

Spiritually Speaking

Call to be His ministers

By Fr. Thankachan Joseph

This week's readings deal with three different personalities called by God: the prophet Isaiah, Paul and Peter and his coworkers. How did these people respond to the call of God? They all felt unworthy. Isaiah said, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips!" (Isaiah 6:5). Paul felt himself unfit to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God. (1 Corinthians 15:9). And Peter fell down at Jesus's feet and said, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" (Luke 15:8). Humility is said to be the first and primary virtue in authentic spirituality.



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Beyond the feeling of unworthiness, these three people called to do God's work have in common availability and readiness to do God's will and follow His directives. As soon as Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord asking, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" his immediate response was, "Here am I; send me!" (v. 8). In the case of Peter and his partners, "they left everything and followed him" (v. 11) without looking back. And Paul threw himself with so much zeal into God's work that he worked harder than all those who were called before him, though as he is quick to point out, "it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me" (v. 10). We must be available and willing to go as the Lord directs us.

In the first reading, the vision that the prophet describes (6: 1-2a, 3-8) is so awesome, the prophet believes a curse has fallen on him: "Woe is me! For I am lost." His awareness of "being lost" comes from his sense of unworthiness: "I am a man of unclean lips, living among the people of unclean lips!" We understand that the prophet had yet to learn that the vision of glory must burn deep and cleanse him. So, he has to go through a process of purification. Thus, the seraph flows to him with a "burning coal." Isaiah feels the intense burning in his mouth, which must be cleansed first if he is to speak the messages of God. And only after purification are the prophet's ears opened to hear the call of God. Only after he is freed from his sins is he able to hear and comprehend the word of God: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The prophet is ready for his mission: "Here am I! Send me" (v.8).

St. Paul's letter to the First Corinthians (15:1-11) describes the call of Paul. Even though Paul did not meet Jesus face-to-face in his lifetime, his certitude that he was passing on the authentic teaching of Christ is based not on the many visions of Christ that he enjoyed but on the teaching he received from the apostles before him. "For, I handed on to you as of first importance, what I in turn had received" (1 Cor. 15: 3). Paul understood his ministry as essentially that of passing on the message. To succeed in this, two things are most important: how one receives the tradition, and how one passes it on.

The Gospel reading from St. Luke (5: 1-11) illustrates the call of Peter and his co-workers, the first disciples. It happens in the context of the miraculous catch of the fish, which illustrates that when we follow the guidance of the Lord in our lives, we achieve results that will change our lives. He and his men toiled all night long and caught nothing. Relying on their competence as seasoned fishermen resulted in failure. But when they followed the Lord's guidance, which did not make much sense (fishermen did not set the net in broad daylight), the result was an astounding success. Jesus said to Peter, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people" (v. 10). We see that their qualification for the work of God does not come from them but from God. It is not their personal achievement; it is God's grace. That is why Paul could say, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (v. 10). The one who calls us for His mission will surely provide us with necessary qualifications to do his apostolate. Are you ready and willing to be a minister at the service of Christ?

Morrow SWCD to meet

Morrow SWCD will meet Tuesday, February 8 beginning at 6 p.m. virtually via Zoom. If you wish to attend the Zoom or join over conference call, please contact the SWCD beforehand at 541-676-5452.

Meetings of the Morrow SWCD are open to the public.

CREZ makes long-term commitment to cities in Morrow County

\$200,000 annual infrastructure money for 10 years

By David Sykes

In a shift from prior year's funding decisions, the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) recently decided to give \$200,000 per year for 10 years to each of four cities in the county, Heppner, Ione, Lexington and Irrigon. The money is for use on big infrastructure projects such as sewer and water, the CREZ board said in providing the money. "I think this a good thing for our county," Boardman Mayor Paul Keefer said in urging a yes vote on the multi-year expenditure. "It says we are going to commit to you so you can build infrastructure in your community, I think this says a lot about our county," he added.

In past years the CREZ has been reluctant to commit multi-year funding for any group or taxing district, instead making only year-to-year funding decisions. However, with a stable funding source apparent over the next 16 years, the board felt it could commit to long term grants, especially to cities facing large infrastructure projects and expenses.

CREZ Chairman Don Russell said he had talked to city officials in three of the county's cities and they all expressed a desire for stable funding which could then be used for the bigger more expensive infrastructure projects. Last year the CREZ gave each of the four cities \$200,000, but only for a one-year commitment. "If we are ever going to have Ione or Lexington solve their big utility problems this is the way to help them do it," Russell said. Some board members were concerned about making the multi-year commitment fearing that CREZ could lose some of its funding and then be unable to pass on the money. The enter-

prise zone receives money from businesses who have located or expanded there and pay money to the CREZ instead of regular property taxes. Most of the development has been in the Boardman area which has seen an explosion of growth over the past 10 years, providing the CREZ with its money.

While most board members felt future funding would be stable, others were more cautious. Port of Morrow board member Jerry Healy, who is not a CREZ board member but was at the meeting, said the cities should be notified when given the multi-year money, that in the event of a "train wreck," where something unforeseen happens to the funding stream, the grants would no longer be available.

The money coming into the CREZ over the next 16 years appears pretty secure, however, with \$191 million scheduled to be collected and disbursed through 2037. Most of it will come from the Amazon data centers located near Boardman, who pay money into the CREZ in exchange for a lower property tax rate.

This year the CREZ had about \$10 million to disburse and at this year's finance meeting decided to stick pretty much to what it has done in the past, funding five categories of activity around the county. As in previous years the CREZ has provided money to education, public health and safety, community development, and housing and infrastructure. See table below for this year's dis-

bursements.

This year also saw the CREZ board hit with more special funding requests or "asks," as appeals came in from nine different groups and organizations for funding outside the traditional five category framework. The board decided not to fund these asks, however, instead telling requesters to either go to their umbrella taxing districts, such as a city or the county government and go through the normal budgeting process for funding or make application to one of the three economic development groups servicing the county. These economic development groups have, in the past, given out cash grants for housing, community enhancement or business development.

This year's total disbursement of funds by CREZII

2021 CREZ II Disbursement by Entity	
Name	Amount
Boardman Cemetery	1,698.16
Boardman Central Urban Renewal Agency	2,171.19
Irrigon Cemetery	4,137.05
CREZ II Zone Manager Expense	9,375.40
Irrigon Park	16,438.90
Umatilla Morrow Radio & Data District	17,022.03
Oregon Trail Library	25,391.46
North Morrow Vector Control	29,123.06
Morrow County Unified Recreation	45,641.52
Intermountain ESD	61,623.95
Blue Mountain Community College	110,889.46
Boardman Park	134,692.46
City of Heppner	200,000.00
City of Ione	200,000.00
Town of Lexington	200,000.00
Morrow County Health District	250,004.22
Boardman Fire & Rescue	498,346.59
Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group	736,273.20
Morrow Education Foundation	975,287.74
Boardman Community Development Association	1,144,936.00
City of Irrigon	1,152,790.80
Morrow County	1,383,333.33
Port of Morrow	1,383,333.34
City of Boardman	1,863,990.53
TOTAL	10,446,500.39

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Heppner's Wee Bit O' Ireland St. Patrick's Day Celebration is back!

After a long two years, the celebration kicks off on **March 11!**

The Heppner Gazette-Times will publish our special St. Patrick's Day pages in the March 9th issue. Do not miss this opportunity to reach local and visiting customers.

The deadline to be included is Monday, March 7 at 5:00 pm.
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