

Here I Am, Lord, Send Me!

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Is 6:1-2a, 3-8 / Lk 5:1-11

Ave Maria Catholic Church, February 6, 2022 - Fr. David M Vidal

There is a predominant idea that emerges from the inspired texts of this fifth Sunday of the liturgical year, and this is **the Divine call or Vocation**: the vocation of prophet Isaiah in the first reading, the vocation of Saint Paul in the second reading, and the vocation of the apostles in the gospel.

God has a plan for each one of us. Creation has meaning and purpose. Ultimately, the meaning and purpose of our existence can be summarized in this way: we were created to know, love, and serve God. In other words, our happiness is to be united to our Creator. We came from Him, and we return to Him.

God has a plan for each one of us. He freely calls us to live the divine plan in its fullness. We receive several divine callings; however, we can primarily identify three:

First, God calls us to existence. We share this in common with everything that is: rocks and plants, animals, human beings, and angels. This is the divine calling from not being to being. The result of this calling is the miracle of creation and the miracle of natural life!

Second, God calls us to holiness. God wants to give us His very own life. God wants to make us his sons and daughters by adoption. And this is the miracle of grace. This calling is the transition from sin to the life of grace, which includes the grace of eternal life in heaven.

Third, God calls us to a state in life. In this way, God calls some to marriage and others to consecrated life. Today, inspired by the readings of the Mass, let us meditate on the divine call to priesthood.

Again, God has a plan for each one of us. To say the opposite would be absurd. It is absurd to think that God created us without knowing why. Certainly, God knows the meaning and purpose of our existence. Perhaps, we do not yet know it, but God does. Before we were in the womb of our mothers, God already knew us. He called us by name. We are not a number among millions. Each one of us is personally known and loved by God. God knows me, God loves me, God calls me.

Through several testimonies in Holy Scripture, we know that God calls men to specific vocations. These testimonies include the vocation of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and in the New Testament, they include the vocation of the first disciples, the twelve Apostles, and St. Paul among others.

To those disciples and apostles, Jesus said: *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit,”* (Jn 15:16). Jesus called some men to be closely united to Him. They were the apostles; they were the first priests. The gospel that we read today speaks about them. It speaks about these fishermen who were astonished at the catch of fish and to whom Jesus says: *“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”*

It is Jesus who calls them. Why? That is a mystery. Saint Paul speaks about this mystery in his first letter to the Corinthians, when he says: *“Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong,”* (1 Cor. 1: 26-27). Jesus could have chosen doctors of the law, but he chose fishermen and he made them pillars of the Church.

Jesus calls them to a sublime vocation. What does it mean to be “fishers of men”? Sometimes, people in the world consider priesthood as one of the many careers that a man can choose for his life: a man can be a physician, a fire fighter, a football player, or a priest. But is that the case? Priesthood is not a career; priesthood is a supernatural call that changes completely the life of a man who is called to be “another Christ” (*alter Christus*), not a different Christ, but the same Christ who uses their voices, their hands, and their very beings to make Himself present among his people. For this reason, when a young man discovers the divine call to the priesthood, immediately, all friends and family should fall on their knees in thanksgiving for his vocation because that man was called to be another Christ. He was called not only to live as Christ lives but also to do what Christ does. He was called to forgive sins and restore the image of Christ in souls. He was called to bring Jesus on the altar and bring Jesus to souls, so that people might be living tabernacles of our Lord.

How does Jesus call his priests? He does it in different ways. Among them, we can give three examples.

Sometimes, Jesus’s calling is as luminous and clear as the flash of light that struck Saul on the way to Damascus. Saul fell to the ground, and humbled by it, he just said: *“Who are you, sir?”* The reply came, *“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do,”* (Acts 9: 5-6). Then, from a persecutor of Christians, he became an apostle of Christ.

Other times, Jesus manifests himself through the unexpected circumstances of life. Such was the experience of Ignatius of Loyola as he had to recover from an injury. He requested books with stories of knights, but there was only a book on the lives of the saints, like Francis and Dominic. And while reading the book, Ignatius thought, if they were able to live such lives, why wouldn’t I?

Jesus can also show himself through the words and examples of others. That was the way the disciples of John the Baptist found and followed Jesus: *“John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God.’ The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come, and you will see.’ So, they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon,”* (Jn. 1: 35-39). The words of John the Baptist led the two disciples to Jesus. Then, Jesus entered into the heart of the disciples, in the heart of John the Evangelist, who even remembered the hour of his encounter with the Lord: it was about four in the afternoon.

Why do the disciples and priests choose to follow Christ? Humanly speaking, it is incomprehensible. Why do they leave father and mother, a family of their own, nets and boats, the possessions and a career, wealth, and prestige? Why do they follow Jesus who has no place to lay his head, who is persecuted and rejected, who preaches the cross, and even dies on the cross? Once again, humanly speaking, it is incomprehensible. The vocation to follow Christ in this way goes beyond our natural way of thinking. In other words, this is a supernatural vocation by which men recognize something that the human eye does not perceive. Through faith, these men discover their new life in Christ.

This is what ordination to the holy priesthood does: it elevates the life of a simple man to a new dimension that the human eye does not perceive. In Jesus, in the person of Christ, the priest says: *“This is my body,”* and Jesus dwells among us. Then, the priest says: *“I absolve you from your sins,”* and the doors of heaven are opened for us.

Let us pray for holy vocations to the priesthood.

The world needs many good priests. If we do not pray and work for the promotion of holy vocations to the priesthood, it could happen to us what has happened in some towns of the former Soviet Union where the faithful had to go to the graves of the priests to confess their sins.

Today as before, Jesus continues calling: *Come, follow me. Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.* Let us pray that many among us may have the courage to repeat those words of the prophet Isaiah: *“Here I am, Lord, send me!”* Amen