

HOMILY FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
9 February 2025

Fr. Jim Fredericks

Part One: the readings for the day
Part Two: reflections on the readings
Part Three: guidelines for *lectio divina*

PART ONE: READINGS FOR THE DAY
Lectionary: 75

Reading 1 Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

In the year King Uzziah died,
I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne,
with the train of his garment filling the temple.
Seraphim were stationed above.

They cried one to the other,
"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!
All the earth is filled with his glory!"
At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook
and the house was filled with smoke.

Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed!
For I am a man of unclean lips,
living among a people of unclean lips;
yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"
Then one of the seraphim flew to me,
holding an ember
that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

He touched my mouth with it, and said,
"See, now that this has touched your lips,
your wickedness is removed, your sin purged."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"
"Here I am," I said; "send me!"

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8

R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple
and give thanks to your name.

R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Because of your kindness and your truth;
for you have made great above all things
your name and your promise.

When I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

All the kings of the earth shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
when they hear the words of your mouth;
and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD:

"Great is the glory of the LORD."

R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Your right hand saves me.

The LORD will complete what he has done for me;
your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Reading 2 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

I am reminding you, brothers and sisters,
of the gospel I preached to you,
which you indeed received and in which you also stand.
Through it you are also being saved,
if you hold fast to the word I preached to you,
unless you believed in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance
what I also received:
that Christ died for our sins
in accordance with the Scriptures;
that he was buried;
that he was raised on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures;
that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

After that, Christ appeared to more
than five hundred brothers at once,
most of whom are still living,

though some have fallen asleep.
After that he appeared to James,
then to all the apostles.
Last of all, as to one born abnormally,
he appeared to me.
For I am the least of the apostles,
not fit to be called an apostle,
because I persecuted the church of God.
But by the grace of God I am what I am,
and his grace to me has not been ineffective.
Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them;
not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me.
Therefore, whether it be I or they,
so we preach and so you believed.

Alleluia Matthew 4:19

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Come after me
and I will make you fishers of men.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Luke 5:1-11

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening
to the word of God,
he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret.
He saw two boats there alongside the lake;
the fishermen had disembarked
and were washing their nets.
Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon,
he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore.
Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.
After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon,
"Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."
Simon said in reply,
"Master, we have worked hard all night
and have caught nothing,
but at your command I will lower the nets."
When they had done this,
they caught a great number of fish
and their nets were tearing.
They signaled to their partners in the other boat
to come to help them.
They came and filled both boats

so that the boats were in danger of sinking.
When Simon Peter saw this,
he fell at the knees of Jesus and said,
"Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."
For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made
seized him and all those with him,
and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee,
who were partners of Simon.
Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid;
from now on you will be catching men."
When they brought their boats to the shore,
they left everything and followed him.

PART TWO: REFLECTION ON THE READING

The first reading tells the story of how Isaiah became the
Lord's prophet for the people of Israel - and, I also should
say, one of the greatest poets of all time.

It's quite a story.

Isaiah is standing in the Temple precincts when he is given
a vision of the God of Israel seated on a "high and lofty
throne." His angels, the Seraphim, attend him. They are
singing the *Sanctus*.

They cried one to the other,
"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!
All the earth is filled with his glory!"

The gate of the Temple shakes at the sound of the
Seraphim chanting. The Temple fills up with *'araphel* - the
thick darkness that engulfed the Temple back when
Solomon dedicated it.

Isaiah seems to know that he is being called to be a
prophet. This fills him with dread.

I am a man of unclean lips,
living among a people of unclean lips;
yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!

Then one of the Seraphim flies to Isaiah holding an ember in a pair of tongs that he has taken from the altar within the Holy of Holies.

And the angel sears Isaiah's mouth with this burning ember. Then he announces,

See, now that this has touched your lips,
your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.

This is how Isaiah was raised up by the Ancient of Days to proclaim God's word.

Today, I want to say that God has not stopped raising up prophets for his people. Angels of the Lord still fly to us holding a smoldering ember to sear our lips and loosen our tongues. In this regard, I want to reflect on the sacrament of reconciliation with you.

I am filled with wonder when you come to me and open your heart to confess your sins. There is a reason that confession is a sacrament. Opening your mouth to confess your sins is a sacred moment in the life of the Church. You speak with such simple eloquence and humility when you confess. As I impose my hands over you and speak the words of absolution, I sometimes ask myself,

What angel has seared your lips that you speak such beautiful words?

I do not presume that confessing is easy. I also want to assure you that, when you confess, I am not standing over you in judgment. I am sitting with you in joy over what the Holy Spirit is bringing about within you.

Do you understand this? Hearing a confession is a privileged moment of grace *for the priest*, not simply for the one who is confessing.

I recommend that you pray over the first reading carefully. It reveals much about this great sacrament of reconciliation.

Isaiah, gazing into the Holy of Holies at the throne of God is filled with dread.

Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed!
For I am a man of unclean lips,
living among a people of unclean lips;
yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Isaiah is saying: even though I am a sinful man, even still – God has revealed himself to me. In fact, God is calling out to Isaiah. In fact, God is raising Isaiah up to be His prophet.

God needs a prophet and so, the angel burns Isaiah's lips in order to loosen his tongue. Then, the angel announces,

See, now that this has touched your lips,
your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.

In becoming a prophet, Isaiah's wickedness has been removed. And the same is true of us as well.

In the sacrament of reconciliation, God is raising us up to be His prophets. After I give the absolution, you are now set free to tell out the Good News. God has not abandoned us. God has not forsaken us. Our sins really are forgiven and, in being forgiven, our lives really are transformed.

So, when you confess, remember Isaiah and how God made him a prophet. God took away Isaiah's wickedness by sending an angel to sear his lips and loosen his tongue.

God is still raising up prophets through the forgiveness of our sins. So, when you confess, remember the last verses of the story of Isaiah and his vision of God in the Temple:

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"
"Here I am," I said; "send me!"

PART THREE: INSTRUCTIONS FOR *LECTIO DIVINA*

I suggest that you use the readings and my reflections as an opportunity for practicing *lectio divina* ("divine

reading"). This is an ancient spiritual practice that started with the great monks in the Syrian and Egyptian desert back in the early days of the Church. It is really quite simple.

Step one: calm your mind (my Buddhist friends describe the mind as "a mango-tree full of chattering monkeys"). I find that paying attention to your breath for a few minutes is a practical and effective way to do this.

Step two: read the readings slowly and attentively. Savor the words as if you were tasting a great Pinot Noir. Don't rush. You are not looking for information or instructions. You are making friends with a sacred text which will bless you abundantly if you will only open your heart to it and let it speak to you. In *lectio divina*, we are not actually "reading" the Bible. Rather, we are "listening" to the Bible as the sacred words speak to us.

Step three: repeat step two.

Step four: read the homily on the readings.

Step five: Ask yourself a few questions:

- What particular words in the readings call out to me most forcefully?
- What is going on in my life such that these words call to me so forthrightly?
- How am I being asked to change, both interiorly and exteriorly?
- In light of this *lectio divina*, how am I being invited to be of service to the world today?