

5otc A Call to serve: Out Into the Deep

In 1968 the movie, *The Shoes of the Fisherman*, was released. I saw the film on an Easter Sunday; my parents wanted us out of the house for awhile. The basic plot line of the film concerns a man named Kyril Lakota, former Archbishop of Lebow in the Ukraine who had been sent to Siberia as a political prisoner. The Soviet government arranges for his release to the Vatican where he is raised to Cardinal. He is released into a world on the brink of thermonuclear disaster. Soon the Pope dies and he is elected Pope by acclamation of his brother Cardinals.

In one scene, as things are becoming unclear to him and he faced with some hard decisions, he speaks to a priest/theologian whose writings are suspect, about his accepted election.

“David, I am troubled. I am lost; maybe in the excitement of things I should have stepped back and refused election. Maybe I accepted it too fast. Suddenly, I feel very alone.”

When we are called by God we may feel the exhilaration of the moment, that of all people I or you have been chosen for a specific mission. But for some that moment is filled with trepidation. They may wonder if they are worthy or not. This happened to Isaiah. Surrounded by the holiness of God, Isaiah experienced himself as unworthy for the mission he was called to. However, God assures him that God will take care of all that, God only asks that he give his “yes”, God will work with this imperfect vehicle to accomplish God’s will. Isaiah’s sense of unworthiness is typical of mystical encounters with God. We are at once drawn to the experience and repulsed by our own sinfulness.

Sometimes we all feel unworthy of such a call—I know I do many times. I ask myself, “Am I able to carry such a burden? Can I carry the hopes and expectations that others have of me with the grace and commitment that is required? Can I honor the one who chose me to be deacon, or will I disappoint and fall short? Dare I venture out to the deep? It is easy to shrink from such a mission or to summon up a myriad of excuses of why it is too hard. Certainly, Peter had his misgivings. But such things can be a clever evasion of responsibility, or it may be an expression of a sincere sense of humility that one is not worthy to approach divine.

Jesus wants him to go out once more, out to the deep, to trust the One who has called him to mission. Peter’s first inclination is to resist; Jesus is not being practical, I mean, after all, who knew these waters better than Peter? But he relents and does the Lord’s bidding and discovers that when he said “yes” to the Lord, abundance was the result! The nets are bursting.

Every believer is summoned by the Lord to go out into the “deep” and trust; to lower the nets of our lives by which God will bring more people to the good news of a God who cares for them with the greatest of passion. However, we know that to trust in this way

entails some risk; we may be seen as being starry-eyed dreamers, fools or just plain crazy. But we are told that if **we do not take** such risks our lives can be hallow and never live up to the promise that each of our lives possess. We **don't have to be Nobel Prize winners, have won Oscars or been famous, we are called to love—that is the greatest human act for it already shares in eternity.** Like the **turtle** we cannot move forward unless we stick our necks out. After all there is nothing to fear, God is with us in all things and places of our lives. God will write on the *crooked lines* of our lives the good news; the good news that God has won the victory in his Christ, witnessed in the lives of his followers. **So, are we prepared to venture out into the deep?**