

## **FEBRUARY: THE MONTH OF THE HEART**

“Woe is me. I am doomed. I am a man of unclean lips,” said Isaiah the prophet.

“I handed on to you what I received, that Christ died for our sins,” says St. Paul.

“Depart from me Lord for I am a sinful man,” says Simon Peter to Jesus.

The common theme to each of the readings is sin. Sin is real. Sin touches everyone, even the sinless Mary and the Holy One of God, Jesus. What is sin? It started out small. In the garden. It was reaching out and taking what had not been given. Taking. Not receiving. That taking was born of a simple arrogance. “I can do what I want.” That taking was born of a lack of trust in what God had said. That taking resulted from the disobedience of the first human beings. As I said, sin started small. But it did not stay small. It spread everywhere. Not only in human creation. That taking introduced disorder into our world. It introduced disharmony into every aspect of life. It is everywhere.

And we wonder. Is that all there is? Will all of this beauty and goodness ultimately be destroyed by this invidious sin that so destroys the True, the Beautiful, the Good? Isaiah says: “I am doomed.” But the Lord purifies him and removes his sin. Immediately, Isaiah, the doomed one, steps forward and says: “Here I am. Send me!”

And St. Paul who persecuted Christians to the point of death has a conversion experience. Christ suddenly appears to him and everything is changed. The persecutor becomes the proclaimer. It is as if Paul says what Isaiah said: “Here I am, send me!”

And Simon Peter is suddenly overwhelmed by the reality of sin in his life as the impact of the gigantic catch of fish dawns on him. He suddenly realizes how close God is to him in the person of Jesus. But like God responds to Isaiah and Paul, God is not afraid of our sin. Jesus speaks to Simon: “Do not be afraid. I am sending you out to fish for people.”

I have a friend who calls the month of February: The Month of the Heart. Probably because of Saint Valentine's Day right in the middle of the month. But she thanks God each day of the month for the triumph of his heart over sin and selfishness in her life. Let me say that again. She thanks God every day of this month for the triumph of his heart over sin and selfishness in her life. That is the key. The reality of sin is not the key. The reality of sin is the problem. The resolution of the problem is found in Jesus Christ.

It was sin that cost him Jesus his life. Yes. All sin. But he was willing to pay that price to forgive us. And to cover our sins in the blood, the precious blood shed on the cross. And He did that. And your sin. And my sin. They are defeated. They have been overcome. No longer are any of us to think like Isaiah did, "I am doomed because of my sin." Or Paul, "My sins were too grievous to be forgiven." Or like Peter, His sins had made him a sinner. No. No. No.

Sin is sin. But God's grace far surpasses sin. God's grace transforms sin. God's grace heals sin at its root in us. It does? Yes, it does. Well how can I have that happen in me? You have only to believe it. It is already so. But the grace still has work to do. The purification continues until all is new again. The key is to believe that God wants to do this for you. That God can do this for you. That God IS doing this for you. AND. That you will welcome God doing this in you in and through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Will you, this day, believe fully in the triumph of the heart of Jesus over your sin? Well then. Welcome to the month of the heart!

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace!