

1 Sm3: 3b-10, 19 1Cor 6: 13c – 15a, 17-20 Jn1:35-42

What are you looking for? With the events of the last year and those of the last few weeks, this question might be on our minds. First, we are looking for health and protection from the virus. Also we desire justice in our society. Lately, it is clear we need to seek reconciliation and unity for our country in order to move forward together. There are so many things we look for in the New Year.

The one asking us this same question In today’s gospel is Jesus. John the Baptist points out Jesus, naming him the Lamb of God, to two of his own disciples. The two heard this and began to follow Jesus. At that point Jesus asks them the question that is really a constant in all of our lives, “What are you looking for?” It is not a simple question. John’s gospel is always deeper and theological. What are we looking for? Do we even know what we are looking for in life? Will we even know it when we find it? This is a good question at the beginning of a New Year. Jesus told Conchita: “I want you to look for me in everything. Stop looking at yourself.”

The two disciples respond by simply ask where Jesus is staying, which again has a deeper meaning. The word they use is not just place but more like where Jesus abides, as in abiding in God. Jesus stays with the Father. Jesus responds to them and to us with “Come and See.” “Staying” is mentioned three times. To stay in Jesus for John’s gospel is not just a location, but to really listen, and to be transformed. To stay with Jesus is to stay with the Father, in a communion brought about by the Spirit. This is not just a visit, rather it is a homecoming. It is where we belong, where we need to stay. We

are created by God and will only be back home when we are with God. Listen to Jesus tell you, “Come and see.”

In this gospel the disciples are slowly transformed as they identify Jesus in a deeper way. They begin calling him rabbi, which means teacher, showing their openness to learning more. Later they will call him Messiah, Son of God, King of Israel, and finally the link between heaven and earth. This movement happens through faith. To go through these stages of faith they need to learn from Jesus. They need to be not only willing students but also disciples who go deeper into themselves.

The two disciples stayed with Jesus, and begin the time together that creates the friendship, that leads one to know Jesus, and then to invite others to get to know him. They brought Peter. When we discover something great, very special, we tell others, and keep spreading the message. Samuel was sleeping in the temple. Samuel was invited to grow in his ministry. He did not understand at first; the third time he answered the voice, the call! Here I am Lord! This experience will be completely transformative. The Lord comes before him. Samuel becomes a prophet.

Sometimes listening to what has affected or impressed our friends, we come to know things better for ourselves. A good example is the experience of the ACTS retreats, which have deeply affected and changed many people. We often imitate things we admire in others. We come, see and meet Christ through those we know, and also through prayer, scripture, and sacraments. To know him is to be changed, transformed. To know him and stay with him is to have a new life.

We are called to be a witness to Jesus. You witness by your words and deeds. John the Baptist witnesses to Jesus. His disciple witness to Jesus to their friends. Nathaniel later interrupts the invitation with skepticism and even prejudice, when he questions Jesus because of his origin in Nazareth. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Does this kind of thinking sound familiar today? The Immigration debate is questioning who we want in our country. However, the history of immigration often shows if anyone gets an opportunity to improve their life they can do it and contribute greatly to society. Nathaniel meets Jesus and becomes a follower immediately, calling him Son of God. When we really know Jesus our prejudice melts away as we realize we are all members of one family. It is painful when some people act racist and at the same time proclaim to be followers of Jesus, a total contradiction.

What are you looking for? Actually, it is really God who is seeking us. We don't find God but rather we let God find us. Jesus simply invites. We need to be open. We need to take action. The gospel story today has lots of action words: see, stay, hear, believe, come, watch. All are ways we ultimately are found by and follow Jesus.

In John's gospel the call comes through someone else: John the Baptist sends Andrew and one more. Andrew calls Peter. Philip calls Nathaniel. The Samaritan woman calls the townspeople. Jesus often calls us through others. We need to listen for that call. We also can be that call for others.

To be a disciple is not just to accept Christ, but It is to create a home: more than just where we eat and sleep, but shared values, insights, love, concern and commitment.

Take time to stay with Jesus, to listen, to see what He is all about.

Take time to create a true home this year.

Pope Francis “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who m accept His salvation are freed from sin, sorrow, emptiness and loneliness.”