

February 7, 2016 – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Prepared by Fr. Thomas J. Marti, MM, Seattle, WA

Isaiah 6: 1-2, 3-8; Psalm 138: 1-5, 7-8; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5: 1-11

“Here I am; send me!”

We as Christians are recipients of the most extraordinary news the world has ever heard. And what is that? The news is that God is a loving and caring God who so loves us, humankind, that he sent his own Son to become one with us, to redeem us and to invite us into his eternal presence to a banquet of life that is so extraordinary that it defies description.

Less than two months ago we once again celebrated the extraordinary event of the Incarnation, the birth in Bethlehem of the Son of God, Jesus Christ who has revealed to us and to the whole world God’s extraordinary love for everyone. Through his prophetic example and teaching, and ultimately through his death and resurrection, Jesus reveals this love and invites us to the embrace of God’s love. All are invited! No one is excluded!

Not only are we invited to participate in the eternal banquet of God’s love, but also we are invited to participate in the mission of Jesus, a mission he received from the Father. We participate in this mission of Jesus in various ways, but ultimately by the witness of our lives – how we live! As the quote often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi says, “Preach the gospel at all times; use words when necessary.”

In today’s readings we have three extraordinary examples of people being called to participate in this mission. First of all we have testimony of Isaiah the prophet. Hearing the Lord’s calling – “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” – Isaiah responded saying: “Here I am; send me!”

Then we have St. Paul reflecting on his own call to preach the Gospel, the message of God’s unfailing love, identifying himself as the least of the Apostles. He writes: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them – though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”

And then we have the extraordinary conversion of St. Peter and his companions after the miraculous catch of fish at the word of Jesus. Peter and his shipmates were dumbfounded. Peter exclaimed: “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!” Jesus responded: “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people!” St. Luke the Evangelist then remarks that Peter and his companions brought their boats to land, left everything, and became Jesus’ followers.

Like with Isaiah, Paul and Peter we too are called by Jesus to continue his work of proclaiming the Good News, the Gospel. We are called to work for justice and peace our world of grave sin, including the sins of imperialistic militarism, materialism, consumerism, and racism. We continue to experience senseless violence in the world. In our own midst we have the massacre of the children and teachers in Newtown, CT. We have the terrible war going in Syria. The UN records that 60,000 have died in this past year and anticipate that another 100,000 will die this year, 2013. In our war in Afghanistan there have been over 330 drone attacks, and over 1,700 children have been killed or harmed in the conflict. We live daily in the face of possible nuclear annihilation as our government continues to develop more powerful nuclear weapons and more sophisticated vehicles for conducting nuclear war.

It is in such a world that we are called indeed to carry on the mission of Jesus as peacemakers. Our late Holy Father Pope Paul VI said: “If you want peace work for justice!” This is our challenge, our call.

How are we responding to our Lord’s commission to the early Church – to go to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation?

“Here I am; send me!”