

Homily for January 15, 2006
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

By Father Charles Bowes

1 Samuel 3:3-10, 9
1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20
John 1:35-42

God leads us to find the answer to the question, “What are you looking for?”

The first words that Jesus the Word of God speaks in John’s Gospel are directed to two prospective disciples sent to him by John the Baptist. Jesus asks them, “What are you looking for?” At the beginning of any spiritual journey, it is important to ask what it is that we seek and desire to find.

There will inevitably be surprises along the way. But without a goal, however vague it may be, there can be no journey and no finding a home.

The two prospective disciples’ initial response is awkward and even embarrassed. They ask Jesus in turn, “Where are you staying?” We can presume that the two prospective disciples were looking for what most of us are looking for from a religious teacher like Jesus: a personal relationship with God, the meaning of life, a sense of moral purpose and direction, an experience of community and a reason for hope.

In response to their query, Jesus offers an invitation and a promise: “Come, and you will see.” The spiritual journey with Jesus is not for those with short attention spans. It demands attentiveness, commitment,

patience and fidelity. The prospective disciples will have to find out what kind of person Jesus is and what he stands for, and they will have to confront the mystery of the Cross.

Just what are we looking for? I know as a young man searching for what to do with my life, I had questions, questions about God, questions about the Church, questions about the meaning of life – the purpose of it all – so much so that my questioning led me to enter the seminary in order to find some answers and discover a faith far different from that which led me there to start with.

The whole ministry of the reconciliation of “fallen-away” Catholics usually begins with the question from a friend: “What made you leave the Church?” A question can be seen as a gesture of hospitality. “Do you want to talk about it? Come on, let’s have a drink or go for coffee.” There is this entire dynamic going on in the Gospel today: people meeting each other and their lives being turned around. Nothing says that we cannot do the same.

What I find intriguing in the Gospel, John chapter 1, is that Jesus relied on Andrew to bring him to Peter. What kept Jesus from just going on his own? What made him wait for Andrew to fetch Peter? The story

gives us insights into how God works. God chooses people to bring other people to Him.

In our lives, each of us plays two roles: We bring people to others and they, in turn, bring people to us. Many of these people bring God to us. Think of all the people in our lives who have revealed God to us: our parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, clergy, our children, youth ministers. To whom have we introduced God by the way we speak or act? We bring God to people without knowing it, just by what we say or do, even by some quiet example. I remember a roommate in college who knelt down next to his bed every night in my presence and in the presence of another roommate who wasn't Catholic. That took courage for a 19-year-old young man. I never forgot that.

Today's gospel has a line that can change our lives: "What are you looking for?" It's a question calling for quiet reflection. And we can rest in that question, dwell there in the silence it creates while waiting for an answer. And we can pray the prayer of Samuel, too, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

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