

## Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

When someone calls us on our mobile phones, we often know who it is before we answer. If the caller is already on our contact list their name will appear on our phone. But when God gives us a call God doesn't seem to be on our contact list and we often can't recognise God's voice at the other end of the line.

Today we have a delightful story about someone who found it very hard to recognise the voice of God. Samuel was only a boy learning how to listen to God and be God's servant when God called him in the middle of the night. He thought that it was the holy man Eli who had called him. He couldn't imagine that it was God speaking to him. After the third time that he ran to Eli, the old man was able to tell him that it was God who had called him. If he called again, Samuel was to say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening". You and I need holy people like Eli to help us to know when God is speaking to us and to know how we might respond.

The response that Samuel made to God is the kind of response that we would want to make every day. We want to be open to God's Word, no matter how that Word comes to us. I'm sure that we would love to be described as Samuel was described. "Samuel grew up and the Lord was with him and let no word of his fall to

the ground." Oh, that we could catch every word that God speaks to us.

Our Gospels this year are nearly always from Mark's Gospel but today is an exemption. What we heard is described as day three of the ministry of Jesus in John's Gospel. John the Baptist has a role to play in each of the first three days of Jesus' ministry. Today he points Jesus out to two of his own disciples. One is Andrew. The other is unnamed.

There is a beautiful sense of movement in this gospel. The disciples are described as standing with John. Jesus walks past them. The two disciples begin to follow Jesus when John describes him as the Lamb of God. Jesus stops and turns around. He asks them, "What do you want?" or what are you looking for. Despite what John had revealed to them they call Jesus "Rabbi", which we are told means "teacher". What surprised me was that the gospel's author translates the word "Rabbi" for us to make his point that those first disciples should have seen more in Jesus than just a teacher. They ask Jesus where he lives, expecting that he is going to be like any other teacher and have a base from which to teach. But Jesus was more than an ordinary rabbi, the kind of teacher with whom they were familiar. Jesus makes that beautiful invitation for them to "Come and See". It is an invitation that he makes to all of us who are his

followers. He wants us to come close to him and to see what he offers to us. He wants us to be at home in his company and to learn how to live from him. No one can become a disciple of Jesus without spending a lot of time in his company.

The few hours that Andrew spent with Jesus were enough for him to seek out his brother Simon and to tell him “We have found the Messiah.” It might have been more accurate for Andrew to say to his brother that Jesus had found him. In our relationship with Jesus, it is always Jesus who takes the initiative. We are followers of Jesus only because he has called us to follow him. Our love for Jesus is always a response to the love that Jesus has for us. Whatever we give to Jesus has already been given to us in abundance.

Twice more in today’s gospel the narrator translates words for us. He tells us that “the Messiah” means the Christ. He seems to be making the point that Andrew still has a lot to learn about Jesus. Even though he calls him the Messiah, it is his image of what the Messiah should be that he knows at this moment. It will be a long time before the disciples of Jesus know what kind of Messiah he really is. Most of us are very good at creating God in our own image. We find it very difficult to imagine that God can do anything more than we do. We think that God can only forgive as much as we can

forgive. We think of God’s mercy as being not much more than the mercy we show to others. We dare not imagine the kind of love that Jesus has for us.

When Jesus meets Simon, we are told that he looked hard at him and said, “You are Simon son of John; you are to be called Cephas.” Jesus knew who Simon was, where he had come from. But he knew too where he was going, who he would become. At the initiative of Jesus, he was going to become Cephas the rock upon whose faith the Church was going to be built.

Are we free enough to allow Jesus to look hard at us? Can we risk allowing Jesus to know us so well that he can speak to us not just about who we have been and who we are now, but also to speak to us about who we can become when we let Jesus take the initiative in our lives? It is a risk worth taking. Jesus can only look hard at us and speak to us with great love.