

What does it mean to be called?

c-b-2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time Jan 14 2018

I love the gospel I just read. It is appropriate for a number of reasons.

- 1) We have just finished the Christmas season, and the first thing we hear when we come back from all the festivities surrounding the Christmas season is the importance of being called to follow Jesus.
- 3) I love it because it indicates the uncertainty of the early disciples. As I feel a certain familiarity and comfort with their uncertainty.
- 2) I love it because it helps us to understand what we are doing this morning.

Just before communion I hold up the bread and wine and say,

“Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world.

Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

These words are taken from this gospel.

The words that John the Baptist spoke to his disciples many years ago,

encouraging them to accept Jesus,

are the same words we hear encouraging us to accept Jesus.

And I especially love the response to these words.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,

but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

It is a clear indication that we are in need of God’s help.

I just hope that the day will come soon

when all people will know the importance of the liturgy.

However, I also love this gospel because it shows the uncertainty of the early disciples.

When John the Baptist points out Jesus to his disciples they followed him.

If they were John the Baptist’s disciples,

and John the Baptist was called by God to prepare the way of the Lord,

then his disciples would have known that they were preparing the way of the Lord,

and when Jesus came on the scene, they would have been out of a job,

there was no more need to prepare for his coming, if he was already present.

So it only stands to reason that they would follow him.

After all they had been helping to prepare his way.

It was only a small step for the disciples to follow Jesus.

Regarding the question that Jesus asks them, “What are you looking for?”

I can only say that John the evangelist was truly inspired. There can be no better question.

In John’s gospel these are the first words that Jesus speaks.

To understand the importance of these words

you need to remember that John is writing on multiple levels at the same time.

On one level Jesus is directing this question to the disciples of John the Baptist.

On another level he is directing this question

to each and every person that is considering following Christ.

And the question itself, “What are you looking for?” What is it even asking?

On one level he is addressing the curiosity of the disciples of John the Baptist.

On another level the question is asking the question

that each and every human being is asking.

What is the purpose of life. Why are we here? What is it that we are supposed to be doing?

How can I fill the deepest void within my heart?

To this eternal question I have to laugh at the disciple's feeble response. "Where are you staying?"

I mean Jesus is asking them to consider the mysteries of life,

and on one level they are merely concerned with where Jesus is sleeping that night.

(pause) But on another level, they are seeking out the answers to life's mysteries.

"Where are you staying" can also mean, How are you supporting yourself?

How do you live?

What do you have to offer us?

These are all questions that we ask ourselves whenever we ponder our relationship with Jesus.

How are you supporting yourself, or put another way, How can you be all powerful?

How do you live, what is it that sustains you?

What do you have to offer us? Which in the end is the most important question.

What is it that you can offer that no one, or nothing else in the universe, can offer?

Now Jesus doesn't go into a long theological treatise of who he is.

He doesn't try and explain the incarnation.

He doesn't raise his arm and move a mountain.

He doesn't fashion a new animal out of dust and blow life into it.

He merely says, "Come and see."

On one level he is saying, come and see when I am going to sleep tonight.

But on another level, a much deeper level, he is inviting them to come and see,

come and experience what it means to be in the presence of the almighty God.

He knows that theological arguments, although important,

are not what leads people to undergo conversion.

People are converted because they see and experience something that can not be explained.

The only explanation is the workings of the almighty God.

And they want to be a part of that almighty God.

What I find absolutely fascinating is how John the Evangelist

is revealing the process in which people are brought to Christ.

Let me see if you can pick up his pattern.

John the Baptist, who has had an intimate relationship with God,

invites his disciples to follow Jesus.

These two disciples follow Jesus and undergo conversion.

One of these disciples, whose name was Andrew, who by then has a relationship with Jesus,

then invites his brother Simon Peter to follow Jesus.

Simon Peter follows Jesus and undergoes a conversion.

Peter who now has a relationship with Jesus invites all people to follow Jesus.

Because of Peter's influence many undergo conversion and follow Jesus.

The pattern is fairly obvious.

Someone who knows Christ invites someone who does not know Christ.

When the latter spends time with him; they undergo a conversion,

come to believe and in time lead others to Christ.

I say this because it becomes obvious that we have a part to play in this gospel.

Each and every one of us in this church is here because someone has brought us to Christ.

For most of us it was our parents, for some their spouse,
and others a close friend or relative.

But we are all here because we have all asked the most fundamental of all life's questions.

What is the purpose of life. Why are we here?

What is it that we are supposed to be doing?

How can I fill the deepest void within my heart?

In time we have discovered that it is only in Jesus that these questions have been answered,
and we know that to go elsewhere, is futile.

But it also means that we have a role to play in perpetuating this pattern.

Meaning we have a role to play in bringing others to Christ.

And this is where many of us become afraid.

For some reason we think our faith is supposed to be personal, and we are afraid to share it.

I once had a conversation with someone.

He mentioned that he lived his life in such a way that he tried to reflect the love of God
to all people. And for the most part he was successful.

Not much different than what most of us do.

I acknowledged his efforts but asked him,

“If you never tell anyone about Jesus how will they know who he is?

He became silent, he wasn't offended (pause)

But he took a long time to ponder his philosophy of life.

In time he came to understand what I was trying to say.

If we never tell people about Jesus,

why should we be surprised that they do not join us around this table.

The diocese is helping us understand that we must be Intentional Disciples.

That we must not only intentionally live our faith,

but we must intentionally be like those who told us about Jesus,

and we must in turn tell others about Jesus.

The days are over when we can just assume that they will come to us.

We must be the ones who spread the word.

John the Baptist's disciples did, and they were richly rewarded.

Andrew did and he was richly rewarded.

Peter did and he was richly rewarded.

Believers throughout the ages did and they were richly rewarded. Now it is our turn,