

## **'Come and See'**

January 17, 2021, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel of John 1:35-42

Fr. John

The brief initial verbal exchange between Jesus and the two disciples in today's Gospel reading might at first seem rather trite and superficial.

Jesus: 'What are you looking for?' [sounding like a pedestrian feeling annoyed because he's being followed].

The two disciples: 'Where are you staying?' [almost like what hotel are you registered at].

Jesus: 'Come and see' [like he's inviting them over for a drink].

But let's not be fooled by the seeming casualness of this encounter.

The language of John's gospel is very compact like that of a poet whose carefully selected words, though few in number at times, contain a profound depth of meaning.

What are you looking for? becomes - what in life gives you ultimate joy and meaning and where are you looking to find it? Is it in hoarding material possessions, seeking security, power and domination; sexual promiscuity [as mentioned in today's reading from Corinthians]. Indeed, what ARE we looking for? As human beings, we spend a lot of our waking hours focussed on day-to day concerns: Financial concerns; family and relationship concerns; employment and health concerns to name a few. These are important, and we are called to do our best to address them. But how much of our time do we focus on a bigger picture. Jesus would remind us that life means more than food and the body more than clothing. 'Regard the birds of the air and the lilies of the field...' if God looks after them how much more important are we in his sight. 'Set your hearts on his kingdom and these other things will be given you as well' [Mt 12:31]. Indeed what DO we set our hearts on?

'Where are you staying?' is not an inquiry about Jesus residence but in the original language is more like 'what's your message, where are you rooted - what is the source of your being and significance'. We might put it in more contemporary ideological terms: 'Where are you coming from?' Yes, what are the frames of reference that direct and guide you? So often we are driven by our particular social or political ideologies. People were always trying to place Jesus on their side when it came to questions of moral, political, social or even religious issues. But rather than always trying to claim the moral higher ground, we need to seek the mind of Christ first. And we do this by prayer - prayer rooted in the scriptures, guided by the Holy Spirit and bolstered by the wisdom of the Church down through the ages.

'Come and See' can be understood as an invitation; 'Journey with me and learn a whole new way of seeing and interpreting life.' Didn't Jesus say that he came to give us 'life in abundance'? Not power or material wealth or pleasure - but life in abundance! Two Sundays ago, when we celebrated Epiphany, the gospel relates that after finding the Christ, the Magi did not return to Herod but returned home by a different road. I think taking that 'different road' meant more than just avoiding Herod. It represented a different life path for them as it would for Andrew, Peter, John and the other disciples.

It begs the question: What kind of path are we following?

The afternoon that Andrew and the other unnamed person then spent with Jesus must have really awakened and excited them to the point of them proclaiming that he was the messiah and even bringing people like Simon Peter to meet Jesus.

I sometimes wonder if we have ever gotten that excited about Jesus and the gospel or whether we just see our faith as a piece of religious luggage given to us by our parents that we have to lug around. As a priest, I have baptised many people over the years. But sometimes I ask myself: How many have I really brought to God?

Andrew, Peter and the other disciples, excited as they were in that initial meeting with Jesus, however, had a long way to go to achieve a mature faith and it would come at great cost.

So it is with us. Keeping fidelity to Christ with all the ups and downs that life brings is not an easy road to travel. As we journey through this liturgical year with the gospel of St. Mark, Sunday after Sunday, may we use it as a transparent window to our own lives.

If we are willing to commit to that journey, we will experience the profoundness of Jesus' simple invitation to 'come and see'. Like Samuel, it may take us a while to wake up to that invitation, but God is patient and does not give up on us easily.

'What do you want?'

'Where are you staying?'

'Come and See'

In that brief exchange lies the story of our Christian lives.