

## **Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

February 4, 2007

*Is 6:1-2a, 3-8; 1Cor 15:1-11; Lk 5:1-11*

Homily by: *S. Catherine Marie Bazar, O.P.*

If you look closely at the three Readings for this Sunday, you will see a parallel pattern that defines what a Dominican vocation is all about. Isaiah, Paul, and Peter enter a profound experience of transformation that sheds the old false-self system (granted, painfully!) and resurrects a new self cleansed and prepared to preach the Good News.

In the first Reading, Isaiah enters the silence of the Temple – his sacred space. But he is overcome and terrified at the miserable truth of himself in the presence of Pure Divinity. However, in the seraphic burning of his lips, he totally surrenders himself to this Power and is sent by God as a new man to prophesy and preach.

After having been struck down and blinded, Paul entered the silent and dark “temple” of his disgrace and depression, and here experienced his own absolute powerlessness. Then, cleansed and purified, he awakened to heed the message given him by Ananias. Today in Corinthians he describes how God’s grace restored and empowered him to preach the Gospel message of salvation to all who would listen.

Finally, in Luke we see Simon tired from a long day’s toil, nevertheless going with Jesus out into the “sacred” silence of the deep waters. Peter feels more and more the futility of the day’s work and the emptiness of his soul/boat, yet consents grudgingly to do what he foresees as an abortive act – to lower his nets (and perhaps his defenses). Overcome by the results, he, too, falls to his knees in humility as he faces the shattered Peter within before the glory of Jesus. Yet it is this act that, like Isaiah’s burned lips and later, Paul’s blinded eyes, frees Peter to begin a preaching ministry so intense that laying down his life in disgrace for Christ becomes a privilege.

### *Contemplata et aliis tradere!*

How many times have we heard that profound line over the course of our Dominican training? “Contemplate, and then render to others the fruits of your contemplation.” It is surely in entering the inner temple of our own being that truths can be faced and embraced, battles lost and won, attitudes torn down and rebuilt, self-images surrendered and restored, energies redefined and redirected. It is here that God’s work sculpts and prepares us to declare Gospel Truths authentically and purely because we consent to get out of the way.

This is why Paul, risen anew, was clothed with the confidence that announces, “I live now, not I but Christ lives in me.” This is a lovely mantra to echo as we claim in our hearts the Wisdom of the Ages. Father Thomas Keating says that no world leader should ever govern a country until he or she has first undergone – many times over – this experience of dying and re-awakening. Only then are they fit to lead others.

Let us embrace our contemplative heritage with the enthusiasm that speaks first of courage, then of surrender, then of release, then of profound gratitude so that our true selves, bathed in compassion and love, can rise to preach the Good News of compassion and love in return.