

## ***SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER***

### ***John 15:16***

We learn that a close friend or relative has met with tragedy.

Our immediate reaction to the news we have just heard is a desire to do something, say something, that will help. But as we think about it, we ask ourselves, "What can I do? I wouldn't know what to or do. I am only a housewife, a labourer, a teenager, a retiree." "I am only" are only three small words, but they have the power to stifle anything we consider too challenging or too demanding.

We hear those words spoken numerous times in the Scriptures, and we can assume that they were in the minds of those who questioned God's command or even rejected it. When God told Jonah to call the people of Nineveh to repentance, he went in the opposite direction and was probably thinking, "I can't do this. I am only.'

There are others who initially said, 'I am only' but then responded with obedience. When God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, Moses tried to wriggle out of going to the Egyptian king by saying he wasn't very good at making speeches, but he went.

When the angel spoke to Mary and told her she was about to bear a child, the Son of the Most High God, she too said, "How can I? I am only a young girl not even married yet."

When Jesus called His twelve disciples, one and all could have quite legitimately said, "I can't do this! I am only a fisherman, a tax collector, an ordinary sort of person."

When God chooses people for certain tasks and calls them to even do what is seemingly dangerous and downright crazy, He knows what He's doing. Even if the individual can only respond with 'how can I do this' and proposes all kinds of objections, God can see past our weaknesses and insecurities and see the real potential that exists within each of us.

When God spoke to Moses from the Burning Bush, He said, "*I will be with you*". As Jesus commands His disciples to preach and baptize people of all nations He says, "*I will be with you always*"

The words God uses here indicate His deep commitment to those He chooses in much the same way as the Bible describes the commitment between a husband and wife, or the way God speaks of His commitment to the people of Israel. Just as God came in His grace to Jeremiah, and called Him to be His prophet, He has come to us. Through Jesus and His death and resurrection He has given us a new identity as His chosen people and given us a new life as His chosen people. We are to be God's voice to speak His Word of comfort and grace; to be God's ears to hear the cries of those who are hurting; to be God's hands to demonstrate God's love through our care and love; to be God's feet to go and be his disciples in the every day matters of living in this world, to be a witness to God's love for all people in our neighbourhood, our community, in fact, the whole world.

It all sounds very nice to talk about Moses and others and their call to be God's messengers, and seeing a parallel with God's call to us to be His chosen people through Holy Baptism, but when it comes down to it, our response ends up no different from the biblical characters, "How can I do this. I am only" and like Moses and the others, we feel totally inadequate to carry out

what God is asking us to do.

The words “I am only”, are words that deny the gifts God has given us to develop and use. “I am only” is offered as a reason why we can’t do something. We don’t have what is needed to be on a church committee, or visit the sick, or talk to a neighbor about Jesus and the Church, or help in the worship service. We am only a house wife, a retiree, etc. Our fear of failure is nothing unusual. Our feeling of inadequacy is normal as we wonder how we will cope and what we will do. We would prefer that God leave us alone and ask someone else.

It’s normal to feel afraid and inadequate and it’s just when we feel like this that we need to be reminded of God's commitment to us. It is God who chooses us to be His children and to actively be His disciple. It is God who has promised those who He has chosen that He will never leave them and will always be beside them to give guidance and help. His commitment to us, whom he has chosen as his people and given the task of using our gifts and skills to bless others is no different to the one He gave Moses, *“I will be with you.”*

If God can overrule the objections of Moses and Peter, He can do that for us as well. God chooses us and appoints us to bear much fruit, to use Jesus’ words. We can be sure He won’t challenge us with anything for which He hasn’t equipped us.

And we can be sure that He will help us in our times of lack of confidence. He will provide us with those who will help us be what He has chosen us to be.

We will all too willingly shy away from challenges that are presented to us. It is part of our human nature to want to take an easier path and not to step out of where we feel comfortable. Be assured that our God, who knows what we are capable of better than we know ourselves, is the one challenging us to extend

ourselves beyond what is comfortable and easy. And as we are reminded of this, let's also remember Jesus own words, "*You did not choose me, I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit.*"

Those are reassuring words, we have been chosen by our Lord and Saviour to carry on His work, and as His chosen people He is not only ready to forgive us when we fail, but also gives us the means of carrying out His work. No matter how inadequate we may feel, God has a marvelous way of using what we say and do to bring blessings to others.

When we hesitate and wonder what we could possibly say and do, remember we are God's chosen people, made clean by the blood of Jesus and given a new life through his resurrection. He has chosen us, appointed us, will support us and provide us with the means and opportunities to bear much fruit.

**AMEN.**