveness to the prophet in v7.⁷ **were stationed above.**

3**They cried one to the other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!** "The Lord of hosts" refers to the fact that God creates the armies of Israel. This phrase was also a part of the hallowed name given to the Ark of the Covenant that accompanied Israel into battle. God the Warrior is an extremely important concept throughout the OT.⁵ **All the earth is filled with his glory!**" The seraphim praise God in words that were used in the liturgy of the temple in Jerusalem as well as in Revelation 4:1-11 and are still used in our Mass today where the congregation joins with the choirs of angels in singing the *Sanctus*. The three-fold "Holy" is an expression of the superlative. It is a way of saying that God is supremely holy.⁸ The place of the *Sanctus* in the Eucharistic liturgy testifies to the Roman Catholic belief that the Mass parallels the heavenly liturgy.⁹ God's glory is the radiation of his holiness upon the world.⁵

4**At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke.** The cry of the seraphim is experienced as an earthquake, and smoke fills the room; both of these are traditional symbols of the divine presence. The smoke is the same as the "cloud of glory" which filled the tabernacle during the sojourn in the wilderness. It veiled as well as revealed that presence.⁵

5**Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed!** One factor in the prophet's terror in the temple was probably the familiar story of how Uzziah became a leper in the same temple, where he was before the same altar of incense, "when leprosy broke out on his forehead."⁷ **For I am a man of unclean lips,** This is an expression of his personal unworthiness and sinfulness. **living among a people of unclean lips;** Here he acknowledges the sinfulness of the nation. The first five chapters of this book give us the picture of a land corrupted by greed, arrogance, drunkenness, injustice, oppression and murder. Isaiah identifies his people as those whose "speech and deeds are against the Lord, defying

his glorious presence.” (3:8)⁷ yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” Isaiah is terrified to find himself in the very presence of God, for he knows his own unworthiness and that of his people. It was commonly believed that no one could see God and live unless God made special provision.²

⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember that he had taken with tongs from the altar. The temple had an altar of incense where there were always burning coals. It was Jewish belief that the earthly temple was an image or model of the heavenly Temple.⁸

⁷He touched my mouth with it, and said, “See, now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.” This is a symbol of deep spiritual cleansing. The call is not just an invitation, it is an act of creation whereby the one called is made capable, that is, equipped. It was the result of God’s, not man’s initiative.¹ A prophet was someone designated to speak God’s own words. The prophet was believed to stand in the presence of God, who sat enthroned among the angelic host of heaven, in order to hear the deliberations of the council of heaven. The prophet would then report God’s decisions and decrees, typically introducing his prophecy with the phrase “Thus says the Lord.”⁶

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” Isaiah then hears God holding council with the heavenly court and asking who will communicate the divine decisions to the world.² God’s question is spoken not just to Isaiah, but to every person.¹⁶ “Here I am,” I said; “send me!” Isaiah offers himself as God’s messenger. Clearly, though, God had already chosen him before he volunteered.²

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Some of the Corinthian Christians were objecting to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. As Paul lays the groundwork here for his answer, he proclaims the historical fact of Christ’s resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the essential doctrines of the Catholic faith, explicitly stated in the first creeds of the faith. It is the supreme argument in favor of the divinity of Jesus and his divine mission. Our Lord proclaimed it many times and by rising from the dead he provided the sign which he had promised those who did not believe him. This point is so important that the primary role of the Apostles is to bear witness to Christ’s resurrection and the proclamation of the resurrection of the Lord is the very core of apostolic teaching. This is the earliest documentary record, earlier than the gospels, of our Lord’s Resurrection. It was probably written in the spring of 57 AD.⁹

¹I am reminding you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand.

²Through it you are also being saved, Note the present tense. if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. Because of free will, any person might freely choose to reject God’s saving grace through deliberate thought or action against, or deliberate failure to act in accordance with, God’s wishes, thereby stripping from themselves the ability to enter into the Beatific Vision.¹¹

³For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: The idea of the gospel as received was a vital one in the early Church. The certification or validation that a Christian preacher carried with him was his Apostolic pedigree. One had to show that one’s teaching was not one’s own but that it had been received from an Apostle or someone who had been taught by an Apostle. In the earliest churches of the Mediterranean world the lists of succession of bishops were kept back to the Apostle from whom the faith, the Gospel, had been received. If there was a dispute about the content of the Gospel this pedigree was appealed to. Later as the Church grew, the

Roman Church, which had members in it from all around the Mediterranean, was appealed to because of its international quality and because it could boast both Peter and Paul in its Apostolic pedigree. Rome became the Church with which all must agree because its bishop received the promise made to Peter and passed to his successors that he would be the rock foundation of the whole Church. This gave the Church unity.⁸ Today, every bishop (and every priest whom they have ordained) in the Catholic Church can trace his spiritual genealogy back to one of the apostles.³ (CCC 1555) **that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures;** Jesus' redemptive death fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant and after his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles.

4that he was buried; In recounting the death of Christ, all four evangelists expressly mention that his body was buried, thereby eliminating any doubt about his death and it also underlines the miracle of the resurrection.⁹ **that he was raised on the third day** This was significant because bodily corruption began on the fourth day. **in accordance with the Scriptures;** St Paul may be referring to certain passages of the OT which--after the event--were seen to foreshadow the Resurrection—for example, the episode of Jonah, Hos 6:1-2 and Ps 16:9-10. This verse 4 has passed directly into the Creed.⁹

5that he appeared to Cephas, (This is the Aramaic form of the nickname given to Simon by Jesus which is "Peter" in the Greek.) The Resurrection is announced to the "the disciples and Peter in Mark. In Luke and in this verse it is suggested that Peter was the first witness of the Risen Jesus. **then to the Twelve.** Here we see Peter having primacy of place among the apostles.

6After that, Christ appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

7After that he appeared to James, He was the first appointed bishop of Jerusalem.¹⁰ **then to all the apostles.** This probably refers to a wider circle of disciples than the "Twelve", as sometimes is the case in the NT.¹⁰ Paul does not include the apparitions to the holy women because Jewish law would not accept them as legal witnesses.⁵

8Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me. All of the people to whom Jesus appeared were his disciples, except Paul. Paul both saw the risen Christ and received a missionary mandate from him (Acts 9:1-15). His encounter with the resurrected Jesus in visible glory was unique compared with the other apostles, who saw Jesus alive before his Ascension into heaven. Paul felt undeserving of an apostolic mission in light of his former hostility to the Church.¹⁰

9For I am the least of the apostles, Paul sees that the primary role of the apostles is to bear witness to Christ's Resurrection. It is the very core of apostolic teaching in Acts.⁹ **not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.** Paul probably came to Jerusalem within a few years after the death of Jesus. He was a student of Gamaliel and became a rigid Pharisee.⁴ Acts tells us that the witnesses to the stoning of Stephen (the members of the Sanhedrin) piled their cloaks at the feet of Saul (Paul) so they might better hurl the stones at Stephen, and that Paul concurred in the act of killing. After that he became an agent of the council in Jerusalem in its attack upon the Christians. He entered house after house, dragged men and women out and threw them into jail. Later he went to the high priest and asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, which would empower him to arrest and bring to Jerusalem anyone he might find living according to the new way.

10But 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. God

chooses to use man's cooperation. As St. Augustine says: "that is, not just me, but God with me; and therefore not the grace of God alone, nor myself alone, but the grace of God and myself."⁹

11Therefore, whether it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed. Paul insists his gospel is identical to the teaching of the rest of the apostles.

Luke 5:1-11

The setting here is in Galilee near Capernaum.

1While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. Matthew and Mark speak of the "Sea of Galilee" but Luke, being a gentile, minimizes it. This freshwater lake is about 13 miles long and 7.5 miles wide.⁵

2He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. This meant that they had finished their long night's work.¹⁴

3Getting into one of the boats, The Fathers saw in Simon's boat a symbol of the pilgrim Church on earth.¹³ the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down This was the normal position for a teacher.¹⁴ and taught the crowds from the boat.

The people sat on the hillside which was like a natural amphitheatre. The sound carried from the boat and the people didn't crowd Jesus. Christ gets into the boat in order to teach the crowds and from the barque of Peter, the Church, he continues to teach the whole world.¹³

4After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water This is also a metaphor for responding to the call of Christ, for God never calls us to the safety of the harbor until our lives are over.¹ and lower your nets for a catch."

5Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." Peter set aside preconceived ideas. Notice that he speaks for the others.¹⁴ In the four gospels and the book of Acts, the name of Peter occurs 195 times. The apostle John comes next in frequency for he is mentioned 29 times.¹⁵ Though exhausted from a night of unsuccessful fishing, Peter places his faith in Christ, despite the apparent odds against catching anything.¹²

6When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.

7They signaled to their partners It appears that Simon (Peter) and the sons of Zebedee (James and John) are business partners.¹⁴ in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking.

8When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, The change from the title "Master" in verse 5 to "Lord" shows Peter's religious fear before the awesome presence of the divine.⁵ for I am a sinful man." In all three readings, the writers had an experience of the presence of God and all found it humbling. They felt that they were unworthy on the brink of their vocations. Proverbs 9:10 says "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

9For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him,

10and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." At daybreak on Pentecost Peter preaches the Gospel and takes in a miraculous catch of 3,000 souls from all over the world in his first outing as a fisher of men.(Acts 2:41)

11When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything Luke's Gospel is called the gospel of complete renunciation.² It stresses that Christian discipleship demands a loose attachment to worldly possessions and a willingness to part with them if necessary.¹² and followed him. Harder

than the search for God, perhaps, is the fear that God may find us, ask us to cast aside our tasks, and follow.⁶

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2004" by Aelred R. Rosser; (2) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1998" by Lawrence E. Mick; (3) "Catechism of the Catholic Church," (4) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (5) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (6) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2007" by James L. Weaver; (7) "Isaiah" by John F. A. Sawyer; (8) The Commentary Notes of Tim Gray and Sean Innerst; (9) "The Navarre Bible: CORINTHIANS," (10) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians" with Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch; (11) "Bible Basics" by Steve Kellmeyer; (12) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of LUKE" with Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch; (13) "The Navarre Bible: ST LUKE," (14) "The Gospel of LUKE" by Luke Timothy Johnson; (15) "Jesus, Peter & The Keys" by Scott Butler; Norman Dahlgren and Rev. Mr. David Hess; and (16) "Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word" by Graziano Marcheschi with Nancy Seitz Marcheschi.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.