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“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch” (Luke 5:4).

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

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's three readings offer insights into the conversion experiences of three major figures in the Bible: The Prophet Isaiah, the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter. When called by God to serve, they are overwhelmed by their unworthiness, then drawn into service by an even more overwhelming sense that they are fully known and being deliberately chosen by God. Their vocations advance salvation history and serve as a model for our own response to God's will in our lives.

Isaiah is called to be God's mouthpiece during an earth-shaking theophany in the temple, and he immediately despairs because he knows he is a "man of unclean lips." An angel touches his lips with a burning coal from the altar and Isaiah cries, "Here I am, Lord, send me!" Paul describes his own unworthiness to be an Apostle, "abnormally born" and the least among them, yet the most devoted of all by God's grace after Jesus appeared to him. Finally, Peter falls to his knees in the boat after the miraculous catch of fish and begs Jesus to depart from him because he is a sinner. But he cannot resist Jesus' piercing look of knowledge and love. He will become the leader of the other Apostles.

Though these stories can seem unique and extraordinary, they mirror an experience all of us can have in some form or intensity if we are open to and blessed by love. Falling in love begins when we exchange a look of recognition with another person that invites us to risk a relationship that will change everything. Whether that invitation occurs immediately or over time, it dares us to explore a new future. Whether this experience comes mediated in a human encounter or in prayer, it reveals that we are not alone and that we are meant to love and be loved.

To know that someone loves us can first be overwhelming. We think, "If you only knew the real me, you would see how unworthy I am of this gift." When Peter looked into the face of Jesus and saw that he already knew him completely and still wanted him, he was challenged to the core. Jesus saw Peter as he was, but also who he would become. For Peter to say yes was to begin a journey of change and growth that would reveal the glory God saw in him.

The Good News is a grand scheme that changes history, but first it must enter every heart in a personal and intimate way. Before Paul received his assignment to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, he had to grasp that the Jesus he had tried to destroy loved

him and gave his life for him.

We will not serve God out of some vague belief or sense of duty, but only if we fall in love with God. This is the first prayer, the one gift that opens us to every other gift. “Lord, look at me with love, and I will follow you anywhere” Jesus answers, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”

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