

May I speak in the name of the living God, who is our creator, sustainer and redeemer. Amen.

It happened to me again. We just read a Gospel passage that I am willing to preach on. Like this one, Peter “knowing better than God” what God has to do... I love Peter, I am so alike! But then, something else comes across and I have to postpone my longed planes.

I met Ysmena for first time in St Albans when she gave us our first Old Testament lecture. She asked us to introduce ourselves and say something about us. “I am extremely rational and analytical,” I said. She replied, “you will have a tough time with this module then.” We chose some Old Testament texts another day, someone picked up the first reading we had today, the burning bush I called it. I said, “I am a bit obsessed with that passage.” Ysmena told me, “because the fire does not consume the bush, isn’t it? I said “not quite...”

This text was used by the bishop in the event “is God calling you?” that I attended to. It is Moses’s call.

We can learn a lot about how God may call us in this passage. For example, when and where may God call us? Moses was shepherding, God called him in his day-to-day live.

How is God’s call? It is subtle, especial, but nothing big. There is burning bush in the wilderness.

What did Moses do? Moses responded to the subtle God’s call. Moses could have continued in his way with the flock, but he didn’t. He went out of his way to see the subtlety.

What happens when Moses responded? “The Lord saw that he had turned aside to see” and then God reveals him or herself. At this moment subtlety vanishes: God clearly calls Moses by name, gave him instructions, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet”, and says who God is: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”.

Once the conversation between God and Moses has been established, God gives Moses his job description. Look Moses, I have heard the cry, blah, blah. ‘So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.’ God clearly spells what Moses has been called for: to free the people of Israel.

What did Moses do now? He said, “excuse me?” Well, not that way but he put excuses for him not to follow God’s call. You know? Who am I? What can I say?

By the way, this is natural. It also happened to Jeremiah and even to me. When God called me to be “a prophet in a foreign land”, I mean, when God called to become a priest in England... I know this is not a foreign land for you... but it is for me. I said to Him (or Her): in Spanish, of course): ‘You know I studied French as a teenager because I didn’t like the British Empire. I can barely form a sentence in English, and the only thing Spaniards and Brits have in common is that we both love beer and football! Otherwise, we are aliens to each other! How can I even think of reaching out to them to share your precious message?’ And then God said to me, ‘Neither the

inarticulateness of Moses nor the inexperience of Jeremiah were excuses that worked for me. I have some experience with this, you know? You are not that special to be the first ‘unfit’ person that I have called, nor will you be the last.’ Well, he told me something like that... but as I said, in Spanish.

Coming back to the text, what did God do? God just shut down the excuses giving reassurance at the same time: “I will be with you”. How beautiful, isn’t it? God saying “I will be with you”. That’s it, there’s nothing else to care about. God will be with you when you respond God’s call you.

And then God continues with the revelation: “I am who I am,” and continues giving more instructions to Moses, “thus you shall say to the Israelites.”

God is faithful. God will keep knocking the door. God will keep calling us.

God might call us for big things, like he called Moses in this reading, to talk Pharaoh and get God’s people free. Though I believe the vast majority of times we will be called to tinier things. There is a Spanish saying that goes many tiny bits make a big one! What kind of things might be God calling us to do?

Paul gives a generic non-exhaustive handbook in today’s Roman’s passage. As it happened to Moses, once we acknowledge God’s call, all these Paul’s commandments, which may look like a bit abstract (be ardent in spirit), will become clearer, more precise. When we accept our personal

God's call, we change the way in which we look at the world. And suddenly, we can see it, you can be ardent in spirit by enrolling in the flower's rota. Perhaps rejoicing in hope and being patience in suffering, and do no repay evil for evil means to setup a youth group with all those "annoying" teenagers around here. Persevere in prayer may mean you need reevaluate your career, understand what kind of messages may be God telling you through your current situation and putting it in your lifetime perspective. Contribute to the needs of the saints might mean you need step up and become a reader. Or extending hospitality to strangers may be asking you to help a refugee's charity. Only God knows, and you will do too when you respond the call, if you haven't yet.

If you haven't responded yet, I would suggest you answer ASAP, because once you accept God's call, I assure you that you will feel such as fulfilment that you will look back into your life and wonder, like I did, how many other burning bushes have I missed in my life? For how long God knocked at my door and I didn't answer? This is why I was obsessed with this text. And I was obsessed until I understood that the answer is it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how many times you ignored God's call because God is faithful and will keep calling you. The important thing is you have responded God, today, a few years ago or you will in a few years. Because God in His or Her faithfulness will keep calling to let you His or Her plans for you. Will you try to see where God's call can be in your life?