

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Gospel: John 1:35-42

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

REFLECTION 1:

COME AND SEE

Today our generation can fall into a frenzy at the sight of a popstar or famous sportsperson. The pope is not a rock star, but he causes major excitement too. At recent World Youth Days in Cologne, Sydney and Madrid, the sight of the pope released tremendous energy and enthusiasm from young people. Today's Gospel story's encounter with Jesus did not take place publicly – it was in the quiet village of Bethany on a sleepy afternoon. Instead of great crowds, there were only John the Baptist and two future disciples. Still, the encounter released the same kind of energy, excitement and enthusiasm. The disciples ran after Jesus calling out his name.

When I was a child, I had a friend, Jackie, whose home was a place where everyone wanted to gather. This place, just a few doors away from where I was born, on St. Lawrence's Road, Clontarf, was special because of the love that embraced everyone that went there. Now, I imagine Jesus' contemporaries perceived him as that friend whose home everyone wanted to see. His words and his works made everyone want to know where he had come from so they could follow him there and share in the experience that made him who he was. While this may have been part of the reason, the first disciples were drawn to Jesus. The Evangelist John is not using simple straightforward verbs, such as 'follow', 'stay' and 'see'. It's much more profound than that. For the fourth Evangelist the act of following, means that a person has become willingly and totally committed to making the way of Jesus their own. Following means discipleship. Moreover, Jesus' question to those first followers, 'What are you looking for?' was no casual query. Jesus' question is a challenge, a call to fellowship, addressed first to those who walked with him in Bethany and then repeated for all who hear this Gospel proclaimed today.

Jesus' question affirms that the vocation to discipleship is always God's privilege to initiate. Later in the Gospel, Jesus offers this privilege, 'You have not chosen me', no, 'I have chosen you' (John 15:16). When the disciples responded to Jesus' question with a question of his own, 'Where are you staying?' they were not asking for his address. Rather the term used in the original Greek means 'abide', 'remain', or 'dwell' as well as 'stay'. Later in the Gospel, the deeper implications of the disciples' question are explained, as the Evangelist speaks of the indwelling of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father, as well as the Spirit remaining with and dwelling within the disciples after Jesus' resurrection. The Evangelist indicates that discipleship involves the believer in the very life that Jesus shares with God.

By inviting those who followed him to 'come and see', Jesus was offering more than hospitality, he was eliciting their commitment to him. 'Coming' to Jesus and 'seeing' Jesus are terms that appear frequently

throughout the fourth Gospel to indicate that a person has come to believe and sees with the insight of faith.

The invitation 'come and see' features in the pages of the Old Testament, inviting listeners to avail of the blessings and graces God has prepared for those who hunger for wisdom, knowledge and truth. Jesus as wisdom incarnate has the power to offer God's gifts to all who will come after him and stay and see and believe.

REFLECTION 2: CONSULTING OUR VOCATION

How would you like to be a rock star or a President of Ireland with a face that everybody knows? Many celebrities admit that the fame they once sought has now become a burden. Famous people can't go anywhere without the paparazzi following them. Just getting out of a car causes the eruption of flashing cameras. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry John had to point him out to a complacent world: 'Look there is the Lamb of God. Today's Gospel describes the beginning of Jesus' fame. Soon Jesus will have no place to hide and great crowds will follow him wherever he goes. Before today's Gospel ends, Andrew is already telling his brother that he has found the Messiah. Now we hear the first words Jesus spoke in John's Gospel 'what do you seek?' That is the most important question in anyone's life. Whether or not we clearly articulate our response, everything we do reveals our answer to it. As the Gospel presents it Andrew and his companions begin to respond by calling Jesus 'Rabbi' allowing that one word to signal their desire to hear more from him. They then ask him a profoundly theological question: 'Where do you live?' It was impossible for Jesus to respond to that question with an address or geography. At that moment the answer they needed was: 'Come and see'. Only after they had spent three days with him could Jesus answer more fully. At the Last Supper he reminded them that following him is a matter of the heart and soul as much as feet, ears and eyes. He said 'Abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commands and abide in his love' (John 15: 9-10). The real answer to that question is that his abode was in them.

One of the notable words in today's Gospel is the saying of John the Baptist that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Mention of the lamb hints of sacrifice but also of salvation. The lamb here is no victim but rather the victor: he is not a scapegoat on whom guilt is heaped, but the pure one who actively takes away the sin that has burdened human history.

Today's readings offer a prism on the theme of vocation. In Eli and the Baptist we see the generosity and the humility of those who point their disciples beyond themselves. With Samuel we are reminded that we must be quiet and attentive if we are to hear God's call in our busy world. Together with the first disciples we are faced with the core question of the meaning of our life and that following Christ will change everything. Finally in the midst of it all, Paul assures us that who we are, flesh and blood is good – so good in fact, that individually and collectively we can show God's glorious presence in our world. That is our vocation.