

Homily for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

January, 17, 2021

While John was baptizing along the River Jordan, one day He sees Jesus coming toward him and cries out, *“Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ... I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel”* (Jn 1:29-31).

When the next day John again sees Jesus he once more declares, *“Look, here is the Lamb of God!”* This time two of John’s disciples decide to leave his side to follow Jesus.

So, they are tagging along behind Jesus, following but not speaking to Him. Maybe they are too shy to approach Him directly? So, our Lord does something entirely characteristic. He turns around and speaks to them. He meets them halfway. He opens the door that they might come in.

Here we have another example of the divine initiative, like we met a couple weeks ago in the story of the Wise Men. It is always God who takes the first step. When the human mind begins to seek and the human heart begins to yearn, God comes to meet us. As Saint Augustine observed, we could not even have begun to seek for God unless He had already found us.

So, Jesus turns around and speaks to them. He asks them, *“What are you looking for?”* These are the first words we hear Jesus speak in the Gospel of John and they are a question.

But that is not as unusual as you might think. When we imagine our Lord conversing with others, we often have an image of Him preaching or teaching. We rarely think of Him as asking questions. But like any good teacher He asks questions, a lot of questions! According to one estimate, in the four Gospels Jesus asks 307 different questions!

And the question Jesus asks, “*What are you looking for?*” means a lot more than just, “Can I help you find something?” Our Lord does not ask questions because He needs to know the answer. Rather, He *uses* questions the way Socrates used them, the way a surgeon uses a scalpel: to open up a new level of awareness in His listener.

His listeners are forced to examine themselves: their presuppositions, what they value, their motives. They are also forced to confront Who He is and what level of trust and commitment they have to Him. Jesus’s questions do not seek information but *transformation*. And the onus is on the listener to decide what to do next.

You see, our Lord knew that people come to Him for a multitude of reasons – then and now. So, He wanted these two men to evaluate exactly what was motivating them to seek Him out; what they were hoping to find in Him? Because if they were going to become Jesus’ disciples, they were going to have to let Him transform their hearts and minds to desire what He offers and to do His will.

Our Lord goes out to meet people today and asks the same question. What are you looking for? What is your heart’s deepest longing? Are

you willing to become My disciple? Are you willing to allow Me to transform you so that the love with which the Father has loved Me may be in you, and I in you? (see Jn 17:26). The onus is on the seeker to decide what to do next.

Now, instead of answering Jesus' question, Andrew and his companion ask a question of their own: "*Teacher, where are you staying?*" It seems a straightforward enough request. They simply want to know where He is currently residing. But is that all it means?

In Greek, the word translated as "staying," *menō*, means much more than the English equivalent. It means to "abide" or to "continue to be present." At a deeper level they are asking Jesus where He abides, where He will continue to be present?

Their question ends up being the best response to His question. What are you looking for? I am looking for You. I am looking for where You abide, where you continue to be present in this world and in my life.

Jesus responds to their request. He tells them to "*Come and see.*" Jesus is inviting them not only to come and talk with Him, but to come and *stay* with Him, to become His disciples and discover those things that He alone can open up to them.

Our Lord invites us to come and see where He abides: in the Eucharist, in His Church, in this world, in our neighbour, in ourselves. He invites us to be with Him, no matter who we are, no matter what our personal situation. "*Abide in Me as I abide in you*" (Jn 15:4).

Dwelling in His presence reveals to us our deepest longing, the desire God put into our hearts from the very beginning when He created humanity. A yearning for something beyond this life and this world but that gives meaning to it all. To be united to Him now and for eternity; to share in His life, His love, His glory. This is the calling “*given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began*” (2 Tim. 1:9).