

ON DISCIPLESHIP

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January 17, 2021

Today's readings are about discipleship: the call and response from God to Samuel, Andrew and his companion, his brother Simon, and the many men and women who decided to leave everything and follow Jesus.

Discipleship is a process that requires different steps. In the young Samuel's case, he has to first learn to listen and then, through the help of his mentor Eli, to respond to the Lord's Voice: "*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*"

With Andrew and his companion, we see a number of steps in their call to discipleship:

First of all, they were initially disciples of John the Baptist so we can say they were seekers. Writer Karla Manternach suggests that perhaps they felt some deeper longing than John could fill. When John pointed to Jesus and said: "*there is the Lamb of God,*" something stirred in their hearts" so they decided to leave John and follow after Jesus. The Psalmist puts it this way, "I have waited, waited for the Lord."

Jesus asks them, "*what are you looking for?*" A great question with all kinds of possible answers and on different levels of meaning. A question that each one of us can ponder and answer at various times in our life.

Andrew and his companion respond with a desire to spend some time with Jesus: "*where are you staying?*" As a result of their question Jesus invites them to spend time with him. Little did they know that this was to be the beginning of a new spiritual journey for them! Scripture scholar, Roland Faley, writes: "they entered into a new communion of life with Son

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and Father, brought about by the Holy Spirit."

Preparing this Homily brought me back to my own call and the various steps that led me into the Jesuits.

As many of you know I was a salesman for a food cannery in San Jose, California. Although I had a good job, a full social life, and the car of my dreams, I felt there was something missing. One day, on the way home from work, I decided to stop at my parish and go to Confession (the Holy Spirit sneaking into my consciousness). After I received the Sacrament I sat in the church for a while. My attention was drawn, not to the tabernacle, but to the color of the wall behind it and the altar: a very peaceful blue. As I gazed at the wall, I felt peace in my heart (what we Jesuits call, consolation I realize now).

This feeling of peace drew me back to the church a couple of times a week for about two months until one day in my office I had what I thought was a startling thought: "*I think I want to be a priest!*" As I drove home that afternoon it became clear to me that I was being called to be a Jesuit priest.

To be honest, I didn't realize at the time that I was "waiting for the Lord" nor that God was patiently waiting for me. In the Novitiate I realized that what had been missing in my life was a sense of meaning. I found it on what we call The Long Retreat (30 days of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola) and especially in the meditation: The Call of Christ the King.

We are each called by God to be disciples of the Lord, through Baptism and Confirmation. We are each invited to let go of whatever keeps us from being able to say, "*Speak, Lord, your*

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servant is listening" and "Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will."

And, so we pray,

*For a listening heart,
A desire to grow closer to God,
And a willingness to share our faith
with others.*

*Help us to never stop being seekers
of the truth
and proclaimers of it.*

AMEN

I Samuel 3:3b-10, 19 Psalm 40 I Corinthians 6:13-20 John 1: 35-42

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