

Commentary to the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

I can't do this...alone



This Sunday we are presented with Isaiah, Paul and Peter. All three are chosen by God. Each regrets that he is too human, and too sinful to fulfill God's choice. But God makes up for what they lack. Isaiah says, "How can I, a man of unclean lips living among people of unclean lips, proclaim the Lord. Paul adds that he was called even though he had persecuted the Church. He is the very least of the apostles, but by the grace of God, still an apostle. Peter is quite aware of his humanity. He is a fisherman without out any education. He is stubborn. He is a bit of a braggart. He lack courage.

But God still calls him and gives him the ability to be the greatest and first of the apostles. "I can't do this". "I can't do this anymore". I have heard a young girl say this as she is dealing with the stress of her first baby who suffers from cholic. I have heard an elderly man say this as he is dealing with the challenges of chemotherapy. I have heard a young widow say this when two years after the tragedy of her husband's death she still questions her life. I have heard a husband say this as he realizes that he is not giving himself fully to his marriage. I have heard a priest say this as he realizes that he is not giving himself fully to the priesthood. To all these people, I must say, "You are right. You can't do this anymore . . . at least not alone.

It is time for us to stop thinking that we can do it ourselves and start trusting in God who will help us complete the mission in life he has given us. That young Mom, and all our young parents need to know that you didn't just happen to become a mother or father. God has given you this child and he will give you the help you need to be a good parent. That elderly gentleman taking chemo and all those in our parish suffering from serious ailments no matter how old they are, you need to know that you are not alone in your suffering and your anguish. Trust in God, put up the fight for your own life the best you can, and know that as long as you are with God, it really doesn't matter whether you beat this particular

crisis, or the next or the one after that, as long as you fight with the Lord. The young widow and all those suffering horrible losses, particularly those who have lost children, need to know that God will get them through the sorrow and that they now have a gift of understanding they can share with others in pain. That man or woman, mother or father, in perpetual grief over the loss need to know that they are better for having loved, and now can be even more loving, having lost.

The husband or wife who say they cannot go on because he or she is not fully committed to their marriage need to ask themselves why they are holding back. They need to ask themselves if they want God in the relationship. Sometimes, the person they want is neither God nor their spouse. Then no wonder why they feel they can't go on. They can't. But if God is admitted and a Christian lifestyle is resumed, they can do this, they can be a husband or wife. God gives us the power to walk away from that which is destroying us. I once had a long talk with a priest who it turns out was living a double life.

He said, "I can't keep doing this; preaching the faith, and living Christianity while at the same time I want to be with another person. I, a product of the 70's, was shocked at how traditional my answer was: You are right, you can't do this being a public hypocrite. But God called you to be a priest. He can and will give you the grace and power to return to the life he has given you and to leave a situation which is destroying your priesthood and destroying you. Fill in the blanks. Are there situations in your life when you feel you just can't go on, you just can't do it.

Do you feel deserted by God? You are not. He's never closer to you than when you need him the most. Remember, the miracle of his love is that there are billions of people in the world and each one is loved by God as an only child. He loves you and he loves me as though we are the only one's he ever created. We can go on, we can do it, with God's help. And his help is there. The angel took an ember from the fire and purified Isaiah's lips. That had to hurt. Perhaps it does hurt to let God take control of our lives, but it is a good hurt. All that we do for the sake of our Divine Lover and his Kingdom is worth the effort and sacrifice. The gift of ourselves is little in comparison to the gift of Jesus on the cross. But it is still a valid and worthy gift as we complete our role in the battle of and for the Kingdom of God. I can't do it. Yes I can. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.

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