

Isaiah 6:1-8ⁱ

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

ⁱ About the First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

This reading recounts the call of the prophet Isaiah. He has a vision of the Lord enthroned amidst the divine council in the setting of the temple at Jerusalem. The throne is the ark of the covenant. Above the Lord are the seraphs, literally "burning ones." Here, like the cherubim in the first chapter of Ezekiel, they indicate the heavenly creatures who give God worship.

The triple repetition of holy emphasizes the mysterious, unapproachable quality of the divine. Isaiah responds to the vision of God's holiness with a sense of profound sinfulness before God's perfection, not only for himself, but for all the people. He is granted cleansing through the coal from the altar so that he may proclaim God's word to the people.