

Fifth Sunday Ordinary Time.

*Isaiah 6:1-8    1 Corinthians 15: 1-11    Luke 5: 1-11*

The theme of call continues in today's readings. Luke places Jesus' call, to some to become disciples, in the context of the proclamation of the Word of God. This could suggest that in the time of Luke the call to discipleship had a liturgical setting.

The story develops over four scenes. Jesus selects a boat and sits as he would in the synagogue. He follows the scripture with a short teaching. By making the countryside his locus for teaching Jesus emphasises that the word is paramount not the venue.

After the teaching Jesus asks Simon to move out into deep water and begin to fish. Simon, who has fished unsuccessfully at the optimum time, is prepared to try again at Jesus' request. In choosing Simon's boat Jesus meets his potential disciple in his own environment. Simon is responsive to Jesus even before he hears the explicit call to join Jesus in ministry.

The call to leave the shore becomes a metaphor for the risk entailed in a new life-style. There is also a risk in taking advice from someone who knows nothing of the fishing business.

Handling the catch needs more than an individual's resources. It requires communal effort. Discipleship often begins in a family. The call to discipleship can come from one's family or friends.

Simon's initial conversion comes from the sight of the unexpected. He receives a surprise. Paul, also, describes his conversion in terms of shock. The unexpected triggers fear, as if he suddenly becomes aware of the mystery that lies just beyond his usual pragmatic approach to life. So often these little visions of both light and shadow offer us a new way of being and doing.

Simon's reaction is to separate himself from the power of Jesus' presence for he intuits that the encounter will have life-changing effects. Simon's companions also experience the awe and fear of the presence of God now tangible amongst them.

The call of Isaiah is also experience in liturgy. Isaiah, like Simon, is conscious of his inadequacies and feels the power and majesty of God. The symbol of the ember purifying the lips of the prophet stresses the importance of the role of proclaimer of the Word. The ability to say, "Here I am, send me," comes, first of all, from God who calls all to participate in re-creation and restoration. Awareness of one's own shortcomings is suddenly inescapable. Such self-understanding is the beginning of humility.

The church selects the beginning of Paul's great treatise on resurrection for this Sunday. The whole teaching will be covered over the next few weeks. The resurrection of Jesus is the starting point of Christian faith. Paul states that the central mystery of Christ, his death and resurrection, is not a radical break with

scripture but a natural development. That is, the life death and resurrection of Jesus belong within the unfolding of the design of God from eternity.

The tradition about the resurrection, expressed in the Gospels in narrative form, continued to be shaped by the experience and reflection of the Christian community. "after-death" stories were common in Hellenistic culture. New Testament theology differs considerably. The first difference is that Jesus was experienced as present in a more powerful way than before, not as a spectre. The second is that the experiences had a communitarian nature. Paul cites as his authority the "seeing" by significant members of the community. It is the presence of the risen Christ that brings community to birth. God who is the author of the resurrection of Jesus can bring about spiritual re-birth in the most unlikely candidates.