

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time: The Call to Be Church

Today's Gospel reading presents the calling of the apostles, Andrew and his brother Simon, whom Jesus later names Peter. We find in scripture two different descriptions of the calling of the first apostles. In the *Gospel of John*, Andrew is a disciple of John the Baptist. He is present when the Baptist points to Jesus and says, "There is the Lamb of God." Andrew stays with Jesus for the rest of the day, then he goes to inform his brother, Simon, who goes with Andrew to meet this Jesus. In the Synoptic Gospels, *Mark, Matthew and Luke*, Jesus sees Simon and Andrew fishing. He calls them, and they drop everything to follow Him. He then calls James and John who are in their boat mending their nets. They also follow Him.

So which account is correct? How did the call to the first apostles really take place? We do not know. Actually, how the story of the call of the first apostles is framed is not as important as this: Jesus decided to call people, common everyday people, to follow Him and then to continue his mission to the end of the earth. The call to the disciples was the first step in the formation of the Church. The Church would not be fully formed until it received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, but the initial call was the beginning.

It is a great miracle of faith that twelve ordinary people should be able to spread the New Way of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Fishermen, a tax collector, a political zealot and just plain everyday people who seldom traveled, literally went to the end of the earth. They spoke about Jesus and people listened, and pressed them to hear more about the Christ. The deaths of the apostles, all martyred with the possible exception of John, did not slow down the movement. If anything, the blood of the martyrs strengthened the New Way. Andrew and Peter, James and John, and all the rest listened to the call and gave witness to Jesus with their lives.

Jesus chose ordinary, everyday people to continue His work. He still does. He chooses you and me to testify with our lives that the Kingdom of God is at hand. To do this we have to be the very best version of ourselves. It would be wonderful if we were always the same, but we are not, at least those of us who have not attained saintliness are not always the same. We behave one way with one group of people, but another way with another group of people. We have the church persona, the work persona, the school persona, the hanging out with friends persona, and many other versions of ourselves, including those we think no one knows about, except the millions of people who can easily find evidence of the websites we visit.

Because we often attempt to allow various versions of ourselves to exist together, we often feel disjointed and unhinged. We are. But when we are our best selves, and we allow our best selves to dominate our lives, then we feel at peace, no matter what challenge we may face.

We have been chosen to continue the work of Jesus Christ. First, though, we must know the Lord. Andrew first spent the afternoon with Jesus before he called his

brother, Simon. Simon and the other disciples who would become apostles, spent three years with the Lord. They experienced His healing and other miracles. They heard his preaching to all the people and his particular teaching for them. They knew Him. Remember the dialogue between Philip and Jesus in John 14: 8-9. Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and it will be enough for us." Jesus responded, "Have I been with you for so long a time, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? One of the saddest elements in the tragic story of the betrayal by Judas Iscariot is that he had been with the Lord for so long; He knew Him; yet he still sold him out for money.

We need to respond to the call of the Lord by first dedicating ourselves to knowing Him. We do this by having a strong prayer life and a consistent prayer life. We need to be serious about our morning and evening prayers. We need to search out new ways of growing closer to the Lord; perhaps in some of the spiritual reading available. We have two thousand years of the prayers of saints that we can reflect on. More than this, we have the Sacred Scriptures, the Bible, which are always new to each of us. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God, reaches out to each of us in unique ways.

We need to be consistent in our prayer life. We need to make a prayer schedule and keep it. If we need flexibility, for example if the time for us to leave for work varies, then we need to be sure our schedule is based on when we will leave the house, not on a particular time. For example, let's say we need 30 minutes for our morning prayers and rosary. We need to base the time we get up on creating time for our prayers and not say, "I say my prayers at 7:00 am and I leave for work at 8:15. If I have to leave for work at 7:45, then I don't have time for my prayers." No, we need to say, "Tomorrow I have to get up a half hour earlier so I can have time for my prayers."

There is a wonderful upward spiral in the spiritual life. The more we pray, the more spiritual we become. The more spiritual we become, then the more we pray.

Armed with the knowledge of the Lord fortified by our prayer life, we are then ready to proclaim the Lord. Our very union with God will be evident in the way we reach out to others, care for others, and in the way we live our lives. Others will come to the Lord because they can sense the presence of His Spirit within us.

We have been called like the first disciples to know Jesus and proclaim the Good News that God is ultimately in control. We have been called to be Church.