

I remember the day well. It was June 30 1995, the temperature had reached a humid 95F; even at 7.00 in the evening it hadn't gotten much lower.

Holy Rood Church was full – probably around 400 people in it, and no air-conditioning.

I laid prostrate before the altar as the Litany of the Saints began: then a cool breeze started wafting over me.

Of course, hot air rises, so being on the floor meant that it would be a little less hot down there.

But an actual, perceptible breeze on a hot and humid evening in a packed building; surely not; but what else could it have been?

Well, as Hamlet said: "There are more things in heaven and earth, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." William Shakespeare: Hamlet; Act 1 Scene 5

As that 'breeze' cooled and calmed me, it took my mind back to the Old Testament reading I'd chosen for this, my Ordination Mass; and it's the reading we've heard at this Mass.

The year is 740 BC, Isaiah's quietly worshipping God in the Jerusalem Temple, and suddenly the Lord appears to Him in all His splendour, and majesty.

And that encounter Isaiah has with the Lord is rooted to a pivotal moment in history, because Uzziah, the King of Israel, who'd ruled powerfully, and successfully for 52 years, was dead.

What was going to happen to the country now? Would the next King be godly or corrupt?

Would he make alliances with Israel's powerful neighbours Egypt, Syria, or Babylon that would make Israel a vassal to one of them?

And so God appears to Isaiah to show him that He, the Lord, is the true King.

A seraph touches Isaiah's lips with a hot coal, and assures him that: "Your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Is. 6: 7

Then the Lord calls: "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us? [And Isaiah says] Here I am. Send me!" Is. 6: 8

To go to the people and tell them of the God who is love, so that they: "Will see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn to [the Lord] for healing." Is. 6: 10 (altered)

All of the readings at this Eucharist, but especially Isaiah, and the Gospel are so rich, and beautiful as they open for us the different ways in which the Lord speaks to us, and calls us.

And His call is to a vocation of love for Him; which, in turn, puts His love in our hearts for those whom we will meet, and don't know Jesus.

And love such as this is possible because we know that God is love: "Which enables those who have drunk from the fountain of God's love to become in their turn a fountain from which 'flow rivers of living water' (See Jn. 7: 38)." Benedict XVI: Deus Caritas Est; 42

And, because God is love, it means that He calls us to follow Him, in love, in so many different, and totally unexpected ways.

In the Gospel Peter, James, and John are fishermen, but they've had a bad night, having caught nothing.

Jesus just casually asks Peter if He can use his boat as the people are crowding in on Him, eager to listen to what He has to say.

Jesus, again casually, after He's finished speaking, says to Peter: "Put out into deep water, and let down your nets for a catch." Lk. 5: 4

Peter's the expert here, so he knows full well that daytime isn't the best time to catch fish as they'll have gone to the bottom of the lake.

But he humours Jesus, casts out the nets, and in so doing hauls in so many that he has to call for help.

Then he falls at Jesus' feet and says: "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" Lk. 5: 8
His reaction, like Isaiah's when he meets the Living God, is to recognise his sinfulness in front of utter holiness.

But God, in Christ, doesn't condemn Him: He calls him to a specific task: "Do not be afraid; [Jesus says] from now on you will be catching people." Lk. 5: 10

Catching them up into the love of Jesus so that the Lord can say to each one of us: "Follow me." Jn. 21: 19

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran Pastor who was hanged by the Nazis in Buchenwald for resisting Hitler, said: "When Christ calls a person, he bids them to come and die. It is always a decision, either for or against Jesus Christ." Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Cost of Discipleship

This became a reality for Peter when he was martyred in Rome because of the decision he'd made to follow Jesus that morning all those years before at Lake Gennesaret.

We may not be called to lay down our lives for Jesus in that way, but if we're to truly follow Him then, in another sense, we are.

When we consciously make a decision to follow Jesus, our old ways have to die; which can be just as painful as physical death.

Then we have to constantly invite the Spirit of Jesus to work in us so that we will: "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." Ash Wednesday Liturgy

Most of us will live out our Christian vocation, Laity and Clergy, leading ordinary lives in the midst of the world; no doubt thinking that we've had little or no impact on anyone in particular, or the world in general.

But the quality of our loving, if it's rooted in Jesus, and not a shallow misrepresentation of His love, will make an indelible mark on the heart of humanity.

Each one of us, at some point in our lives, has to say for ourselves that I: "Have come to believe in God's love. [Because] being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, [Jesus] which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." Benedict XVI: Deus Caritas Est; Introduction 1

Let us, like Peter: "Put out into the deep water." Lk. 5: 4 of faith and say to Jesus: "Here I am. Send me." Is. 6: 8