

Sunday's Word

'Here I am, send me'

February 7, 2016

**FIFTH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME****Is 6:1-2, 3-8**

The Call of the Prophet

Ps 138:1-5, 7-8

I will sing your praises, Lord

1 Cor 15:1-11

The Call of Paul

Lk 5:1-11

The Call of Peter

[http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/
020716.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/020716.cfm)**REV. ROBERT
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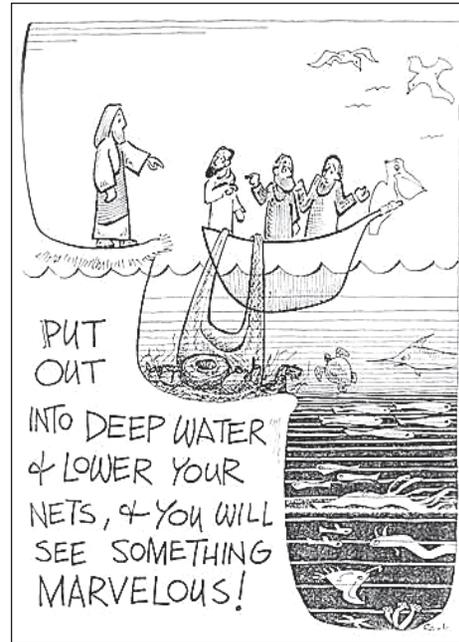
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account. His main topic here is witnessing to the resurrection of Christ; with a long list of such. At the end he includes himself, "as one born abnormally." His point is that his experience happened long after the others. And yet, he too is an apostle.

We are familiar with the story of Peter fishing, with Jesus standing on the shore. Peter has been working hard, to no avail. At Jesus' advice, and despite his own practiced judgment, Peter tries the other side of the boat, and has tremendous success. His response is the key line of the story: "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

Luke's account differs from that which we see in Matthew and Mark, the simple version of the story, where Jesus calls them, and they leave everything and follow him (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20). Luke's account includes much of the information in these other stories, but he has much more, most notably the large catch of fish.

There is another difference that we tend not to notice. This is not the first time Je-



sus has an encounter with Peter. Already, in Luke 4:38-39, we see Jesus coming to the house of Simon, to heal his mother-in-law. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark this healing occurs shortly after the call by the lake, as a kind of follow-up. This seems more natural. But Luke has decided to narrate the two incidents in reverse order.

However, there is a method in his manner. In Luke's hands, the story of Peter's call becomes a portrait of a disciple's repentance. With Luke, repentance is necessary for discipleship. Luke includes in his

account persons not mentioned in the other Gospels. And each is a portrait of repentance. Besides Peter, here in chapter 5, we can include Zechariah, in Luke 1, the repentant woman in Luke 7, Zacchaeus, the short tax-collector who climbed a tree, in Luke 19, and the Good Thief in Luke 23. Also, Luke alone recounts the parables of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) and the Pharisee and the repentant Tax-Collector (Luke 18). In addition, of course, there is the three-fold description of Paul's conversion in Acts, as mentioned earlier. Each of these involves repentance.

In this regard, it is notable that Peter speaks to his sinfulness, not his sins. In Luke, repentance does not seem so much to be a matter of identifying certain sins as it is a question of self-knowledge. It is a call to change the direction of one's life. It is a reorientation more than a spell of housekeeping. For Luke's readers, Gentiles who are attracted to Luke's message concerning Jesus, this amounts to a challenge to the set of values with which they were raised — the Hellenist culture of the Roman Empire. The language of dominance and control is called to account, with the image of the Servant, Jesus.

For reflection: How is the call to repentance a question of self-knowledge for us as well?

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