

# Scripture Reflections on Holy Orders

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## Reflection One

### Scripture Reading

And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28:18-20)

### Reflection

I'm always struck by what Jesus does not say in this Gospel passage. He does not begin with, "Maybe, if you want to, if you have the time, when you get around to it, you might want to consider, here's an option for what you can do..." Rather, he says: "Go to the people. *Make* them my disciples. *Baptize* them. *Teach* them." There is nothing wishy-washy about what he is telling the disciples to do. It would be not only a challenging but also an entirely overwhelming task, except that Jesus inserts a footnote. I can imagine the collective sigh of relief from his followers when he tells them: "Oh, and, by the way, don't worry. I'll be with you, always." Today, as then, people hear and accept the call to minister in the church. And Jesus remains true to his promise to be with them, always.

### Prayer

Holy God, guide those who minister in our church. Bless their efforts to spread the Gospel of your Son, Jesus. Grant them strength when they need to be strong, and encouragement when their hearts are heavy. May they know joy in serving you, through Christ Jesus, you Son, who is always present with them. Amen.

## Reflection Two

### Scripture Reading

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.' Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, "I am only a boy"; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.' Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth.' (Jeremiah 1:4-9)

### Reflection

It is an amazing thought that God knows each of us thoroughly and entirely before we are even born; that God has chosen us to love and serve in this world, each in unique ways with the unique gifts he has given us.

But Jeremiah is having doubts, like we sometimes have doubts. Once again, God reassures us — “I’ll be there with you! You’re not on your own! Don’t be afraid.” What a wondrous, faithful God.

#### **Prayer**

Creator God, you who know us inside and out. You know the purpose for which we are created — to know, love and serve you each in our unique ways. Today we pray especially for those whom you have chosen to serve you as ordained ministers in the Church. Be with these men as they strive to be holy and to bring the Word of your Son, Jesus, to us. Amen.

### *Reflection Three*

#### **Scripture Reading**

That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.’ (Acts 10:37-43)

#### **Reflection**

Over and over again in Scripture we read about how God does the choosing. God chooses those who are meant to tell others about him. God chooses those who will announce clearly to the people that Jesus is

the savior, the Lord. Throughout the ages, God has chosen men and women to lead others to Jesus, his Son.

#### **Prayer**

Holy God, through our Baptism you have chosen us to be disciples of your Son, Jesus. We share in the common priesthood of believers and the ministry of being bearers of Jesus’ Good News. With the help of your Spirit, may our lives be living witnesses to the power of forgiveness and peace. And may those who have dedicated their lives to you in ordained ministry experience the strength of your Presence everyday. Amen.

### *Reflection Four*

#### **Scripture Reading**

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:14-20)

#### **Reflection**

This Scripture is a clear job description for a priest: be ruled by Christ’s love; do not judge people by what they seem to be; regard people as new creations in Christ; share God’s message of

peace and forgiveness through Christ. Speak for Christ. But the passage also challenges those of us who are a part of the common priesthood of believers: Listen to the message!

### **Prayer**

Good and gracious God, you have gifted the Church with many wonderful men who have dedicated their lives to proclaiming the Gospel of your Son, Jesus. Protect them and bless them. Keep them safe, and keep them true to you and to the Gospel. May the light of your Son, Jesus, shine through them. Amen.

## *Reflection Five*

### **Scripture Reading**

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. (2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-7)

### **Reflection**

That God trusts us is an awesome thought. What a gift, and what a responsibility to live up to that trust! The work of spreading the Gospel is not for selfish people. Nor is it for people seeking power for themselves, or for people trying to look good or be cool. It is not for people who cannot see beyond themselves to the needs of the world around us. The work of spreading the Gospel is for selfless people, for people willing to serve, to be earthen vessels that hold the treasure of

Jesus. For our priests and for us, the real power to witness that Jesus Christ is Lord comes from God, not from us.

### **Prayer**

Dear Lord, today we pray for humility, the humility to know that it is you who makes all things possible through your Son, Jesus. We pray for humility in our Church, that those who lead us humbly honor the great trust that you have placed in them. Fill our hearts with Jesus. Amen.

## *Reflection Six*

### **Scripture Reading**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' (John 20:19-23)

### **Reflection**

After 9/11, I felt afraid. Even though my family and I live thousands of miles away from the attacks, I felt the need for protection to lock the windows and doors of our home so that whatever terror was out there would stay out there. I was in shock. I try to imagine the shock and fear the apostles felt after the crucifixion of Jesus. I probably would have rushed to lock the doors, too! But as we read in this Scripture, Jesus breaks through their fears, he breaks through our fears, and he sends us out into that wild and sometimes terrifying world to forgive. Wow.

**Prayer**

Holy God, be present today with those who are afraid. Be present to those whom you are calling today to a vocation of ordained ministry. Be present to the deacons, priests and bishops who serve in ministry in our communities. May they see Jesus, as the first apostles did, offering them his peace, and challenging them to go out into the world with his saving grace. Amen.

## *Reflection Seven*

**Scripture Reading**

Then Jesus went about all the cities and =villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'  
Matthew 9:35-38

**Reflection**

Imagine how different our world would be today if Jesus had not handed on his leadership, passed the baton so to speak, to his apostles. What if no one had spread the Good News of Jesus Christ after he was gone? Throughout the ages, people such as ordained ministers and all who live out the common priesthood of Baptism bring the light of Christ to the world. What a different place it would be without that Light.

**Prayer**

Dear God, our prayer today is one of thanks to you for our many blessings, most especially for the gifts of the people, who, with your grace, have proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus throughout the ages. May all who serve in your Church today, bring Christ's light to the world. Amen