

## *5th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Here's the story of my vocation to the priesthood. I was a little kid—maybe six years old, and, in my parents' bedroom at 57th and Woodland here in Kansas City, I was helping my mother fold laundry—as much as a six-year-old could help. We were active at St. Therese Little Flower Church, where at least four of the six of us kids were attending grade school. Between the shirts and the sheets, somehow the conversation turned to priests and nuns, whom I assumed materialized out of nowhere. Mom said, “No, they're people. Even a little kid can grow up to become one of them.” This was news to me. I said, “Really? You mean I could be a priest?” She said, “Yes.” I thought about this for about two seconds and said, “Well, then, that's what I'm gonna be.” And that was it. It was part of my life from there on out. Mind you, I was already playing piano pretty well at age six, and I could have pursued a music career. I never wanted to fold laundry for a living, though I respect people who do, and I actually enjoy it in my down time.

This weekend throughout our diocese we're observing Called By Name Sunday. Bishop Johnston has asked us priests to share our vocation story with you and to make two requests. He writes, first, “For those of you discerning your life's vocation, be open to God's call to the priesthood or religious life. God's calling is a beautiful gift; be courageous and open to His call! Jesus came that we might have life and have it to the full—do not be afraid! If God is calling you to the priesthood or religious life, then nothing less will satisfy.”

Then, Bishop Johnston adds this request: “Please think of the men and women you know and believe might have a calling to the priesthood or religious life. While God is the one who calls, he often uses our voices. Please help us reach out to these individuals and... share their name(s) and contact information so that a letter of encouragement can be sent to them.” We have nomination cards at the doors and Gathering Place of the cathedral today. Please pick one up and fill it out, using the QR code or a pen.

Today's scriptures relate two vocation stories, and each of them gives an account of resistance. When Simon Peter beheld the miraculous number of fish that swam into his net at the bidding of Jesus, he did not say, “Let me follow you, Lord.” He said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” Peter felt the opposite of a vocation. Yet Jesus called him: “Do not be afraid.”

Isaiah, too, when he beheld Seraphim swimming around the upper reaches of the temple, he did not say, “Take me along,” but rather, “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips.” But one of the angels touched Isaiah's mouth with a burning ember to purge away his sin. The Lord asked, “Whom shall I send?” And Isaiah finally responded, “Here I am... send me!”

In response we sang a refrain from Psalm 138, “In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.” This is fundamentally a psalm of thanksgiving, opening with the words, “I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with all my heart.”

When people ask me, “Why did you become a priest?” my answer has resembled Psalm 138: “Out of thanksgiving.” I thought God had been really good to me, even as a kid, and I wanted to show my thanks to him. Whatever your story of encountering God, do not be afraid. In his will is our peace.