

Bishop Jaime Soto – Homily for Sunday,
February 7, 2010
World Marriage Day

In the first reading today, the prophet Isaiah spoke of the moment he received the call to be a prophet. He trembled inside the temple of Jerusalem where he was experiencing a vision that overwhelmed him. He saw himself standing in the very presence of God. He felt unworthy and unable to stand under the gaze of the Almighty. The angels of God approached him. They purified his lips and his heart. When the thunderous voice of God called him, the young Isaiah boldly stood up and said, “Here I am. Send me.”

In the second reading today, Paul told us about himself. He was one who persecuted the disciples of Jesus. He felt unworthy to know Jesus or speak for him. Despite his own failings, Paul said of himself, “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective.”

In the gospel, the Lord Jesus lifts up his good friend Peter from his fears and failings. He says to him, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”

We have heard the vocation stories of three prominent figures from the Sacred Scriptures: the prophet Isaiah, and the two great apostles, Peter and Paul. They were courageous preachers of God’s word who dedicated their lives in service to the God who called them. Peter and Paul would give the ultimate testimony of martyrdom, both of them making their offering in Rome. Their tombs are sacred shrines still venerated in that ancient city, the Basilica of St. Paul outside the walls, and the majestic Basilica of St. Peter in the heart of the Vatican.

Each of them responded to God’s call despite their own unworthiness. Because of their docility to divine grace, God was able to do amazing things in their lives. We can too quickly make them an exception and just as quickly discount God’s call to us.

This evening we gather here to celebrate the holy bond of matrimony. This too is a sacred calling. God is the one who created you. He created you for one another. He designed you to share in His holy work. As each couple to be married stands before altar of God, they are standing in the same place where Isaiah stood in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, the same spot where Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus. They stand on the sandy seashore where Peter knelt humbly before the Lord Jesus. As did those great prophets and preachers, each married couple stands before the loving gaze of the Almighty God.

This evening we celebrate what the grace of God has brought about your lives. Yours has been a sacred task, as prophetic as Isaiah's, as energetic as Paul's, and as foundational as Peter's.

In each example about which we heard in the readings today, God called a humble human person. He formed a personal relationship with them. He sent them to be his messengers and his instruments to communicate His wisdom and love.

God continues to do so for each of his disciples. Some are called to be priests. Others are called to be religious. Some are called to share in the sacred calling of marriage. We diminish God's work if we do not acknowledge God's amazing grace at work in the bonds of Marriage where the Lord Jesus calls his humble disciples to form a unique relationship with him through their covenant with one another. The couple becomes the Lord's messengers and His instruments to communicate His wisdom and love to one another and to the world.

We all pray for you now that God, who called you together, may continue this good work. Like Paul, by the grace of God you are who you are for one another and for the Church. May He sustain in you the grace to say: "Here we are, Lord. Send us."