Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Remnant- Vocation

To me, Salvation history has an accordion effect, it expands and then it **contracts**. The expansions are the moments of flourishing, moments of growth, moments of faithfulness and the contractions are moments of diminishing faith, judgements, and **unfaithfulness**. In the Old Testament before the flood, there was a moment of expansion, growth and then contraction down to Noah's **family.** Later it expanded from Noah' family to tribes, people, and kingdoms, expanding and contracting every time, hence the accordion **effect**. What is interesting to me is that every time there was a season of contraction, there was always a small group left that was faithful and carried out the mission, **this group is referred to as a remnant.**

The prophet Zephaniah was a prophet in the Old Testament during a transition period, the people of Israel were going through a contraction period, there was idolatry and religious **decay.** He exhorted the people of Israel not to conform to the times, to be **faithful.** He encourages people to <u>seek the Lord</u>, to <u>seek justice</u>, to <u>seek humility</u> and that if they did, they would be part of the remnant of **Israel.** Zephaniah saw a need, he saw that the faith was diminishing, they were going through a moment of contraction, and a faithful steady group was **needed.**

Think of Jesus coming and selecting his remnant a small group of 12 to continue his **mission.** This remnant like the remnant called for in Zephaniah, was a remnant that <u>sought the Lord, sought justice, sought humility</u> and because of them the accordion started to **expand.** St. Paul was one of the beneficiaries of this expanding accordion, he received the message from the Lord, **answered the call** and became one of the greatest missionaries, helping create expansion moments (moments of flourishing, growth and faithfulness). **How do you become part of that remnant? You answer your call.**

The Lord tells us that to be part of that faithful remnant we need to <u>seek the Lord, seek justice and seek humility</u>, in the gospel the famous beatitudes reinforce even more the need for us to be people of justice, humility and most importantly people of the **Lord.** This remnant is called to great things but not on their own, **God through them.** It could be dangerous to think of yourself as part of the remnant because pride can filter **in.** The Corinthians discovered this firsthand, because of their desire to be part of the remnant they began to boast, to boast of their faith, to boast of their knowledge, to boast of their wisdom, to the point that they were dividing and forming groups and **clicks.** Instead of being a unified group helping expand the faith, they were creating division and **confusion.**

If you find yourself boasting because of your calling, read how St. Paul explains to the Corinthians **why they were called**… not because they were wise, powerful, not because they were noble, rather they were called because they were foolish, weak and lowly… **How about that for boasting?** If you are part of the remnant is because you seek the Lord, you seek justice and you seek humility. **So that if you boast you can only boast in the LORD.**

Just like the Corinthians, just like all the remnants, each one of us has been called, called to be part of the faithful, part of those who help expand the accordion, your calling can be called your **vocation.** Today our diocese celebrates vocations, our calling, this weekend is… **Called by name weekend**. You are encouraged to pray for vocations, to share your vocations, to nominate or name someone that you feel might have a calling to a particular vocation… **My Vocation is not Special or Unique…**

Growing up I didn't know much about deacons, I attended a parish in Rhode Island that had three deacons, but I didn't know the difference between a deacon and a priest, so I never thought of the deaconate as a vocation for **me.** I wanted to have a family and never thought of myself as a representative of our **faith.** Fast forward fifteen years we leave Rhode Island and end up as parishioners at St. Anthony's in Kansas City, **MO.** Here we encounter another deacon, deacon Tom Powell, who asked me if I had ever considered the **deaconate**. I very quickly said no, because I still had no clue what was the deacon role, I told my wife waiting for her to laugh at the idea, and she responded maybe God is asking you to look into it… **Not what I was expecting**, so then I saw it as a question to investigate, to inquire, to learn.

A few months later (not sure if they spoke to each other) but the priest at St. Anthony approached me and asked me the same question **(A priest by the name of Fr. Paul Turner)**. He said, have you ever considered the deaconate, so now I saw it as Samuel going to Eli and asking **did you call?** So, I said Lord I have no idea where this will take me but here, I am, I will take the next step, Fr. Paul was transferred from St. Anthony right when I started formation. After getting ordained I was assigned to St. Anthony and to the Cathedral, **I see that as God telling Fr. Paul… you were involved in this mess, now you deal with it…**

Each one of us has a calling, you might be called to the priesthood, deaconate, married life, single life, consecrated life, **but we all have a calling**. That calling is our pathway to becoming that remnant, that group that is expected to be faithful, to help expand the faith like an **accordion.** At times we feel that the heavens have to open and we have to have an out of body experience to know that we are called, but the reality is that he is just asking you to say yes to the next step and he will take it from there. **If you seek the Lord, justice and humility, you are guaranteed to answer his calling. We ask you**

to pray for vocations, pray for discernment and if you see traits of a particular vocation in someone don’t hesitate to name them!