

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – B
Fr. Chad S. Green
Mary, Queen of Peace Catholic Church
Sammamish, Washington
17 January 2021

1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19
Psalm 40
1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20
(John 1:41, 17b) John 1:35-42

Come, and You Will See

This weekend we begin our Sunday observance of Ordinary Time for 2021. In this new liturgical year, we'll be hearing primarily from the Gospel of Mark on Sundays. But, every year—whether we're in the year for hearing from Matthew, Mark, or Luke—we always begin Ordinary Time with a reading from the Gospel of John. And, in each of the three years, the reading chosen is an echo of the Epiphany we celebrated two Sundays ago—that is, another way in which hear about how Jesus is revealed to us.¹

Today, we heard of how Jesus was revealed to three fishermen—John, Andrew, and Simon Peter—who all left behind the life they had known, and followed Him as His Apostles.² And, in the calling of these three, we see the basic framework for any of us who have been called to be a disciple of Jesus: seeking, coming, seeing, believing.³

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About a year ago, I preached about my own experience of being called by Jesus. And, one seemingly minor aspect of my own story that I'll always remember—and that I want to reflect upon again today—is the day I told my boss I was leaving for seminary. I nervously went to his office and asked if I could speak with him for a moment. When I closed the door behind me, he knew it was something other than just a quick question about one of our projects.

Once I told him, he was surprised, and he was regretting that he was losing me. But, he was also excited for me. And, I'll never forget what he said to me: “Wow, Chad, that's really awesome! I'm happy for you! Tell me, what's it like? Is it like hearing a call from God?”

I wasn't ready for him to ask me *that* question. I thought we'd be discussing more pertinent things like my last day of work or plans for turning over my projects to coworkers. Yet, he asked me what is actually the *most* pertinent and important question: *Is it like hearing a call from God?*

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At that time, I was in the midst of my career in structural engineering and construction management. It was a career that I had discerned and felt called to, and one that I had worked hard at and enjoyed for many years. It's a time in my life that I'll always be grateful for. So, maybe a bit like the three fishermen we heard in today's Gospel, I wasn't expecting to change careers, so to speak, either.

When I made the decision to apply to seminary, I had been discerning priesthood for a couple of years. And, on the one hand, yes, it did seem like a mysterious calling from God to leave behind my career, home, family, and friends. On the other hand, it wasn't like the scene in today's Gospel: Jesus walked by; the Apostles immediately began to follow Him; and He invited them to come see where He was staying. It wasn't quite that clear or that quick for me.

In whatever ways Jesus had been calling me throughout my life, I certainly didn't leave everything immediately and follow Him like those first Apostles did. It took some time to recognize His call and, once I recognized it, it took some more time to gather the courage to respond.

So, when my boss asked me that question, I didn't quite know how to explain it to him in that moment. But his question really got me thinking then, and has kept me thinking ever since:

Did I hear God's voice calling me to follow Him as priest?...

Back in college there was the priest who encouraged me to think about priesthood—*was that God's voice calling me?*

People at church had been asking me more and more if I was thinking about becoming a priest—*was that God's voice calling me?*

When I was watching Pope Saint John Paul II's funeral an inspirational thought welled up in my heart: "I wonder if I could be a priest..."—*was that God's voice calling me?*

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All these years later, now that I am a priest, I can look back on those moments—and many others—and answer my old boss's question with confidence: "Yes, it *is* a call from God." And he was right: hearing God's voice is awesome! It's awesome, but it's not surprising—or, at least, it shouldn't be surprising. God is *always* calling each one of us. God's voice calls to each one of us in personal ways and at different times in our lives.

In my years as a seminarian and now as a priest, I've had the privilege to meet many people in parishes, hospitals, schools, prisons, mission trips. And, it's inspiring, and an honor, when people share with me the ways that they have heard God calling them—particularly in big moments of their life: how God called them to get married; to become a parent; to get involved with a ministry; to pursue a different career; to change their life in some important way. How God called to them through their passion for a profession; in their studies; through the beauty of nature. How God called them to get Baptized; to become Catholic; to receive the Eucharist; and to be Confirmed. Yes, there are many awesome ways in which Jesus is calling each one of us in a particular way to follow Him!

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But, it can happen to any of us. Maybe God's call sounds clear at one time, but not as clear at others.⁴ Life gets busy or stressful and God becomes more difficult to hear. In those times, we might not be so sure if God is really calling, or how to hear Him if He is. It's important, therefore, to keep reflecting on that question my boss asked me years ago: *Am I*

hearing God's call in my life? Am I acknowledging that God is the One Who is calling me in a personal and particular way in every moment?

Several years ago, a middle-aged man came to me after Mass in which the readings were on this same theme of hearing God's call. He looked downcast and regretful, as though he had missed out on something in his life. He said to me, "I guess I've never really felt called by God to anything in particular." I was surprised to hear him say this, because he was very devout and committed to the parish. He appeared to be actively and regularly responding to God's call in his life by the way that he faithfully served our community. Maybe, though, he was simply not recognizing that God *was* calling him.

The First Reading today demonstrated that we all need help at times in recognizing God's call.⁵ Three times Samuel heard God's voice; three times he didn't recognize it was God.⁶ His mentor, Eli, helped him recognize that it was God who was calling him, and this helped him respond with faith.⁷

We may or may not have a specific person like Eli in each of our lives, but we *do* have one another as a faith community. We help one another hear God's voice. That's why we often encourage folks to be active in parish groups, whether it's: joining one of "The Search" groups, a book club, liturgical ministries, Knights of Columbus, watching video resources on FORMED.org, being involved in faith formation or youth group.

These aren't simply ways to "fill your calendar" with another thing to do or keep you out of trouble. These aren't requirements to fulfill some spiritual obligation to God or the Church. These are ways in which you and your family will get more familiar with God's voice. Better at hearing God calling you. Ways that will help you see and believe in what Jesus is offering to

each one of us—that is, the Gospel Message: freedom from sin, fear, and death, and the gifts of peace, joy, and eternal life with Him in Heaven.

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Let's return to the basic framework for being called as a disciple of Jesus: seeking, coming, seeing, believing. We're all seeking something. Jesus—who knows us better than we know ourselves—He knows this about us. We're all seeking something, and yet, we don't have to go very far to find many different voices telling us that *they* are what we're looking for. Many different voices trying to convince us that, if we follow them, *then* we'll be happy.

However, we see in today's Gospel that this is not Jesus' way. Other voices try to convince us to believe in them before we see all they have to offer. They appear good, exciting, fun, or interesting, but, if they're not from Jesus, and if they're not filled with the Holy Spirit, then they eventually lead to some kind of disappointment, dependence, or addiction, and they ultimately lead to death.

But, Jesus does the opposite. He doesn't try to manipulate us or force us against our will. He gently says to us, "Come, and you will see."⁸ Come, and you will see that you are made for the Lord.⁹ You're not made for lesser things that can never satisfy.

Follow Jesus and see where it leads you. Not necessarily to an "easier" life filled with all the comforts and pleasures of this passing world.¹⁰ But, rather, to a life filled with the riches of the freedom, peace, and joy that only God can give.¹¹

¹ Jill Bevilacqua, Vatican Radio, "Gospel Truth: Second Sunday of Ordinary Time, 17 January" (www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2021-01/gospel-truth-second-sunday-ordinary-time-17-january.html)

² John 1:37-39, 42 (John is traditionally considered to be the other unnamed first disciple. See note at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/john/1:37>)

³ Adrien Nocent, tr. by Matthew J. O'Connell, "Year B: Second Sunday: The Call of God—Come and You Will See (John 1:35-42)" in *The Liturgical Year: Volume Three: Sundays Two to Thirty-Four in Ordinary Time* (2013), 183

⁴ See Fr. Walter Ciszek, from "Humility" in *He Leadeth Me* (1995), 175:

"We see examples of this in lives around us every day. Young people planning to get married, choosing a profession, or answering a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, feel an enthusiasm and an interior joy

they never knew before. Then, as the years go by, difficulties increase and there is a constant need for more sacrifice and a renewal of spirit in the initial promise or vow taken. And then it is that the test of one's humility—the realization of one's place before God—really begins.”

⁵ 1 Samuel 3:7

⁶ 1 Samuel 3:4-8

⁷ 1 Samuel 3:9-10

⁸ John 1:39

⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:13

¹⁰ See Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *Confessions*, Book X, Chapter XXVII, 38 (tr. by J.G. Pilkington from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 1* (1887) (www.newadvent.org/fathers/110110.htm):

“Too late did I love You, O Fairness, so ancient, and yet so new! Too late did I love You! For behold, You were within, and I without, and there did I seek You; I, unlovely, rushed heedlessly among the things of beauty You made. You were with me, but I was not with You. Those things kept me far from You, which, unless they were in You, were not. You called, and cried aloud, and forced open my deafness. You gleamed and shine, and chase away my blindness. You exhaled odors, and I drew in my breath and do pant after You. I tasted, and do hunger and thirst. You touched me, and I burned for Your peace.”

¹¹ See Luke 12:21: “Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God.”