

Homily Resources for Sunday February 10 2019 5th in O.T.

Readings Isa 6:1-2a, 3-6; Ps 138:1-8; 1 Cor 15: 1-11; Luke 5:1-11

“Called to effective leadership”

1. Summary: The central theme of today’s readings is discipleship and especially leadership: Here we can identify three steps:

1) The awesome awareness of the power of God. This is seen in Isaiah’s vision in the temple, St Paul’s conversion, and the miraculous, catch of fish described in today’s gospel.

2) The recognition and confession of one’s unworthiness and inadequacy: *“Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”*

3) The word of reassurance from Jesus and a call to share in his life-giving mission. This, then, challenges us to examine our own personal call.

This is also a pattern for success in today’s business world.

2. Commentary on the Readings:

3. Introduction: In all three readings we see how Isaiah, Paul and Peter all responded with a profound sense of unworthiness when they were called. After humbling themselves before God, God called them into His service. In this pattern of call, God shows humility to be a quality for leaders, a pattern demonstrated more recently in Jim Collins’ book, *From Good to Great*. We are invited to reassess the adequacy of our own response to the call from God.

b. First reading, Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8: When Yahweh permitted Isaiah to experience His magnificence in a vision in the Temple of Jerusalem, Isaiah at once confessed his unworthiness, calling out, *“Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips.”* In the presence of God’s holiness, Isaiah became painfully aware of his own sins and those of his people. However, when cleansed by God he was ready for His ministry: *“Here I am. Send me!”* While we may feel profoundly unworthy, God will give us the courage to speak His word and call His people to repentance.

c. Second Reading, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11: Here St. Paul is defending the most basic of all Christian beliefs, the resurrection of Jesus. This may be one of the earliest statements of creed as well as a core belief for being a disciple of Jesus. In this passage Paul also humbly recounted his unworthiness to be an apostle because of his former persecution of Christians, giving full credit to God for his call to the ministry: *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*

d. Gospel: The story of the miraculous catch of fish described in today’s gospel is similar to the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus recounted in John 21: 4-14. In both accounts, the apostles at first fail to recognize who Jesus is, then receive a revelation of his true identity by the catch they obtain. This prompts a full confession of faith from Simon Peter to which Jesus responds by commissioning him as the representative of the disciples.

3. Obeying our leader with wisdom and authority. The fishermen and fishing: The scene is the Sea of Galilee (*Gennesareth* in Greek and *Tiberias* in Latin). This body of water is thirteen miles long and seven and a half miles wide. In Jesus’ time, there were ten prosperous towns situated around the lake with a total population of about 150,000. Most of the people residing in them made their living from the waters in front of them. This was big business. These fish were dried and shipped to Jerusalem and as far as Rome. Thus, one gets the idea of how rich the lake was in fish. Jesus was preaching to a large crowd standing right at the water’s edge. When the teaching had ended, Jesus told Peter to pull out into deeper water for a catch of fish. In matters of fishing, Peter was an expert while Jesus was only a carpenter. Hence Peter, complained saying, *‘Master, we have worked hard all night long, caught nothing and already washed our*

nets'. Peter might have added that fish come to the surface in the Sea of Galilee only at night, or that the presence and noise of people would frighten the remaining fish away. Instead his was a response of **humble obedience**, "*Nevertheless, if You wish it, I will lower the nets.*" That declaration of trust was what made the miracle that followed possible. This time, however, instead of pulling up an empty net, Peter and Andrew found the net was filled to bursting point, and they had to ask the help of their partners, Zebedee's sons James and John, to help them bring in the catch. Simon Peter understood the message very quickly. Confronted by the size of the catch, he recognized the very presence of God before him and became convinced of his own pride and self-centeredness, his sinfulness. We find the same response in all the first two readings today. Isaiah, seeing the glory of God in his vision, says, "*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 or his humility, says, "*I am the least of the apostles... I hardly deserve the name apostle.*" Peter begs Jesus to go away. His simple confession -- "*Leave me Lord. I am a sinful man.*"-- marks a turning point in his life, and becomes the model for our humble response to Jesus.

4. Thus Peter became the first person in the Gospel to acknowledge his sinfulness. He is also the first apostle to be called by Jesus. Today's Gospel concludes with an inspiring image of commitment: "*When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him*" (Lk 5:11).

5. Fear and humility are marks of a sincere and effective discipleship as well as leadership in today's world. Simon's response was similar to the responses to the other encounters with God seen throughout the Old Testament. As he stood before the burning bush, Moses confessed his disqualifications for leadership, especially his inability to speak well. (Ex 3:11-4:17, esp. 4:10). Later in the Bible, when God came to Solomon in a dream, Solomon declared that he was not wise enough to govern God's people and asked for an "understanding heart" (1 King 3:7-9). Likewise, when God called Jeremiah, the prophet recognized the inadequacy of his youth (Jer 1:6).

6. Preparation for Lent: 1) Let our encounter with the holiness and wisdom of God lead us to recognize our sinfulness. The good news of today's gospel is that our sinfulness -- our pride and self-centeredness - does not repel God. Our God is a God who gives sinners a new start. Our response must be modeled on that of the tax collector in the parable: "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). The recognition of our inadequacy is necessary for us to be willing and able to receive transformation by God's grace. Application to Ash Wednesday.

7. Application: From Good to Great: There is an attitude, not being confidence and ego driven, but feeling unqualified and profoundly humble is one of the marks of a level five leader in Jim Collins' book, *From Good to Great*. All eleven of the men who led the most outstanding companies in terms of growth from roughly 1975 - 1990 basically felt unqualified for their jobs. They were noted for their humility and modesty. They believed that they needed to become more qualified and to attract other qualified people as leaders. They also had a leadership style that led them to ask questions first rather than proclaiming answers. This style of leadership is remarkably similar to successful leadership in the history of the Church.

8. Leadership for the Catholic Community here at St. Boniface is one of our goals: A primary goal, therefore, is to cultivate a sense of humility, of our own inadequacy and the fear of the Lord so we can be ready to serve him.