

Friday (St. John of the Cross)

In the divine union the soul has a vision and foretaste of abundant and inestimable riches; it attains to the secrets of God, and to a strange knowledge of him. It is conscious of the awful power of God beyond all other power and might and drinks deeply of the wisdom of God. It feels itself filled with all good, emptied, and, above all, rejoices consciously in the inestimable banquet of love which confirms it in love.

Scripture (Luke 5:4-11)

When Jesus had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.' Simon replied, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' They netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled their companions in the other boat to come and help them; they filled both boats to sinking point. When Simon saw this, he fell on his knees saying 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' For he and all his companions were completely awestruck at the catch they had made. But Jesus said to Simon 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is people you will be catching.' They left everything and followed him.

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5th Week of Ordinary Time

The Word became flesh and went to work with us

Volunteering to be God's messenger would have been far from Isaiah's mind when he first meets God in his vision, (Isaiah 6:1-8). Sitting on a high throne, with an immense train, and smoke billowing, (like it did on Sinai to keep the Israelites from seeing God directly), and the voice powerful enough to shake the foundations all leave Isaiah in no doubt about the terrifying power of the 'Almighty God'. Even the seraphs are mindful of God's power, with two wings to cover their eyes so as not to look directly at him. Only moments before he volunteers, Isaiah is terror struck, (he expects to die because he has seen God) and he freely admits that he is a wretch, and is aware that the people he comes from are wretched – at this stage of their history, they have little time or thought for their relationship with God, and he is angry with them.

But then Isaiah's guilt is removed by the purifying fire from the altar. This freely given forgiveness is not God saying, 'let's forget all that', but God saying his sinfulness is not an obstacle.. His volunteering, then, is a joyful response to his direct experience of the all-powerful and loving God; his move from terror and guilt to awe frees him to want to be a part of God's work, to be the messenger. He is now an ideal messenger because he has seen God, he knows him, and has experienced his forgiveness.

Although the call of Simon and his companions, (Luke 5:1-11), takes place in his small fishing boat, exactly the same ingredients are present. Simon already knows Jesus as a preacher and a healer – in Luke, Jesus has already been to Simon's house and cured his mother-in-law – so he knows there is something different about Jesus, but he clearly has no idea just who is asking him to put into deeper water. The huge catch is far beyond anything Peter has experienced: he recognises that knows that Jesus' word has command over nature, i.e. has divine authority and power in it, complete and undiluted. No wonder Simon falls to his knees, terrified, asking Jesus to leave him, (would you feel comfortable in a small boat, so close to this glimpse of God's immense power?), and no wonder he is aware of his unworthiness in the presence of the holiness of God.

As with Isaiah, this is not an obstacle to him being a messenger of God; it is a starting point. Jesus firstly tells Simon not to be afraid: God's power is not something to fear. The full implication of the word Luke uses for 'catch people' is 'and in so doing, bring them new life'. The fishermen are to be co-workers with Jesus in bringing God's powerful love into the world. Their complete and immediate acceptance of the invitation springs from their awe, not from a sense of duty.

As we believe in the Resurrection and the presence of the Spirit, the same contact and invitation is open to us. When we say 'Holy, holy, holy,' we acknowledge the infinite power of God; in the Eucharist, we are going to be in intimate contact with it, (Jesus climbing into the boat?). The prayer before communion, 'Lord I am not worthy', is an acknowledgement of who I am and, in the light of these readings, that this is not an obstacle as far as God is concerned. This should transform us and give us the authority to 'Go and proclaim the Gospel with your life', i.e put out into deeper water.

We aren't asked to leave everything – we're disciples, not apostles – but Jesus needs us to be co-workers in our daily lives. Pope Francis reminds us we are to be a missionary church, but to do this, we need to take the idea of God climbing in the boat with us seriously.

Martin Bennett

Monday (Bernard of Clairvaux)

First, see what measure God deserves to be loved by us, and how he deserves to be loved without measure. The love that is directed to God is directed to something immense, something infinite. God loves, whose greatness knows no bounds, whose wisdom cannot be counted, whose peace passes all understanding. My God, my helper, even though I cannot love you as much as I ought, I still cannot love you more than I am able. I shall be able to love you more only when you deign to love me more.

Scripture (Psalm 138:2-6)

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart. I praise your love and your faithfulness; your promises surpass even your fame. You heard me when I called, and you gave new strength to my heart. All the kings of the earth give you thanks, Lord, when they hear the promises you make; they sing of the Lord's ways, 'Great is the glory of the Lord!' Sublime as he is, the Lord looks on the humble.

Tuesday (Cardinal Newman)

Lord, I am abashed before you and abhor myself in your sight, I am not worthy of the least of your mercies; you have given me good gifts, and I have dishonoured them by my neglect or corrupt use of them. I sinned before you gave them and I have sinned since you gave them. Yet you renew your goodness to me every morning. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name.

Scripture (Isaiah 6:1-9)

I saw the Lord seated on his throne, his train filled the sanctuary. Above him stood seraphs, each with six wings. They shouted these words to each other: "Holy, holy, holy is Lord of hosts. His glory fills the whole earth." Then I said 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.' Then one of the seraphs flew to me and touched my mouth with a live coal taken from the altar, and said: 'Look, this has touched your lips, your guilt has been removed and your sin forgiven.' I then heard the voice of the Lord saying ' Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' And I said 'Here I am, send me.'

Wednesday (Fr. Richard Rohr)

God's love is total, unconditional, absolute and forever. That's grace! And sometimes because we carry guilt and fear and burdens, we are not able to believe that God loves us. Biblically, that's the greatest sin: not to believe the good news, not to accept the unconditional love of God. When we no longer believe God loves us, we can no longer love ourselves. We have to allow God to continually fill us. Then we find in our own lives the power to give love away.

Scripture (Ephesians 1:17-21)

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy people, and how extraordinarily great is the power that he has exercised for us believers; this accords with the strength of his power at work in Christ, the power which he exercised in raising him from the dead and enthroning him at his right hand, in heaven, far above any principality, ruling force, power or sovereignty.

Thursday (Brother Lawrence)

The brother often deplores our blindness, and is always complaining that we are to be pitied for being satisfied with so little. God, he says, has boundless treasures to give us, and a moment's sense of devotion is enough for us. We are blind who so bind the hands of God, and we stem the abundance of his grace. When he finds a soul imbued with living faith, into it he pours grace upon grace, a flowing stream, as it were, which, checked in its proper course, a finding a new outlet spreads wide with force, abundantly. Let us check it no more; let us return into ourselves, break down this dam, make open way for grace and make up for lost time.

Scripture (1 Chronicles 29:10-14)

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the splendour, length of days and glory, everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours is the sovereignty, Lord; you are exalted, supreme above all. In your hand lie strength and power, and you bestow greatness and might on whomsoever you please. So now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your majestic name, for who am I and what is my people, for us to be able to volunteer offerings like this? – since everything we have comes from you and we have given you only what you bestowed in the first place.