

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2022 – 4th Sunday before Lent

COLLECT

O God,
you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers,
that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright:
grant to us such strength and protection
as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 138

- 1 I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; ♦
before the gods will I sing praise to you.
- 2 I will bow down towards your holy temple and praise your name,
because of your love and faithfulness; ♦
for you have glorified your name
and your word above all things.
- 3 In the day that I called to you, you answered me; ♦
you put new strength in my soul.
- 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord, ♦
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- 5 They shall sing of the ways of the Lord, ♦
that great is the glory of the Lord.
- 6 Though the Lord be high, he watches over the lowly; ♦
as for the proud, he regards them from afar.
- 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you will preserve me; ♦
you will stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies;
your right hand will save me.
- 8 The Lord shall make good his purpose for me; ♦
your loving-kindness, O Lord, endures for ever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

The Resurrection of Christ

15 Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters,^[a] of the good news^[b] that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand,² through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,⁴ and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters^[c] at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.^[d] ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.⁸ Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me.⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

Luke 5: 1-11

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

5 Once while Jesus^[a] was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.'⁵ Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.'⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.⁷ So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken;¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.'¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

A reflection from Hannah...

Earlier this week I had the privilege of going into Bomere School and answering the children's questions. ANY questions! One child asked me who my favourite biblical character is. That was an easy one to answer- it is Peter.

Why? Well, today's passage gives us a dose of 'classic' Peter. He initially says a bit too much- arguing back and challenging Jesus' suggestion to let down the nets. Then, following the miracle, his recognition of Christ leads him to blurt out 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' Not really the eloquence or poetry that might befit such a breath-taking moment, but a response from the heart at least!

In Peter all the courage and misguidedness of the human condition is writ large. He puts his foot in it frequently, makes massive mistakes, lops off a Centurion's ear, even denies knowing his closest friend at his darkest hour and yet Jesus chooses him to be the rock on which the church is founded. No clumsy words, no misplaced advice or missed points could stop the truth of Christ's declaration, 'do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people'. In the fullness of his flawed character (and his awareness of it), God used Peter mightily. And that point is an encouragement to us all. We may all at times feel inadequate. More than that, we are all at times undeniably inadequate. Nevertheless, we are all called by God to follow in the way of Christ, in the power of the Spirit and in the tradition of Peter- fully human, saint-and-sinner, chosen.

This episode in which we are introduced to Peter is mirrored by a similar miraculous beachside encounter at the end of John's Gospel. Dejected and confused, Peter stumbles upon the risen Jesus in the early morning light, is restored, and commissioned for the work of the Kingdom. It is a beautiful moment of reconciliation, with the three questions, the allusion to lambs and sheep and the impassioned reply of Peter as the penny drops. All of it echoes the life the two friends knew together, the adventure they shared, and still share, and which is ours to share in too. So may we be fearless in our faith, and wholehearted in our embrace of that commission which is Peter's and ours- to be fishers of people in the power of the Spirit.