

## 5 C

*I remember in my youth paying a visit to speakers' corner in Hyde Park one Sunday afternoon. And, as you know, you get all sorts of eccentrics on their plinths letting off steam about this and that. My attention was caught by one guy pacing up and down holding up a huge placard on which was written **'things are getting worse'***

But for the Christian things should always be looking up. Last Sunday I mentioned how easy it was to slip into the habit of speaking in a derogatory fashion about others. But even though we have fallen in this area we shouldn't give up on ourselves.

Isaiah and Peter acknowledge areas of failure in their lives. They don't seem content with the way they are and are ready for the Lord to break new ground in their relationship with Him.

It's good to know that God is not a perfectionist when it comes to choosing people for his mission. Sure, He wants us to be aware of our shortcomings but not bogged down by them. The 'Year of Mercy' which we're in now, reinforces this message.

Isaiah, in the first reading, is painfully aware that he is a man of unclean lips. Could that mean that he swore a lot or used obscene language? Whatever it was, He feels quiet distressed about it. But then having acknowledged his wretched state, the angel of the Lord comes and purifies him and he's back on track again, ready for mission.

St Peter, in the Gospel, also acknowledges failure, even as a fisherman. It's summed up in the words: 'we fished all night long and caught nothing'. But in deference to Jesus and being willing to pay out the nets for a catch against all the odds, suggests he's ready for something new to happen in his life. He hasn't long to wait. He's completely overwhelmed when his

boat is overflowing with fish. Aware of his own unworthiness, he falls on his knees before Jesus and begs him to leave. But Jesus tells him not to be afraid - a great mission lies ahead for him. From catching fish he will soon be given the commission of netting souls for God's Kingdom.

Our Lord is saying the same to us as he said to Peter. Don't be downhearted by your personal sins and limitations. Does this mean that we compromise with sin? - of course not.

Repentance is a lifelong task. But like Peter and Isaiah we also need to expect the Lord to make His presence felt in our lives in new ways.

Being aware of our own failures should also keep us from standing in judgement over others. On the contrary If we've battled with a particular sin, then we're best placed to help others going through a similar ordeal. The best people to help alcoholics, for instance, are alcoholics themselves who have grappled with the addiction? The Devil does His best to undermine our faith in Christ and give up on ourselves.

*Peter said to Jesus: 'depart from me I am a sinful man'. Far from departing, Jesus did the opposite and asked Peter to be his closest friend and confident. Peter's failures didn't put him off. Ours won't either.*