

Dignity Boston

Homily for 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time

By Abdel Sepúlveda

*“Speak,
for your
servant is
listening!”*

Right now God is calling someone to share the good news that our creator is a God of relationship and love.

Right now, God is asking another person to challenge the status quo of a system designed to favor a particular group of individuals while deliberately putting down and vilifying other groups.

Right now, God’s grace is kindling the fire of prophetic love in the hearts of people around the world and commanding them to go out and proclaim freedom to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release to the oppressed.

Right now, God is using us to answer someone’s prayers and needs.

That’s how our God of relationships, vocation, and mission behaves.

God uses us to become more present in creation.



After all, to quote and paraphrase Theresa of Avila:

“Christ has no body on earth but yours;

No hands but yours,

No feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of God must look out on the world.

Yours are the feet with which God is to go about doing good.

Yours are the hands with which God is to bless her people.”

At this very moment, regardless of our age, ethnicity, gender, political affiliations, sexual orientation, abilities, or health condition, God is reaching out to you and me saying: “Come, we have work to do. I need you to intentionally make my reign more present and complete in your life and in your community.”

This is not a new reality.

God has been doing this since the beginning of our salvation story.

People of every age and race have heard and responded to the call.

From Sarah and Abraham to a stuttering Moses.

From a promiscuous and self-serving David to humble woman in Nazareth who answered yes to being the mother of Christ.

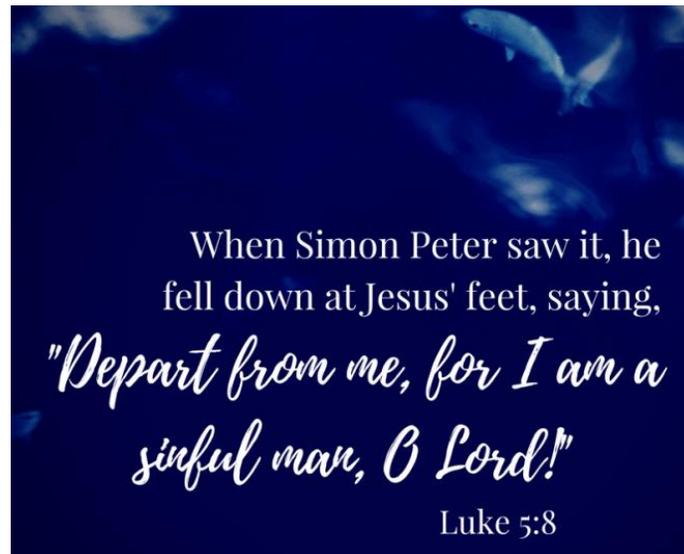
From Paul of Tarsus to Dorothy Day.

All of them, and thousands more, have experienced this call and have answered: “Yes!”

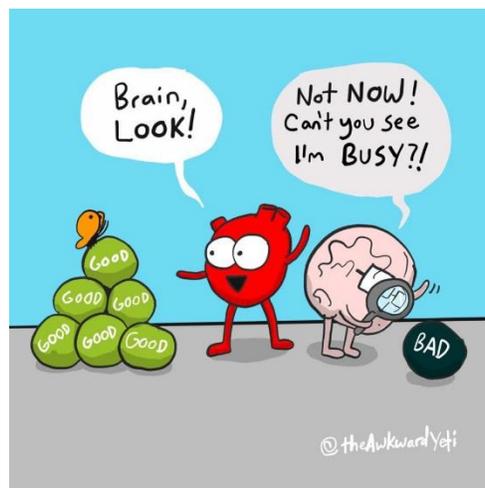
Now, they often react with fear and an overwhelming sense of unworthiness, for you see our brain is very good at reminding us what we have done wrong and our limitations, while ignoring the talents and goodness that we have been blessed with. Take for instance Isaiah is today’s first reading. After seeing the Lord seated in a high and lofty throne the first thing that he says is “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a person of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips”



Or consider Peter, who after experiencing a miraculous event said to Jesus: "Depart from me, Rabbi, for I am a sinful person."



In psychology we call this the brain's negativity bias. It is often explained by saying that our brain is made of Velcro for negative things, and of Teflon for positive things. Our capacity to weigh negative input so heavily most likely evolved for a good reason—to keep us out of harm's way. From the dawn of human history, our very survival depended on our skill at dodging danger, even danger from ourselves. The brain developed systems that would make it unavoidable for us not to notice danger and thus, hopefully, respond to it.



The problem lies when we are in that primal stage and don't let God's grace work in and through us.

Almost in every case God's reaction to our responses includes three components:

- 1) A command not to be afraid
 - a. Do not be afraid, don't let self-doubt, anxiety, and overwhelming feelings cloud your spirit. What's at stake is too precious to let this happen.

2) An affirmation that God has chosen us knowing full well our limitations, talents, successes, and failures.

a. God does not want perfection, God wants holiness through wholeness. This is to say that I cannot compartmentalize who I am when it comes to responding to God's call. I reply with all that I am and have. I reply with my insecurities, fears, anger as well as with my joys and blessings.

3) A confirmation that God will give us what we need to carry on the mission.

a. You are not alone, the God who has chosen you is with you. God is ever present in our lives. We experience God's presence in our lives in multiple ways. And by the way, should you need a sign that God is with you, just ask for one. God will give it to you.

So let us stay open and let us trust that the God who calls us into ministry gives us what we need to do this sacred mission.

Now, what happens if we do not stay open and trust? I'd suggest that the message of salvation will take longer to be spread and will miss people that are in dire need of hearing it.

God cannot afford this and neither can we.

So one again, stay open, stay unafraid, trust, love, and dive into the deep water of God's mission for you.

