

Homily for the 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time 2018

John the Baptist stood with two of his disciples near the Jordan river where he had been baptising. Andrew was one of them. The other is unnamed. Who was he? Some think he might be the disciple Jesus loved as we find in John's Gospel. No one really knows. But I prefer to think of that disciple as an invitation to us to enter the scene. We can take the part of the unnamed disciple and become part of the unfolding story. Put your name there along with Andrew.

In John's Gospel, unlike the other Gospels, Jesus very first words are a question, "What do you want?" Let the question be asked of you as you take the role of the unnamed disciple. What do you want? As always in John things are not always what they seem. It is not the impatient question of someone who finds people tagging along uninvited after him as he walks on. It could be that it is a genuine inquiry about two people who seem interested in Jesus. But in John's Gospel it is a question that seeks the heart of us. What do we really want beneath all the noise and chaos of our life and the world that pull us in all directions?

John does not tell Jesus' story in any simple chronological way. Written a long time afterwards John is writing a theology, a spirituality of who Jesus is. He tells us right from the very first verse who Jesus is. He is the Word who is eternally with God, who was with God when all was created. The disciples coming to faith in Jesus is not a painfully drawn out presentation. The whole story of Jesus is told in just about every episode indifferent ways.

The two disciples' question in reply is, "Where do you live?" Again, a simple question. But there are deep waters here also. It could also be translated, Where do you dwell? Or Where do you abide? In other words it is a question not of Jesus present address but more a question of where is Jesus' heart. His heart dwells, abides with God. So too the disciple abides in God. Just think of how often in John this idea of abiding in Jesus and in God is central. John 15:9,10. "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." Jesus is the vine, the disciples are the branches. They must abide in him if they are to grow and bear fruit.

Jesus' answer to Andrew and the unnamed disciple is a simple "Come and see." You are getting the picture, I am sure. You know that seeing is more than physical sight in John. Light and sight are metaphors of faith in the Gospel of John that he uses again and again. The classic tale is that of the man born blind. He is enabled to see Jesus. His coming to sight is a story of a person coming to faith in Jesus as Lord. Someone who was completely ignorant of Jesus, blind to who he was, comes to see him as prophet, Messiah and Lord. Jesus did not tell him who he was. He helped him to see.

Come and see, then is an invitation to discover Jesus. He does not tell the disciples who he is. They need to abide with him where lives if they are to know him. And when they come to know him they will also discover that through him they will find what they really seek. This then is what we mean by a vocation, to enter into an intimate relationship with God. But it is more.

Sometimes I hear a religious person say that they are called by God to do such and such. Then they proceed to impose that on others. To have a call from God is not a kind of religious individualism. It is received within the community. Samuel needed Eli to discern for him the true origin of the call. So do we need to submit our sense of vocation to the Church.

Samuel says to the Lord, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." We however, often say, "Listen, Lord, your servant is speaking!" Vocation is a call each and every one of us has to abide with Christ and listen to him. And if we are in Christ then we also abide with each other. A personal vocation is inseparable from the good of the community.

So just as receiving Jesus in the Eucharist is a deeply personal experience of union with him, it must only be also a deep communion with each other.

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