

Second Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B

[Themes: Being a Disciple of Jesus – Witness, Abiding, Knowing Jesus and Ourselves. Listening. One aspect of discipleship: avoiding (sexual) immorality]

In today's Gospel we hear about the calling of the first disciples of Jesus. Discipleship follows Baptism just as childhood, adolescence and adulthood follow our physical birth. The development of our Christian identity, like all other aspects of our development is one in which each of us must be an active participant. None of us achieves one's potential in any area of life without one's own effort and cooperation.

The very first disciples of Jesus set a pattern for all subsequent disciples, including us. Therefore, their experience is well worth considering closely. Today's Gospel reading begins with John the Baptist telling two of his own disciples that Jesus is the "Lamb of God". That phrase, which we will be singing later in the Mass, is loaded with meaning. It communicates that Jesus is the true Passover Lamb, the one sacrificed so that others might live. All the Passover lambs were a foreshadowing, a figure of Jesus Christ who would come.

Now, Jesus comes, the true Lamb, the fulfillment. Pulling together the promises of many OT prophets, John the Baptist is also saying that this is the long-awaited Holy One of God, the Son, the Messiah, or Christ (Anointed One), the one to set us free from all bondages and enable us to live as children of God. He entered our mode of existence from that source that brought all things into being and sustains them. The two disciples of John the Baptist turn out to be none other than Andrew and John. They were fishermen from Galilee. These two had come to learn from John the Baptist, who is now telling them to follow Jesus instead of him. In our journey of faith, there will be those who point the way for us, human and fallible like us but who point us to our true destination: God.

John and Andrew have enough confidence in John the Baptist that they decide to find out for themselves. That is the tried and true method of spiritual quest. Jesus Himself invites them to "Come and see." Spend time with Him; see where He lives (abides). Taking time to know Jesus is the first

and most essential step of being His disciple. Worship is part of this but also what we do during the week. Are we spending time to think about God? Do share time with at least one other believer with whom we can speak of our faith in Christ? Do we look for what God may be trying to tell us through the unfolding events of our lives or through what others are trying to tell us?

Andrew for his part reached a conclusion after one afternoon in Jesus' presence. He shares his faith with his brother Simon: "We have found the Messiah," He leads Simon to Jesus, again inviting him to see for himself. This is the most basic and liberating form of evangelization: inviting someone else to explore and discover and make up their own mind about Jesus Christ. It is the most important (and beneficial) decision we can ever make in life. Each person baptized as an infant, has at some point, to claim the Christian identity they have been given.

Simon upon meeting Jesus soon discovers that he is already known by Jesus and known more deeply than Simon knows himself. "You will be called Cephas" an Aramaic word rock, in Greek *petros* or Peter. One of the blessings of discipleship is that as we come to recognize the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives, we also find our truer selves, who we truly are, what God is calling us to do and to become, what He might have in store for us.

The Old Testament readings on Sundays are always chosen to parallel the Gospel reading. Today's is especially close in that it tells the story of the calling of the prophet Samuel. What astounds us is that the calling of Samuel bears close resemblance to the call of Andrew, John and Peter, and of us here and now. It turns out that God has been calling people into relationship for thousands of years in remarkably similar ways and still is! The foremost quality that is required for Samuel to receive his call - and for all who seek to follow God - is learning to listen for God's voice. For Samuel, he is awakened three times by hearing his name. Have you ever had this experience? The first and second times, he is convinced that it is Eli, the priest who is calling him. "Here I am." Notice how Eli finally realizes what is happening and gives guidance to Samuel. Eli, whose priesthood at this stage was not very faithful in many ways, was still able to help the young Samuel recognize the Lord's voice. For most of us, this learning to recognize God's voice inwardly can take many years, with much trial and error. But, in this story, the entire development is telescoped into three incidents in a single night. Is it God calling me or is it someone or something

else? Is it a trick of my own imagination? My own desires rather than God's? This takes time to discern and to refine. Becoming a disciple means learning to listen to God, taking quiet time, time of reflection and prayerfulness, away from others and from our distractions, so that we are more apt to hear the voice of God and our calling.

The New Testament reading, today, the portion of Paul's letter to the Christians in the Greek city of Corinth, concerns another important part of the inward journey of discipleship: developing the Christian virtue of chastity. Many Christians have stumbled here, unfortunately including some clergy. If we fail to integrate our sexuality with our Christian spirituality, we will lack the self-control that brings peace and stability. If we fail to acknowledge God's call on us to live our maleness and femaleness either in celibacy or in life-long marriage, we are in effect missing God's plan for how we can focus our energy and love in serving others. Paul points out that immorality in this area has some unique and lasting effects on us. He refers to the effects of immorality on our inner life, our thought life, our emotions, our senses. Modern science confirms these effects. For instance, looking at certain kinds of visual images does change the structure of our brain and our nervous system, predisposing our responses in the future. St. Paul urges us to avoid (run) from this particular type of immorality. These lasting interior effects threaten to enslave us to certain patterns of behavior. Christians are not to be enslaved by anything. Christian discipleship is joyous freedom. This freedom begins with our inner life and then extends outward to our dealings with others.

Today we have much to ponder and to decide: Am I actively seeking to be a disciple of Jesus? To grow in my Christian identity and my relationship with God in Christ? Am I learning to hear the voice of God and His call on my life? Am I pursuing the virtue of chastity? Watching where I place my attention and what I allow to enter into my inner life?