

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.

REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

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The Gospel for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (cf. Jn 1:35-42) presents the meeting between Jesus and his first disciples. The scene unfolds along the River Jordan the day after Jesus’ baptism. It is John the Baptist himself who points out the Messiah to the two of them with these words: “Behold, the Lamb of God!” (v. 36). And those two, trusting the Baptist’s testimony, follow Jesus. He realizes this and asks: “What do you seek?”, and they ask Him: “Rabbi, where are you staying?” (v. 38).

Jesus does not respond: “I live in Capernaum, or in Nazareth,” but says: “Come and see” (v. 39). Not a calling card, but an invitation to an encounter. The two follow him and remain with him that afternoon. It is not difficult to imagine them seated, asking him questions and above all listening to him, feeling their hearts inflamed ever more while the Teacher speaks. They sense the beauty of the words that respond to their greatest hope. And all of a sudden they discover that, as evening was drawing around them, the light that God alone can give was exploding within their hearts. One thing catches our attention: 60 years later, or perhaps more, one of them would write in

his Gospel: “it was about four in the afternoon” (cf. Jn 1:39) — he wrote the time. And this is one thing that makes us think: every authentic encounter with Jesus remains alive in memory; it is never forgotten. You forget many encounters, but a true encounter with Jesus remains forever. And many years later, those two even remembered the time. They were unable to forget this encounter that had changed their lives and was so happy and so complete. Then, when they leave from that encounter and return to their brothers, that joy, that light overflows from their hearts like a raging river. One of the two, Andrew, says to his brother, Simon — whom Jesus will call Peter when He meets him — “We have found the Messiah” (v. 41). They left sure that Jesus was the Messiah, certain.

Let us pause for a moment on this experience of the encounter with Christ who calls us to remain with him. Each one of God’s calls is an initiative of his love. He is the one who always takes the initiative. He calls you. God calls to life, he calls to faith, and he calls to a particular state in life: “I want you here”. God’s first call is to life, through which he makes us persons; it is an individual call because God does not make things in series. Then God calls us to faith and to become part of his family as children of God. Lastly, God calls us to a particular state in life: to give of ourselves on the path of matrimony, or that of the priesthood or consecrated life. They are different ways of realizing God’s design, the one he has for each of us that is always a design of love. God always calls. And the greatest joy for every believer is to respond to this call, offering one’s entire being to the service of God and our brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters, before the Lord’s call, which can reach us in a thousand ways — through others, happy or sad events — our attitude at times might be rejection. No... “I am afraid”... Rejection because it seems to be in contrast to our aspirations; and even fear because we believe it is too demanding and uncomfortable: “Oh no, I will never be able to do it, better not to, a calmer life is better... God over there, me here”. But God’s call is always love: we have to try to discover the love behind each call, and it should be responded to only with love. This is the language: the

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response to a call that comes from love is only love. At the beginning there is an encounter, or rather, there is the encounter with Jesus who speaks to us of his Father, he makes His love known to us. And then the desire to communicate it to the people that we love arises spontaneously in us too: “I met Love”, “I met the Messiah”, “I met God”, “I met Jesus”, “I found the meaning of my life”. In a word: “I found God”.

May the Virgin Mary help us make of our lives a hymn of praise to God in response to his call and in the humble and joyful fulfilment of his will. But let us remember this: there was a moment in each of our lives, in which God made himself present more strongly, with a call. Let us remember that. Let us go back to that moment so that the memory of that moment might always renew that encounter with Jesus for us.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does it mean to you to encounter Jesus?



Heart: Pope Francis tells us that God's call to us is always love. Why might we sometimes not hear or reject God's call?



Hands: What are some ways we can make ourselves more ready to respond to God's call on our lives?

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. Offer 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 praying the ‘Glory Be’.