

Isaiah 6:1-13, The Call of the Prophet Isaiah

A homily on Matthew by St. John Chrysostom

“Whom shall I send?”

“Send me.”

Answering the call of God, on the surface, is what we are witnessing here. The willingness to answer God’s call affirmatively is what I’d like to illuminate in our two readings. The willingness to be the chosen servant is what we see in Isaiah. He hears the call, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” and he immediately replies, “Here I am, send me.” Before he heard and answered this call, though, he humbled himself before God, knowing full well his impurity, his weakness, and he confessed his sin. The seraph flew over to him and purified his lips through fire, with an ember from the altar. He has been cleansed of his wickedness, forgiven his sins. Only after this holy purification, could he feel strong enough to answer the call. And he willfully answered in the affirmative.

The apostles were also called into service by God. They also willingly answered affirmatively after they were purified. In their formation, they were catechized by Jesus, they were baptized, they received the Holy Eucharist, they witnessed the Resurrection and were confirmed with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost with tongues of fire. They, too, were purified before they were sent on their mission to evangelize the world. They were sent as salt of the earth, to preserve the word of God, not to one nation or one people, but to the world.

Both Isaiah and the apostles had perilous missions and each were warned of the dangers. Yet still, they answered with a resounding yes, send me. This is a testament to their faith in God and His faithfulness to His children. They did not allow their faith to falter in the face of certain demise because they knew Who sent them. They were purified for this specific mission.

The willingness to serve is a great responsibility. All eyes are on you. You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth. You will be challenged. You will be accused. You will be persecuted. You will see great peril on this path. All eyes are on you. Just as in our own formation into the Dominican Spirituality, all eyes are on us. We’re being watched by people we’ve never met, by authorities who are foreign to us, by people around us, some within our circles, some not. All eyes are watching us closely, as we set and test the boundaries of lay formation. Our next purification will be during our conference in October, when we make our first profession at mass. Over the next four years, what we do, how we act, how we think, pray, teach, preach, all of this, is subject to scrutiny, because when God asked, “Who shall I send?” We answered in faith, as Isaiah did, “Here I am, send me.”

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