

BA 2016 Homily - Faces of God's Mercy
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, February 7, 2016

- **Is 6:1-2a, 3-8**
- **1 Cor 15:1-11**
- **Lk 5:1-11**

This is Bishop David Ricken. I'm so happy to be with you today through this recorded message. So that I can invite you to join me in continuing to share the mercy of God through this year's Bishop's Appeal.

Today in the scriptures we hear some amazing experiences of God's mercy. Isaiah the prophet, St. Paul the great evangelist, and Simon Peter, the first apostle and first Pope, all had profound experiences of the mercy and love of God.

Most of us question whether we are good enough. Are we good enough to do a project given to us? Are we good enough to get through a difficult class at school, or to make the sports team? Are we good enough to deserve a raise at work, or to be entrusted with the raising of a child? Ultimately, we all ask if we're good enough even to be loved by God and by others.

Isaiah the prophet in today's first reading says he is doomed, that he isn't worthy. Yet God, in his great mercy, gives him the experience of seeing the angels, and removing sin from his life. In this experience of mercy, Isaiah responds by telling the Lord: "Here I am, send me!"

St. Paul persecuted the early followers of Jesus. One day he had a powerful experience of Jesus' mercy. He went away and learned from a man of faith about the life and death of Jesus. Following that, he spent the rest of his life sharing the gospel message. And today in the second reading we heard that message: Christ died for our sins, he was raised on the third day, he appeared to the apostles, and now he comes to us. This basic

message of our faith, which we call the kerygma, is the beginning experience of a disciple of Jesus.

When Jesus called the first of the apostles, Simon Peter, Peter was afraid. He knew he was sinful, and in need of God's mercy. But in his encounter with Jesus, Jesus completely takes away Peter's fear, and calls him to discipleship.

Isaiah, Paul and Peter all were in need of God's mercy. They were much like each one of us in this regard. In their encounter with the Lord, they were changed. They were forgiven, and then strengthened to share their experience with others. The world changed in significant ways because these three shared their experiences of God's mercy.

Today, I invite you into that same process. All of us need God's mercy. When we encounter Jesus at Mass, or at home in our personal prayer or family prayer together, or when we read the Bible or attend a religious education class, or share time with a fellow parishioner, or help someone in need -- we actually become the face of God's mercy.

We do those things individually, and as families and we also do them together as Church. Saints Peter and Paul were the faces of the early Church, sharing the message of Jesus and his incredible mercy. We, so many centuries later, are invited to be ourselves the *Faces of God's Mercy* in the Church today.

In this wonderful Year of Mercy called by Pope Francis, I invite you to participate in the mission of the Church of Green Bay. Will you help me carry out this mission through your prayers and support of this year's Bishop's Appeal? Your generosity in past years has allowed the mercy and the message of Jesus to be shared in so many ways. And this year, we need more than ever to continue and even intensify this mission of mercy.

Please prayerfully consider making your gift today to the Bishop's Appeal. For some of us, this might be your first gift to the Appeal. I would encourage you to pray about how you can help and make your gift. Join me today in giving – so that together we can be the Faces of God's Mercy to a young person seeking God's love or to a family struggling to make it in today's turbulent world.

Our Diocese of Green Bay is a community of communities who follow Jesus. Through the work of the Diocese, we try to help support each of the parish communities where these encounters with the Lord take place every day. In helping to support catechists, we share the basic message of Jesus that St. Paul preached. In providing training for pastoral ministers, we help to share the message of Christ's love and mercy. Through Catholic Charities, we provide direct experiences of helping people to discover the strength of God within them.

As God called the prophet Isaiah, and Jesus called Peter and Paul, we are called as well to experience Christ and then share in his mission. Will you join me in praying for the people and communities of our diocese? Will you join me in supporting the mission of our diocese? Your generosity through your gift to the Bishop's Appeal makes the mercy of God real.

Thank you so much! Your priest or pastoral leader will now be able to share how you can make a pledge to this years' Appeal. May God bless you and your families abundantly, and reward you for your generosity. Amen.