

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski
February 10, 2019

Have you ever had moments in your life when you were simply awe-struck with the beauty of God's creation? In my life, there have been a handful of such moments:

- At the births of our three children. When I got to hold them for the first time, I was simply astounded at the perfection, innocence, and holiness of new-born human life.
- When our children were young, we drove and climbed to the 12,000-foot crest of Fall River Pass in Rocky Mountain National Park and witnessed a most memorable, "purple mountains majesty" sunset.
- Again, with Mary and our children, at Mesa Verde National Park, on a moonless night, I saw the blazing spectacle of more stars than I had ever believed possible to see; so bright that I could easily walk without the aid of a flashlight.
- When backpacking in the Grand Canyon, I was overwhelmed with the grandeur and immensity of that natural wonder.
- Most recently, I was simply astounded, and recognized our own human insignificance, by the expansiveness of God's creation in the panoramic views Mary and I beheld in Denali National Park, Alaska.

These, my life's most unforgettable experiences, or any that you may have conjured up, pale in comparison to the wonder and awe, the "fear of the Lord," that Isaiah, Paul and Peter experienced in their respective encounters with the Lord. As we heard in today's readings, all three of these biblical figures felt astonishment, an unworthiness, in their experience with the Lord:

- Isaiah – I am a man of unclean lips.
- Paul – I am the least of the Apostles.
- Peter – Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.

But the Lord, in his infinite mercy and compassion, looked beyond their sinfulness and invited each of them to join him. All three of our principal characters in today's readings eagerly accepted God's invitation and received a mission:

- Isaiah became one of the Old Testament's major prophets, with the words "Here I am, send me!"
- Paul became the Apostle to the Gentiles.
- Peter "left everything and followed [the Lord.]"

Just like Isaiah, Paul and Peter, through our baptisms, each of us is also **called to mission**; to quote Ellwood Blues from the movie, *The Blues Brothers*: "We're on mission from God!" And that mission is to become intentional disciples, who, **through our word and action**, proclaim the salvific message of Jesus Christ.

To further that mission, Bishop Johnston initiated a Diocesan Visioning Process that began last July with listening sessions throughout the diocese. The bishop then convened a Visioning Team, of which I am honored to be a member, which utilized the insights from those listening sessions to develop a **Mutually Shared Vision** for our diocese:

ONE FAMILY: RESTORED IN CHRIST, EQUIPPED FOR MISSION

The Visioning Team identified 3 priorities with ambitious, measurable goals that will be shaped for **each family, household and parish** within our diocese. Those priorities are:

- **Healing our Family**
- **Using Resources Wisely, and**
- **Growing God's Family**

Over the next 3-5 years, our diocese will strive to achieve the identified goals and priorities which support our Mutually Shared Vision.

To better prepare our diocese and ourselves for the challenges posed by this Mutually Shared Vision, Bishop Johnston is designating a Diocesan Holy Year of Renewal, beginning on

Ash Wednesday, March 6, and concluding with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, on January 12, 2020. As Bishop Johnston wrote, "This Holy Year will be marked by common prayer and observances so that we can open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and 'be transformed by the renewal of [our minds],' that we 'may prove what is the will of God.'"

By now, each household should have received a letter from Bishop Johnston which included information about our **Mutually Shared Vision**. I urge you to thoroughly read the mailing. Additionally, the diocesan website has detailed information, which will be frequently updated, regarding the monthly events and family-focused activities to support our **Mutually Shared Vision**.

These are exciting times in our diocese. Throughout the upcoming Holy Year, I urge you to pray and participate in various parish and diocesan activities that support the realization of our Mutually Shared Vision:

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