

9 February 2025 - 5th Sunday 'C

[Is 6, 1-8; 1 Cor 15, 1-11; Lk 5, 1-11](#)

Homily

The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the story of living witnesses who bear witness to what they have seen and heard, but also to their own spiritual experience. This vocation of witness was that of the entire people of Israel, called to bear witness before the Nations to the fact that Yahweh is the only God. Within the people of Israel, this was the vocation of Moses, David and especially the great prophets, called to bear witness to their experience of the living God, in their own lives and in the lives of the people.

Faced with such a mission, each of us reacts in a different way, according to our character. Isaiah, as we have just heard in the first reading, volunteers, at least after his lips have been purified by the burning coal: *'Send me'*, he says. Jeremiah objects: *'I am only a child...'*. Moses needs signs to prove to the people that it is really Yahweh who has sent him, and he tries to avoid this mission. In the end, they all obeyed and accepted their mission; even Jonah, although he took a long diversion in the belly of the whale...

Jesus was the faithful witness, who testified to humanity what he had seen and heard from the Father, and who bore witness to the love the Father has for him and for us. And when he gave the Twelve their mission, he simply made them witnesses of what they had seen and heard.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks to the crowd, and as they press him, he gets into a boat and speaks to them from a distance. Then he calls Peter to be his witness. On the day of Pentecost, Peter, speaking to the crowd, will say, *'This Jesus... we are his witnesses.'* And when Paul describes his own mission, he says: *'I have received from the Lord the ministry of bearing witness to the Good News.'*

All the ministries that developed in the Church over the centuries, in response to varied and changing needs, are, in one way or another, ministries of the Word. In the beginning, there were only the Twelve, who acted as witnesses to the Resurrection and fostered brotherly love among Christ's faithful. Then, when tensions arose between the Hellenists and the Hebrews, the Apostles appointed deacons to serve the tables, but they immediately began to proclaim the Word. After the first persecution and the dispersion of the Christians, Philip went to preach the Word in Samaria and then in Antioch. The Apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria and Barnabas to Antioch, from

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where he brought back Paul, the apostle par excellence, the witness to the Word who had been sent not to baptize but to preach. Then came the ministries of priests and bishops, which are first and foremost ministries of the Word.

During the first Christian generations, another new kind of ministry of the Word developed: the monastic life. Men and women withdrew into solitude to listen to the Word of God; then disciples came to them by the hundreds and thousands, saying: 'Abba, give me a word'. Subsequently, new forms of religious life appeared, such as those of Francis of Assisi and Dominic, liberating the Word.

Today, the Word still needs witnesses who can give an account of their hope and who know how to proclaim by their words and by their lives, or simply by their lives, the central message of the Gospel - the eternal message of love, hope and joy. The Word needs men and women who know how to bear witness to their personal encounter with God, who know how to cry out with joy and even exuberance: '*I have seen the living God, and I live.*'

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