

## ***Imposter Syndrome!***

*Isaiah 6<sup>1-8</sup>; Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15<sup>1-11</sup>; Luke 5<sup>1-11</sup>*

*You put new strength in my soul.  
[Psalm 138<sup>3</sup>]*

Psychology Today says of Imposter Syndrome,

*People who struggle with imposter syndrome believe that they are undeserving of their achievements and the high esteem in which they are, in fact, generally held. They feel that they aren't as competent or intelligent as others might think - and that soon enough, people will discover the truth about them. Those with imposter syndrome are often well accomplished; they may hold high office or have numerous academic degrees.*

In the readings today both the Prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul suffer from Imposter Syndrome: if we were honest, we would confess that, as Christians, we often feel the same. But just as with the psychological affliction, it isn't something that we should nurture. The fact is that we belong because God says so!

We meet the religious Imposter Syndrome in:

- ✘ Isaiah finds himself in heaven: he knows he doesn't belong! **In the year that King Uzziah died** gives us a specific time for this and the sense of awe at being in the presence of God with the Seraphs; the noise was enough to have **the pivots on the thresholds shake** and the incense meant that **the house was filed with smoke**. Such is Isaiah's Imposter Syndrome that he declares: **woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips.... yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.**

There is a sense in which familiarity breeds contempt amongst those who come to Church. I do believe that it is right that there is a sense of awe when we gather as a community of faith in the presence of the Living God: worship is different to everyday life!

- ✘ Paul, the persecutor of the Church, finds himself challenged, converted and commissioned by God: he knows that he doesn't deserve the honour. He is aware that he was chosen to be a channel for the Good News as we know it in Jesus. He summarises the Gospel so well: **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, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.**

Peter finds himself in the same position. He has heard Jesus teach as he requisitions their boat as a pulpit and then obeys Jesus (despite the fact that they had **worked all night but caught nothing**) who tells them to **let down their nets for a catch**. After a haul that was enough to nearly sink two boats, **Simon Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!'**

'Why Me?' How right that question is when we realise that the God of all creation chooses and calls us to be his own and calls us, as he did the Galilean fishermen, to follow him.

However much we might associate with the Prophet and the Apostle in their Imposter Syndrome, we need to learn from their confidence too. Paul is very clear: **It was not I but the grace of God that is with me:**

- ✘ **Your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.** Forgiveness and a reset conscience is the unique gift from God to all who are repentant and ask for it. If there is anything that Christians need to have tattooed on the inside of their eyelids it is this! God has taken our sin and we keep doing it; and God has taken away our guilt and we grab it like a comfort blanket. How liberating it is to live as God wants us to.
- ✘ **By the grace of God I am what I am and his grace towards me has not been in vain.** He is convinced and confident about the transforming power of the resurrection of Jesus: **so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.** We might feel like we have Imposter Syndrome and there may be people who put us down, but God raises us up!

We are not imposters because it is never what we do and always what God does.