

February 7, 2016 – Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Call of Isaiah – Call of First Apostles
– Call to Consecrated Life

May I have a show of hands?

Who of you likes music?

Who has ever composed some music?

Who has ever changed some lyrics of a song?

I bet almost everyone has tried that ... to make a joke out of the music or to make it fit you own way of thinking.

That handout you received, when you entered church today, shows one example of how one religious group has changed the lyrics of a song.

Let's sing it together and see if you can find where they changed it.

Michelle/Fannie, could you lead us, please.

Here I am, Lord. It is I, Lord.

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, where you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

Where have the words been changed? [pause for response of people]

Yes, they changed it from: "Is it I, Lord?" (a question) to "It is I, Lord" (an answer to God's call).

They changed it from: "if you lead me" (a so-so reply) to "where you lead me" (a commitment to get up and go). Not if but where!

That song is based on Isaiah's story.

In the Book of Isaiah we hear of him listening to God's call and then living it out for all 66 chapters of the book. God's call must have been pretty persuasive.

In today's Gospel from Luke, the fishermen, Peter, James and John, give a positive reply to Jesus' call.

They immediately get off their boat and follow him, a following that lasted the 3 years of Jesus life with them here on earth. And then, they continued to follow him after his resurrection and ascension.

But, that's them. How about us, here and now?

As you can see on the handout, my questions are about our calling, here, today.

Perhaps our calling is like those in Scripture, a major lifetime change. Perhaps our calling is for a shorter term, like some period of time or some season. On Wednesday we start Lent and maybe, if we listen closely enough to the Lord, we will hear a call, a guidance, for how we might have a very productive Lent here in 2016.

Perhaps our calling is looking us right in the face - it's immediate - it should be done this very day!

Answering the call from the Lord is what we often name "ministry", a short word for just doing what the Lord is asking of us.

That leads to the second question of how am I to going to answer the Lord's call to minister.

As you see in the handout, we can go solo or with a group; we can address some immediate problem or work on its root cause.

This weekend we are following Pope Francis' lead in recognizing people in our community who have answered God's call ... for a lifetime ... people in Consecrated Life.

Let me say aloud, and I ask you to join me, in that first green line:

"Thank you, Lord, for all of our parish members in the Consecrated Life!"

We have members from four religious orders here in our parish:

The Dominican Sisters, some of whom live in our convent.

The Sisters of Mercy, some of whom worked in the IHM school for years.

The two Daughters of Charity.

And one IHM sister who is a parishioner.

Let's ask any of those in Consecrated Life who are attending Mass here today to please stand. [applause]

Let's all join in the second green line of text on the handout:

"Thank you, those in Consecrated Life, for your years of ministry."

Pope Francis, living out his call by the Lord, has asked for a Year of Mercy, from Dec. 2015 to Nov. 2016.

On page 2 of your handout is the image that the Church is using to promote this Year of Mercy.

The image shows us Jesus, as we can tell by the nail prints in his hands and feet, carrying another person on his shoulders.

That person could be me, or you, or anyone else.

Notice that Jesus and that person are eye-to-eye.

Jesus has his eye on us ... and, hopefully, we are paying attention to him as well.

Pope Francis has written a document to call us to mercy and has given many homilies to people all over the world calling all of us to mercy.

Recently I heard a great speaker say "Mercy is motion", in other words, it is not just an attitude but actually doing something.

Another way to look at "mercy" is to start with what we all know about God, namely, "God is love!"

That can lead us then to define mercy as "**Mercy is love in motion.**"

You can see where that is leading: "We are made in the image and likeness of God, therefore, **WE** are to show others "**mercy is love in motion.**"

Page 2 of the handout lists some of the many ways we can be like God, the many ways we can be love in motion, the many specific ideas for living out mercy.

Near the bottom of the page are a few examples of people who live mercy is love in motion by addressing the very root causes of people's problems.

So many of our women in Consecrated Life are living examples of addressing not simply the symptoms but the root cause of problems. Hurray for them!!!!

One of the ways God extends mercy to us is through the Sacrament of Penance, through Confession.

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I have sinned.

For I didn't understand....For I missed the point....For I'm just human.

For I can't find a job...I just lost a job...I just can't hold a job.

For I'm sick...I have no place to live... It was just an accident.

I really screwed up... I've got mental problems...I just don't get it.

Have mercy on me even if I don't look like a nice person.

Have mercy on me even if you don't know me....Have mercy on me - my parents just kicked me out; my wife just kicked me out."

Those may be some of the laments people have made to God, in the confessional or in their other prayers.

We know we can receive forgiveness and mercy from God in the confessional.

Can we extend mercy to people we meet with those same problems?

We are called! We are called to mercy. **Mercy is love in motion.**

Please join us one more time for the song on page 1.