

# *Gratitude Foundation*

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*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?  
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

**The Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time —Year C**

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*“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”*

(1 Thess: 5:18)

# Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

## Reading 1

### Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

In the year King Uzziah died,  
I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne,  
with the train of his garment filling the temple.  
Seraphim were stationed above.

They cried one to the other,  
"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!  
All the earth is filled with his glory!"  
At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook  
and the house was filled with smoke.

Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed!  
For I am a man of unclean lips,  
living among a people of unclean lips;  
yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"  
Then one of the seraphim flew to me,  
holding an ember that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

He touched my mouth with it, and said,  
"See, now that this has touched your lips,  
your wickedness is removed, your sin purged."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,  
"Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"  
"Here I am," I said; "send me!"

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8

**R. (1c) In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,  
for you have heard the words of my mouth;  
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;  
I will worship at your holy temple  
and give thanks to your name.

**R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

Because of your kindness and your truth;  
for you have made great above all things  
your name and your promise.

When I called, you answered me;  
you built up strength within me.

**R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

All the kings of the earth shall give thanks to you, O LORD,  
when they hear the words of your mouth;  
and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD:  
"Great is the glory of the LORD."  
**R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

Your right hand saves me.  
The LORD will complete what he has done for me;  
your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;  
forsake not the work of your hands.  
**R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

## Reading 2

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

I am reminding you, brothers and sisters,  
of the gospel I preached to you,  
which you indeed received and in which you also stand.  
Through it you are also being saved,  
if you hold fast to the word I preached to you,  
unless you believed in vain.  
For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received:  
that Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
that he was buried;  
that he was raised on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.  
After that, Christ appeared to more  
than five hundred brothers at once,  
most of whom are still living,  
though some have fallen asleep.  
After that he appeared to James,  
then to all the apostles.  
Last of all, as to one born abnormally,  
he appeared to me.  
For I am the least of the apostles,  
not fit to be called an apostle,  
because I persecuted the church of God.  
But 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.  
Therefore, whether it be I or they,  
so we preach and so you believed.

## Alleluia

### Matthew 4:19

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Come after me

and I will make you fishers of men.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

## Gospel

### Luke 5:1-11

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God,

he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret.

He saw two boats there alongside the lake;

the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets.

Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore.

Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon,

"Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."

Simon said in reply,

"Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets."

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

They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them.

They came and filled both boats

so that the boats were in danger of sinking.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said,

"Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

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

and 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."

When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

## Exegesis

### Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

The Prophet Isaiah begins his book as follows: “The vision which Isaiah, son of Amos, had concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah.” Through extra biblical sources experts can ascertain the dates that the kings reigned, Jotham (742-735, Ahaz (735-715) and Hezekiah (715-354). In our pericope today Isaiah reveals the year that he experienced his call to ministry as the year that King Uzziah died, which was 742 B.C. Experts also suggest that Isaiah remained in his role as a prophet until the year Jerusalem fell, 701.

The dates are important in that it gives a backdrop for the political and religious environment in which Isaiah lived and exercised his role as a prophet for Yahweh. It was a time of great civil unrest. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians in the year 722. Jerusalem itself fell to Assyria in 701.

At the time that Isaiah received his calling there certainly was plenty of infidelity to Yahweh. The prophet says it quite succinctly: “Ah! sinful nation, people laden with wickedness, evil race, corrupt children! They have forsaken the Lord, spurned the Holy One of Israel, apostatized. (Is 1:4). Despite their infidelity, the prophet always holds fast to the faithfulness of Yahweh, to His infinite love and mercy. “Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be crimson red they may become white as wool.” (Is 1: 18). As Isaiah links his mission, his calling, to Yahweh, Himself, it gives him the authority that he needs to deliver a message that might be difficult for many to hear. It not only gave Isaiah credibility, but it would give him courage and perseverance in a long a difficult battle against compromised religious practices.

Like St. Peter and St. Paul when they first meet Jesus, Isaiah has a feeling of unworthiness as he stands before Yahweh. However, he is quickly purified as the seraphim hold an ember from the altar to his lips.

The theophany that Isaiah experienced as Yahweh called him to ministry certainly gave him the courage to persevere during this difficult time for Israel and Judah. His powerful prophecies helped to ignite the great religious reforms under the reign of King Hezekiah in 715. Many years passed, however, between Isaiah’s calling in 742 and the beginning of Hezekiah’s reforms.

### Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8

Psalm 138 consists of just 8 verses. It is titled *Hymn of a Grateful Heart – of David*. Although it is an individual song of thanksgiving for deliverance, the psalmist is calling for all to praise God for His steadfast love. “All the kings of the earth will praise you, Lord.” (v 4). Although the psalm is a personal proclamation of gratitude it is not meant to be a private proclamation.

The focus of the gratitude expressed is for the grace of God’s salvation and His steadfast love as expressed in verse 8. *Your right hands saves me... Your kindness, O Lord, endures forever*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *saves* interestingly is the same word that is the root word of *Joshua/Jesus*. The word that is translated here as *kindness* is the common Hebrew word *hesed*. *Hesed* describes God’s steadfast unchanging love. It is most often translated as steadfast love. Other times it is translated as kindness, mercy, fidelity, goodness, faithfulness and loyalty. It means all the above. It is this love for which the psalmist is proclaiming gratitude.



## Exegesis (Continued)

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

In our passage from *1 Corinthians* St. Paul is addressing some errant thinking among the fledgling Church in Corinth. The issue is stated clearly in the verse that follows our pericope: “But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection from the dead?” (1 Cor 15:12). It is not surprising that the Church at Corinth would be influenced by Hellenistic philosophy. The Greek philosophers envisioned a separation of the soul from the body at death, i.e., the soul being set free from the fallen, darkened and transient corporeal realm. Among the Jews a small group of Sadducees also believed that there was no resurrection of the body.

St. Paul begins his argument for the resurrection of the body by focusing on the resurrection of Jesus. The Risen Lord appeared to Paul, the apostles and many others for a reason, to show us life beyond the grave. Jesus died on the Cross for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day. There are many witnesses to these historical events. Jesus spent three days in the tomb to validate that His death was real. He rose from the dead and appeared in His glorified body, a body that was real and recognizable, with visible wounds from the Cross, yet He was able to appear in the Upper Room although the doors were locked. His appearances affirm the reality of the resurrection of the body.

Belief in bodily resurrection had already been revealed in the OT. “But the dead shall rise, their corpses shall rise; awake and sing, you who lie in the dust.” (Is 26:19). “Thus says the Lord God to these bones: See! I will bring My Spirit into you that you may come to life.” (Ez 37: 5). Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; Some shall live forever; others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace.” (Dan 12:2). “You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever.” (2 Mac 7:9). Note that the earliest of these OT passages, i.e. from Isaiah, dates back to 740 B.C. The resurrection of the body to eternal life, while made visible in the Risen Lord, was not new to the Jewish faith.

When we think of the various resurrection appearances of Jesus we tend to focus on those appearances to the apostles and others as revealed in the four Gospels. These appearances all occur between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus. After the Ascension, the Risen Lord also appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus. St. Paul acknowledges his calling from the Lord, and like Peter, he too is aware of his own unworthiness. Perhaps this is particularly difficult for Paul in that he was violently attacking the early Church. Jesus makes no distinction between Himself and His Church when he exclaims, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” (Acts 9:4). Paul not only uses his experience of the Risen Lord in his arguments supporting the resurrection of the body, but he bases his authority on his personal calling from the Risen Lord, Himself.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Luke 5:1-11

In Luke's Gospel Jesus has already begun His ministry before He calls His first disciples. He has already performed several miracles and has been rejected by His own in Nazareth. The miracles that He has performed, including the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, have already caused large crowds to press upon Him, such that He must get into Peter's boat to preach. Once in the boat, "He sat down and taught the crowds from the boat."

*After He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."* Peter responded that they had worked hard all night and had caught nothing. Yet, he had enough faith in or respect for Jesus that he and the others responded to His request.

I was once listening to a scripture scholar talk about the typical process of fishermen setting their nets at the time of Jesus, particularly in the shallow Sea of Galilee. It involved an arrangement of three or more nets. It would take several men and at least two boats to set and stretch out the nets. The point is that it was a long and involved process. In our Gospel passage the fishermen had fished all night, they had pulled in their nets and were washing them. They worked hard all night and caught nothing. I am sure that they were tired and worn out. Yet, at the word of Jesus, they went back out and reset their nets, and then the miracle happened. It involved the power of God and their faith and hard work, which seems to be a common formula for a miracle. Recall that the servants at the Wedding Feast at Cana had to fill all the stone jars with water first, and then the miracle happened.

Three years later Peter and the others would have a similar experience, perhaps in the same place along the Sea of Galilee. St. John tells the story of the Risen Lord appearing to them, and again there is a miraculous catch of fish. It is noteworthy that there is no other accounts of these fishermen ever catching any fish, without Jesus! The boat has become symbolic of the Church, whether it be Noah and the Ark or Jesus in Peter's boat, it has become a symbol of salvation. With Jesus in the boat the storms are calmed, and fish are caught. Without Him nothing!

Like Isaiah, Moses and others throughout Sacred Scripture, there is a natural human experience of unworthiness in the presence of the Almighty. The natural response is to fall to our knees as Simon did. Jesus almost seems to ignore Peter's gesture. The response of Jesus is to reassure Peter, "Be not afraid, from now on you will be catching men."

There is much more symbolism involved in this miraculous catch of fish. The deep has long been a symbol of darkness and chaos. Bringing fish up from the deep to the light of day is symbolic of moving people from the darkness of life without faith to the light of faith and to the knowledge of God and of His love and mercy. This is something that can only be done with Jesus in the boat.

*They left everything.* The Greek word translated as *left* is *aphiemi*. It is sometimes translated as *abandoned*, *dropped*, or *let go of*. *Aphiemi* appears several more times in Luke's Gospel to describe a response of disposition of possessions in response to God's calling. Shortly after this a tax collector named Levi will have the same response. "After this He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his customs post. He said to him, 'Follow Me.' And leaving (*aphiemi*) everything behind, he got up and followed Him." (Lk 5: 27-28). See also Lk 14:23 and 18: 22-23.

*and followed Him.* The Greek word that is translated as *follow* is *akoloutheo*. The verb *akoloutheo* is used in all the Gospels to express more than a physical act; it denotes a spiritual allegiance of the disciple (see e.g., 5:27-28; 9:23, 49, 57, 59, 61; 18: 22, 28, 43; 22:39, 54). In Luke, the notion of *following* will take on special significance because of the importance of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

## Reflection

There is a common theme that runs through our readings this weekend. It is the very normal human experience of unworthiness in the presence of God. In our first reading, Isaiah speaks of a profound experience of God in the temple. In the presence of God, he feels unclean and empty. In the presence of God, he is purified and filled. The presence of God fills the temple and purifies everything that is present.

In our second reading St. Paul recalls his experience of the Risen Lord and acknowledges his unworthiness. St. Paul states, "I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." In fact, a couple years past before Paul could allow himself to begin his work as the apostle to the Gentiles. Over and over, he talks of the Grace of God that is purifying him and making him worthy of the call to apostleship.

In our Gospel this weekend, St. Peter has a very profound experience of Jesus who got into his boat. At the miraculous catch of fish, realizing that he was in the presence of God, Peter fell to his knees and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Jesus seems to ignore Peter and simply says, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching men." We are told that Peter and the others left everything and followed Jesus. The literal translation simply says that they drooped their nets and followed Him.

Three years later, at the Last Supper, Jesus got up from the table, put a towel around His waist, got down on His knees, and began to wash the feet of His disciples. At this Peter was about to refuse to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with Me." (Jn 13:8). I believe that Jesus is saying, unless you allow me to wash away your sins you will not share eternal life with Me. We must allow Jesus to take away our sins, to purify us. It is a gift that must be received by each one of us. It begins with the belief that Jesus does take away sins, that He does desire to wash us clean and purify us.

The message this weekend will be made real and tangible for all of us when the priest raises the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass and we pray together, "Lord I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." Like Peter at the Last Supper, we must allow Jesus to wash our feet, to wash away our unworthiness. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. All we must do is allow Him to do so. All we must do is accept His Grace. His Grace is enough for us!

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle within us the fire of Your love. Amen.

In Christ,





## Personal Witness

The Gospel this weekend has had a huge impact in my life. As I heard the call to priesthood thirty years ago, I was overwhelmed by the feeling of my own unworthiness. That feeling was supported by many of my friends who were quick to point out my many sins. (I have friends like Job had). The more that I prayed, the more I was led to this Gospel passage, the more I meditated on this Gospel, the louder I heard the voice, “Be not afraid, follow Me anyway. My Grace is enough for you.” That particular response has been overwhelming in my prayer over the years. Whenever the feeling of weakness, unworthiness, inadequacy, or fear would creep in I would hear those words, “Be not afraid, My Grace is enough for you.”

In my early adult years, I was gradually becoming more and more adrift with our American culture. I can look back now and see my regression from the faith and the basic morality of my youth. It was like I was flowing in a river with those around me all drifting downstream. The atmosphere was cloudy, and the water was murky, such that I could not see clearly. The age-old story of the frog in boiling water would be a good metaphor for where I was. The idea is that if a frog were in a pan of cold water and put on the stove the gradual change in temperature would lure him to sleep and he would boil to death. If a frog were put into hot water, he would jump out immediately. My journey was so gradual I did not know enough to get out of the hot water.

But I did. Something was missing in my life, and I went searching for more. I went searching for the God that I once knew. My vocation to priesthood began with a fundamental decision to turn back to God. Like the Prodigal Son, in my emptiness I came to my senses, I made an intellectual decision to get up and begin a journey back. I decided to get out of the “flowing river” because I was drowning.

My searching led me to a Cursillo Weekend Retreat. I have shared many times my profound experience of God’s love and mercy during the Friday evening penance service. What I have not shared that openly is my overwhelming experience of darkness that accompanied that theophany. During the first part of the penance service, in the light of the Holy Spirit, I was given a clear vision of the dark recesses of my life. I saw for the first time, areas of sin that were once cloudy and veiled. As quickly as these images surfaced in my consciousness, however, I felt the Lord purifying them and taking them from me. It was as if weights were being removed from my back one at a time. The weight was absolutely crushing but became lighter and lighter until I became totally free.

It was from that darkness that I was able to see the bright light of Christ. It was in that moment of Grace that I felt deliverance. In that light, Christ was calling me to my true vocation as a priest. The clear message was that I was to help others to experience God’s love and mercy. It was clear that my personal experience was to be shared, and so I do. Have I told you lately how much God loves you? God loves you! If you don’t believe it gaze at the Crucifix for a few moments and say over and over, “I love you this much!”

*Fr Glenn*