

As the gospel tells us St. Peter found out, the first moments after being chosen to do something utterly life-changing are both riveting and humbling. For many of us, being asked by to be a wife or husband by someone is right up there in the list of things that completely grip us and fill us with awe. Wow – I remember thinking when it happened to me – someone actually wants to marry ME – can you imagine!

For many of us, there are times we've been chosen for other things altogether, and the mission was quite different. I remember shortly after being chosen by the Selective Service, showing up at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and being told face-to-face by a drill sergeant at the distance of about an eighth of an inch that the United States of America expected him to perform a miracle.

He asked if I would like to know what that miracle might be. Something told me he wasn't really asking that just to be polite, so I encouraged him to continue even though he was already explaining, in ways that only drill sergeants can, that the United States of America expected him to transform me from a worthless, undisciplined slug into a soldier.

Expressing doubts in his own words, which cannot be repeated here, about the probability of a successful outcome, he also told me I was also ugly and to get out of his sight. I happily complied, wondering uneasily what the next eight weeks were going to bring.

I also felt pretty small, thinking he was probably right about not being able to measure up. The Selective Service had chosen me, but surely they'd been hallucinating if they thought that I'd come even close to being as good a soldier as that drill sergeant. What qualifications did I possess that were comparable to his, anyway?

So I imagine Peter must have felt after Jesus performed his miracle with the fish, and then chose Peter and his companions to follow him. I imagine they felt not too differently than me: called to do something we never thought we'd be doing, feeling absolutely unworthy and incapable of doing it, and wondering what the future would bring.

Unlike my drill sergeant though, Jesus didn't belittle Peter or tell him he was a slug and would never measure up. Nor did he correct Peter and say, "oh no, you're not a sinner, Peter," or anything like that. Arguably, Jesus knew perfectly well at some level what the trajectory of Peter's life would be. That doesn't come up either: Jesus simply tells Peter what his mission in life was going to be.

So it is with you and me. We've been chosen by God to be the ones through whom God's love is to be expressed in the world at this time. That's the mission. That's why you and I are here. It really isn't any more complicated than that.

If we feel unqualified or unworthy, then a) we're right and b) it doesn't matter. The principal thing is to accept that mission and become more God-conscious than self-conscious as we move through life. It's to become aware of and to consent to the presence and action of God within us, understanding as the prophet Isaiah pointed out millennia ago, that it is God who accomplishes all that we do, anyway.

The challenge for you and me is to let go and allow God to act through and within us as God needs to in the moment. The story of humanity is far larger than the story of any individual human, and little if any of it ever turns out exactly as we imagine it should. Indeed, in this moment, is life unfolding just the way you thought it would?

We've all likely heard the expression by now— if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans. It may just be that you and I, like Peter and his companions, have

been chosen by God for a destiny we can't even begin to imagine and truly don't see, even though it's actually in play.

Thomas Merton expressed it this way in a famous prayer many of you have probably memorized by now:

“My Lord God I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that my desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

You and I, like Peter, have been given a fabulous destiny far beyond our ability to grasp. If we were to see it now, right in front of us, we would likely recoil in terror, awe and astonishment, consumed with fears of unworthiness and incapability.

Yet that's exactly what God would like to give us as a gift. All that's required is, in utter humility and acceptance, to respond “yes, Lord, I have no idea what it is for which I'm signing up, but I know you're all about Love, so I will trust you the way I did before I even existed. You've chosen me. Here I am. Do with me as you will.”