

We find Isaiah consumed ... by a sense of sinfulness and total... **failure** ... and **unworthiness**: a doomed sinner in the midst of doomed sinners ... not worthy of God's trust!

Peter is **not** a ... **sport** ... fisherman. Fishing is his livelihood ... and that of his crew. But they have fished all night ... and caught nothing. Peter is tired ... he is discouraged. And when the new preacher asks him ... to go back out and lower their nets ... yet **again** ... even though he **knows** it is useless ... he complies. And he catches fish ... a **lot** of fish! He is grateful ... he is amazed ... but ... he is also **frightened** ... bewildered and **very** aware of his own sinfulness and unworthiness to be anywhere ... **near** Jesus.

Paul ... has worked hard to establish and nurture the church in Corinth ... but now many are questioning his **authority** ... and disputing his teachings ... **especially** about the resurrection. We find him reflecting on this disappointment ... and also ... his own personal history of moral failure: "... the **least** of the apostles, not **fit** to be called an apostle ..." His past ... as a persecutor of the Church ... is horrendous and ... he cannot help but harbor feelings of unworthiness ... as he compares himself to the other apostles.

Isaiah ... perhaps the greatest ... of the prophets ... Peter ... chosen by Christ himself ... to be the first leader of His new Church ... and Paul ... the greatest Christian missionary in history ... three of the most important people ... in all of salvation history ... and yet ... we find all three filled with feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness ... and very self-aware of their sinfulness.

Why would God have sent **these** men who ... by their own admission ... were so unworthy? He had the whole world to choose from. There were highly educated priests and scribes ... who could preach and instruct more eloquently. There were many God **could** have chosen but ... God's ways are not our ways. And God does **not** choose as the world chooses. Isaiah submitted no resume ... Jesus did not ask Peter for references ... and Paul's ... **job** history ... was best **forgotten**! These men were **exactly** ... what they said they were. They **were** sinners! They **were** unworthy! And when Peter said "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" ... Jesus did **not** say ... "No, you're not!" ... He simply said: "Do not be afraid."

You see ... our God has tasks for each of us ... and **worthiness** ... has **nothing** to do with it! Each of us receives calls from God ... not just **clergy** ... or religious. Some are called to do

great things like Isaiah, Peter and Paul. Most of us are called to do lesser things ... but **all** of us have a call from God ... to reveal in many varied ways ... His presence to the world. And we are called to this ... **in** our very **flawed** humanity. For if being perfect ... were a requirement ... He could never call **anyone**. **No** ... God calls us ... **because** of our unworthiness. For those who **are** aware ... of their own sinfulness **receive** that awareness because ... they **also** possess ... the **priceless** gift of ... humility. They **know** that they are totally dependent on God ... for success ... for their very existence.

Of course, the evil one works **overtime** to convince us that we are not just unworthy but **worthless** ... which leads us to despair and ... prevents us from listening to God's call to share in His work.

No ... **our** task is to **listen** to God in prayer ... to ... **pray** ... for His help and guidance and **acknowledge** our sinfulness and our unworthiness ... but **then** ... **respond** to His call ... **whatever** that call may be. Respond and **trust** that **God** ... will supply the rest. Where we see our limitations ... God sees our possibilities. God knows I'm **not** much ... can't **give** much ... and can't **do** much ... but ... what I've got ... what I **can** do ... God can use. God works through us and through our efforts and will provide whatever is necessary to accomplish His purposes. He asks only that we respond to His call ... that when He asks: "Whom shall I send?" we answer: "Here I am,;" "send me!" ... Trust Him! By the grace of God, we **are** ... what we are ... and his grace to us will **not** be ineffective".

In an effort to discern God's will for our diocese, we have been praying for several months for the work of our Bishop's Visioning Team to discern the path forward for our diocese. The team has identified three overwhelming needs ... **visions** ... for our diocese ... for our church: Unity, Restoration and to be Equipped for Mission.: Unity ... one family held together by Christ. ... Restoration ... being healed in Christ; for individuals and parishes, for our diocese and for our universal church. ... Equipped for Mission ... to understand and pursue our baptismal call as disciples. Our bishop asks that our church family take this vision to heart and to this end he has designated a Diocesan Holy Year beginning on Ash Wednesday of this year and concluding on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord next January. We will be hearing more in the weeks ahead. Meanwhile, I encourage you to visit the diocesan web site to learn more. Like the work of Isaiah, Peter and Paul ... the bishop reminds us that ultimately, this is not about what **we** do, but what God will do **through** us.
