

May 26, 2024

## Encountering God leads to Calling

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### Introduction.

Life-changing encounters. Have you ever had a chance encounter with a person that, in a single moment, altered the course of your life? A meeting that seemed almost orchestrated by a higher power, leaving you in awe of the mysterious ways of the universe? Have you ever experienced something that powerfully transforms your way of thinking or how you make decisions?

Years ago, in the early part of the last century, a man's car broke down on the side of the road. He was out working on the car, unsuccessfully trying to get it started, when another man stopped to help. The second gentleman, looked at the engine, worked on it for just a minute and told the first man to start it up. The car immediately started with no problem. The car owner, in awe of this unexpected encounter, asked his helper, "How did you fix the car so quickly, and how did you know what it needed?" The man answered, "I am Henry Ford. I built the car. I know what makes it work." I can imagine that this encounter with the car's creator, the man who knew it inside out, was a life-altering experience for the car owner. The life of that man trying to fix his car was definitively never the same!

Consider this: if a mere mortal can profoundly influence our lives, what could be the impact of an encounter with the divine? Such an experience could reshape our actions, thoughts, perspectives, and understanding in ways we can't even fathom.

### **Context matter.**

The book of the prophet Isaiah, a significant text in the Old Testament, registers this supernatural experience of this man of God. This book is a rich source of spiritual insights and divine encounters, providing a profound understanding of the human-divine relationship.

The narrative is indeed beautiful and poetic, and the expressions are vivid and dramatic. However, it's important to approach it with discernment and not get caught up in the colorful imagery, surrealism, and spiritual narrative. The purpose is to inspire contemplation, reflection, but also action, not to be overwhelmed by the literary style.

### **Pastoral Reflection**

Whatever the prophet saw was enough to shake him to his core. “Woe is me,” he cries. Woe. Nothing was threatening being said, it seems. There was no overt action that would cause him to cower for protection. There was just presence. Something about that Presence drove him to his knees. Isaiah is overwhelmed by the love of the Creator. We normally assume that experiencing such love would bring us warm and fuzzy feelings.

How many out there need the love of God? How many out there believe God is waiting for them to be punished? And how have we, as people of God, contributed to spreading the idea that God’s presence is only for those who belong to our group? The biblical witness tells us that the first experience in such an encounter is a profound feeling of unworthiness. “Woe is me,” proclaims the prophet, “for I am a man of unclean lips... and I live among a people of unclean lips.”

We believe in God's presence, but encountering God encounter leads us to our calling. God is not a divine presence for emotional or intellectual events; God's presence leads us to a transformative experience that is shared with others.

Siblings in Christ today is a golden opportunity to reflect on encounters with significant individuals or divine experiences. These encounters could be as simple as a moment of peace during a prayer, a feeling of guidance during a difficult decision, or a sense of awe in nature. How have they shaped your life? What actions, thoughts, perspectives, and understanding have been impacted by these encounters? As we reflect, these encounters may have the power to transform our lives, just as they did for the prophet. They are not distant or abstract but deeply personal and relevant to our own journey.

In response to this overwhelming encounter, the prophet, a figure in our religious tradition known for his deep connection with God, his words echo with a deep sense of surrender and readiness. 'Here am I, send me!' he declares, his voice filled with a mix of awe, fear, and anticipation.

The concept is both simple and profound. It's one thing to experience the Presence in a single, awe-inspiring encounter; it's an entirely different journey to be guided by that same Presence every day. To become familiar with and open to God's all-consuming Presence, a presence that permeates every aspect of our lives, is a lifelong journey of discipleship. Knowing and serving God are intertwined, two sides of the same coin. Some start with the knowing; after a profound experience of God's presence, they move into a state of willingness to serve and be sent. Some start by serving and then discovering the God they are serving in the act itself, seeing

God through those with whom they minister. Either way, it can be a humbling and energizing experience.

### **Conclusion and application**

I am sure that we all have experienced God in some way or another. I warmly invite each and every one of you, regardless of your experiences or beliefs, to explore your personal journey and identify your encounters with God. There is no need to have a dramatic or fantastic encounter like the one the prophet experienced.

You have probably experienced a God encounter through a simple act of compassion or love. It is powerful and transformative to understand that God's love is a reality in your life; however, a crucial question we must consider here is, how is God's presence calling you to action?

God's presence in our lives, hearts and soul is propelling us to participate in the transformation of this world. Let us all respond individually, saying 'Here I am '. Let us all respond as a community, saying 'Here we are, send us out! Amen!'