

## January 17, 2021 – Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Dear Parishioners:

Today, we celebrate the second Sunday of Ordinary time. After his Baptism in the Jordan river, Lord Jesus invites his two future disciples to visit him.

In an essay first published in 1942, C.S. Lewis, a British writer, philosopher, and lay theologian, discussed a principle concerning first and second things. He said, “you can’t get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first.” That means things have different values, some greater than others. Whenever we reverse this real hierarchy of values and whenever we put second things first, we lose both the first and second things. I plan to attempt to apply this principle to our spiritual journey for Lord’s tender invitation to his discipleship according to today’s biblical readings.

I used the word of “Lord’s invitation” rather than the word of “calling or vocation”. There are accounts of a “call” of the first disciples in the Synoptic Gospels. For example, in Mark 1:16-20, Jesus said to Simon and his brother Andrew, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Contrary to that, in today’s John’s Gospel, strictly speaking, there is no “call” to Andrew and the other disciple, who has been thought to be the beloved disciple, the author of this Fourth Gospel. Jesus said to them, “what are you looking for?” and “come and you will see.” St. John the Evangelist is not telling us about the call of the apostles (i.e., witnesses) into office. He tells us about Jesus’ invitation to be his disciples (i.e., learners—those who had attached themselves to a certain rabbi/teacher) through their congenial and personal association with Christ. We need to be personally attached to Jesus and his teachings before we become one of his witnesses.

Today, Jesus is asking us, “what are you looking for?” We sense within ourselves, the hunger for God, a space in our hearts perfectly sized to be the dwelling place for God. Due to our own human frailty and the works of the Evil one, we tend to fill this space in our heart with second things, some created good that is less than God. In *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas said that the four typical substitutes for God are wealth, pleasure, power, and honor. Jesus is asking us today “Are there any areas in your life where you are putting these second things first?”

When Jesus asked two disciples, “what are you looking for?”, their answer was “Rabbi, where are you staying?”. I do not think that was really an answer to Jesus’ question, but it was the first thing we ask to find out the correct answer. Many times, in our lives, we either forget or cannot discern what the first things are. To Jesus’ invitation to visit, Andrew and the other disciple went and saw and stayed with the Lord. After that time (i.e., *Kairos*—the Lord’s time) and personal contact with Jesus, they could witness that they found the Messiah. We even read that their encounter with Jesus was so vivid and strong, there is a precise note of time—it was about four in the afternoon. So, to budget our time to stay with Jesus, by listening to His words and sharing the bread and wine, will be the first necessity to be one of his disciples.

Our spiritual journey of discipleship is a mediated one through the human family and occurs in the context of community. In the first reading, we read that Eli becomes a kind of mediator or spiritual midwife for young Samuel’s nocturnal encounter with the mysterious God. Thanks to John the Baptist’s humble and firm witness to Jesus, his disciples were able to find the Lamb of God, the Messiah. Let us not forget this first thing: someone else around us discloses his or her own faith witness to help us to be his disciple, so we may become another true mediator and witness to Jesus for others. First thing that Andrew did next day morning after

staying with Jesus was to go out in search of his brother, Simon Peter, and he did not say to him “I have found the Messiah”. He said, “WE have found the Messiah”. This journey to find the First Cause, the Lamb of God and the Messiah is a “together” journey with our Church and our faith community.

Through Lord’s Words and Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which Lord Jesus entrusted to his Church, we encounter God’s grace of fortitude, perseverance, and discernment which will make us true disciples of Christ.

Amen.

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