

Homily
Memorial of Saint Fabian, Pope & Martyr
January 20, 2023

I have no delusions; I'm a fairly unimpressive, ordinary person. I was an average student, a typical employee, unremarkable by all accounting. Yet, God called me to the Sacrament of Marriage and the Sacrament of Holy Orders. I am the embodiment of the phrase, "God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called." I'd say my life is pretty fulfilling.

St. Pope Fabian, the 20th pontiff during the 3rd century, was an ordinary, unremarkable man before his election. He was a noble Roman by birth, unknown until he arrived in Rome after the death of Pope Anterus. While the politicking of the noble churchmen kept everyone's attention in the search for the next pope, a dove descended on Fabian's head, sparking the crowds to call him worthy and place him on the throne of the bishop of Rome. His reign was peaceful until the 14th year of his papacy when the new emperor called for Christians to venerate the Roman gods and the emperor himself. Fabian's remarkable courage was a sign to the early Church to stand firm in their faith. He was martyred along with many of the faithful. He was known for his faithful administration of the Church and his divinely inspired election.

Jesus called men of ordinary backgrounds. Peter was a simple fisherman who deemed himself unworthy and sinful. Not to disappoint, he continually demonstrated his impulsiveness and occasional shamefulness, especially in his denial of Jesus three times before the cock crowed. I think we can all relate.

But Jesus knew Peter's heart; He knew Peter was struggling with the sin of denial. Jesus comforted Peter with forgiveness and with a mission. Three times, Jesus confirmed Peter's love and three times, Jesus instructed Peter to care for His Church. Jesus knew Peter's gifts and knew Peter would make a great leader after the Ascension.

Jesus calls all of us, unqualified as we are. He inspires us with His Spirit. He strengthens us with His own Body and Blood. He encourages us with His Word. We can take consolation in His forgiveness. Just as Jesus forgave Peter for Peter's denial, just as the Holy Spirit sent a dove to land on Fabian's head, we can take comfort in knowing we are all called to great things and that we are endowed with the gifts necessary to make us happy and give glory to God.

How can we show God we are up to the task?