

FEBRUARY 9, 2025 FATHER PETER TURRONE

"But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.'"

In the Gospel that was just proclaimed, we hear this great moment, where Saint Peter recognizes the great gift that has been given to him. And we also recognize a very human fear, as well. We see his experience, but then we hear the final response of our Lord, and the decision of Peter and the others.

When we think about how God speaks to us today, he speaks to us as he did in the past. As we heard in the second reading, and as Paul tells us over and over again, he says, "Faith comes through hearing." So, what exactly are we hearing? Well, we're hearing the initial proclamation, which was just said in the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. He says the initial proclamation. And he says 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. And then it goes on. So, this is the initial proclamation. So, from the beginning, right, those who saw it and those who heard about it, through the apostles, and then their successors, came to know that God sent his Son into the world to die for our sins. So, it's no longer coal that touches our lips, and that purifies us, which is only symbolic, but now it's the blood of Jesus Christ. It's the blood of God's Lamb, the only Lamb who is capable of taking away our sins, and making something new of us.

We become God's beloved children, and we become his children so we're saved from damnation, and drawn into the reality of the incarnation. And now we recognize that all of us, through God's loving providence, have a role, right, have a role in this life, in preparation for a second coming, as we move towards the completion of time. So you can

see that Peter-- Right, there's this experience, so you hear, right, you hear the proclamation. For him, again, he sees Jesus, he sees this miracle, so he's very familiar with the torah, so he knows that this is not an ordinary man, to be able to do something like that. So he's overwhelmed by the mercy of God, but he's also, again, terrified.

So this epiphany or manifestation, so this is a normal reaction. A normal reaction. But God meets him where he's working. So, he's just going about his daily work, who knows what he was thinking about, other than the fact that he did not catch any fish. He was probably worried about finances, there could've been many things there. But, again, Jesus came to him while he was working. And, thank God, he responded. Right, he trusted in the Lord at that moment, that he was able to leave everything and to follow him. And we have our first pope, right?

So, how does this apply to us? What can we learn from today's scriptures? Well, first of all, is that the Lord is always coming and meeting us in different places. So, for Peter, it was at his workplace, for you, it can be at your workplace, perhaps it can be at home, it can be in a classroom, it can be in a lab. He can meet us in many places, and very often, it's unexpected. It's unexpected. And then he wants to say something to us. He wants us to experience his love. And that love, when we have an authentic encounter with Jesus, what it does is, it terrifies us. Why? Because we see, in the midst of the light, Jesus' light, you know, he's the light of God, he is God himself, so, being so close to the light, is overwhelming, because it shows us who we are.

So, when Peter saw Jesus, Peter also saw himself. So he sees his own sinfulness. This is why he says, he says, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." But Jesus doesn't walk away from us. He doesn't walk

away from anyone. He stays there. We turn away from the Lord. He wants to save everyone. So, he meets us wherever we are, he can meet us even in the strangest places. I remember listening to the beautiful testimony of a sister who had gone raving, she was in Italy, and she was doing all sorts of things, and while she was on the dancefloor, the Lord appears to her. And she's so overwhelmed with the mercy of God, that she said I can't do this anymore. She left everything, and she became a sister.

She gave her life to God. So God meets us anywhere. Even Pope Francis did this beautiful gesture, the first time in history, to open a holy door at a prison. And he's saying, look, the Lord knocks even at the prison. You're not cut off from him, he sees you, and he loves you. And he wants them, he wants all of us, to repent and turn back to him, because he has a special plan for us. It may not be as grandiose as it was, strong as it was, for Saint Peter. But all of us have a role in salvation history. So we ask God for the grace, to recognize our dignity as his children, again, through our baptism, and also-- also to have the courage, like Peter, to let everything go, our worries, our material possessions, whatever they may be, put everything in God's hands, and follow Jesus, for the best adventure of our lives.