

**5th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> 2025**  
**Isaiah 6: 1-2, 3-8; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5:1-11**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

When a person encounters God, the first thing what he/she experiences will be the holiness and glory of God. Soon the person becomes aware of his/her unworthiness before the Holy God. In such situation many will try to run away from God, but a few will humbly acknowledge the sinfulness and seek God's mercy and forgiveness. In the first reading of today we see Prophet Isaiah basking in the glory of God in a vision. But soon the reality of unworthiness creeps into his mind and he exclaims, "**Woe is me, I am doomed! For, I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips. (Is. 6: 5).**" When Isaiah became humble enough to acknowledge his uncleanness one of the seraphim purified him touching with a burning charcoal.

St. Paul, before his conversion, was the bitterest enemy of Christians and he persecuted them. But when he encountered Jesus, Saul the murderer became Paul the great apostle. At the same time he was always aware of his unworthiness. In 2Corinthians 11: 30 Paul says, "*If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.*" In today's reading Paul humbly admits, "**For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.**" But Paul too felt the uplifting touch of Jesus in his life and he says in the same reading, "**But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective.**"

The context of today's gospel is the call of the first batch of disciples by Jesus. When Jesus got into the boat of Simon Peter, to escape the pressing crowd, Simon didn't feel anything unusual about it. While Jesus was preaching, Simon and companions were nursing the bitter feeling of the fruitless night of fishing they did and were busy washing their nets to go home. But the demand of the rabbi to cast the net once more in the lake during the broad day light raised the eyebrows of Simon and friends. On the other hand, Simon didn't want to pick up an argument with the new rabbi whom he met for the first time and simply obeyed what he commanded. But the miraculous catch of fish made Simon and friends come to a closer contact with the holiness of Jesus. Being aware of their unworthiness, their first tendency was to run away from Jesus and Simon expressed his intention very clearly, "**Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man.**" Here we find the humility of Simon to confess his unworthiness. **Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."** We find two good qualities in Isaiah, Simon and Paul; first of all they had the humility to acknowledge that they were sinful people and secondly, they were ready to be purified by God.

We have a tendency in us to feel, *“I am OK and you are not OK.”* In order to keep this feeling alive, very often we look at people who are not doing the right things and convince ourselves, Aha, I am not a bad person. Sometimes people come to confession with the introduction, ‘I am not a bad person, father.’ The Pharisee who prayed in the Temple bragged comparing himself with the tax collector, **“O God, I am not like the rest of men – grasping, crooked, adulterous or even like this tax collector.”** On the other hand the tax collector who didn’t even have the courage to raise his eyes to heaven, humbly prayed, **“O God, be merciful to me a sinner.”** Jesus says that this tax collector went out justified by God, not the Pharisee.

Sisters and brothers, when you and I stand before the holiness and glory of God we are totally exposed and we see very clearly that we are not that good as we think. This was the same experience of thousands of holy men and women when they first encountered God in their lives. When God exposes us, it is not His intention to humiliate or disgrace us, rather to elevate the person to a higher realm. What God seeks from us is nothing but the humility to admit our unworthiness and co-operate with His plan. So instead of claiming that we are good and also trusting in our abilities and talents, let us turn to God for help and things will be different in our lives. **As human beings, none of us can claim to be perfect, we fall and rise.** But if we have the trust in Jesus and the humility, we too will be able to say with St. Paul, **“By the Grace of God I am what I am.”** Very often sinners perish, not because God is not merciful enough to forgive their sins, but because they are not humble enough to acknowledge their sins. With the Psalmist let us also say, *“For I acknowledge my offence, and my sin is before me always; against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps 51:5-6).* **With all humility let us pray with the Psalmist, “If you, Lord mark our sins, Lord, who can stand? But, with you is forgiveness and so you are revered (Ps. 130:3).**