

GOSPEL

JOHN 1:35-42

As John stood with two of his disciples, Jesus passed, and John stared hard at him and said, ‘Look, there is the lamb of God.’ Hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, ‘What do you want?’ They answered, ‘Rabbi,’ – which means Teacher – ‘where do you live?’ ‘Come and see’ he replied; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him the rest of that day. It was about the tenth hour.

One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Early next morning, Andrew met his brother and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ – which means the Christ – and he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked hard at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John; you are to be called Cephas’ – meaning Rock.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

As in the Feast of the Epiphany and in that of the Baptism of Jesus, so too today’s Gospel passage proposes the theme of the manifestation of the Lord. This time it is John the Baptist who points Him out to his disciples as “the Lamb of God”, thus inviting them to follow Him. And thus it is for us: the One whom we have contemplated in the Mystery of Christmas, we are now called to follow in daily life. Therefore, today’s Gospel passage introduces us perfectly into Ordinary Liturgical Time, a time that helps to invigorate and affirm our journey of faith in ordinary life, in a dynamic that moves between epiphany and sequela, between manifestation and vocation.

The Gospel narrative indicates the essential characteristics of the journey of faith. There is a journey of faith, and this is the journey of the disciples of all times, ours too, beginning with the question that Jesus asks the two who, urged by the Baptist, set out to follow Him: “What do you seek?”. It is the same question that the Risen One asks Mary Magdalene on Easter morning:

“Woman, whom do you seek?”. Each of us, as a human being, is seeking: seeking happiness, seeking love, a good and full life. God the Father has given us all this in his Son Jesus.

In this search, the role of a true witness – of a person who first made the journey and encountered the Lord – is fundamental. In the Gospel, John the Baptist is this witness. For this reason he is able to direct the disciples toward Jesus, who engages them in a new experience, saying: “Come and see”. And those two [disciples] will never forget the beauty of that encounter, to the extent that the Evangelist even notes the time of it: “It was about the tenth hour” (ibid.). Only a personal encounter with Jesus engenders a journey of faith and of discipleship. We will be able to experience many things, to accomplish many things, to establish relationships with many people, but only the appointment with Jesus, at that hour that God knows, can give full meaning to our life and render our plans and our initiatives fruitful.

It is not enough to build an image of God based on the words that are heard; one must go in search of the divine Master and go to where he lives. The two disciples ask Jesus, “where are you staying?” (v. 38). This question has a powerful spiritual meaning: it expresses the wish to know where the Lord lives, so as to abide with him. The life of faith consists in the wish to abide in the Lord, and thus in a continuing search for the place where he lives. This means that we are called to surpass a methodical and predictable religiosity, rekindling the encounter with Jesus in prayer, in meditating on the Word of God and in practicing the Sacraments, in order to abide with him and bear fruit thanks to him, to his help, to his grace.

Seeking Jesus, encountering Jesus, following Jesus: this is the journey. Seeking Jesus, encountering Jesus, following Jesus.

May the Virgin Mary support us in this prospect of following Jesus, of going to abide where he lives, in order to listen to his Word of life, to adhere to him who takes away the sin of the world,

to recover in him hope and spiritual impulse.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What are you seeking or looking for in your life? In what ways do you search and look for Jesus and what he has to offer you?
- Where and how have you encountered the living Jesus who is alive and active today? In what ways has this encounter drawn you deeper into your faith journey.
- Through seeking and encountering Jesus we desire to follow him. How might you follow Jesus more closely this year - what is one thing you could do differently that would improve your journey with him?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.