

## **“Your Servant Is Listening”**

Homily of January 15, 2006

by Fr. Brian Timoney

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The Liturgy today is about the call of God to each one of us, the call to discipleship. We first hear about the call to the young man, young boy, Samuel, and we are told that he had no knowledge of God at this time. And so, he was very, very puzzled to hear his name called in the middle of the night because, you see, there were no fireworks, no apparitions, no angels announcing things, just this quiet voice calling. But the old man, Eli, realized what was happening, and so gave him good advice. He said, “The next time you hear your name called, just say ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.’” He wanted him to be open to whatever God was asking of him.

Again, in the gospels, great simplicity and acceptance are underlined. Two disciples, Andrew being one of them, hear John the Baptist say, “Behold the Lamb of God.” And I think they did what you and I might do. Out of curiosity, they followed along just to see who this person was. Again, there was no fanfare, no miracles, no angels appearing, everything just very quiet, very ordinary. And Jesus turns to them and says, “What are you looking for?” Well, I am sure that stopped them dead in their tracks. They weren’t expecting this. And so they blurt out the very first thing that comes to their minds, “Where do you live?” And Jesus said, “Come and see.” Come and see.... Yes, the invitation comes from Jesus. It is pure gift. No one merits discipleship. No one merits being a Christian. The call is gift from God. Remember Jesus saying at a later time, “It is not you who chose me. It is I who chose you.”

What are you looking for? Come and see. It is the answer given to all who seek, the answer given to all who are looking for meaning and purpose in their lives. “Come and see. Experience me. Experience my presence. See who I am,” Jesus is saying. “See what kind of person I am. See the values that I hold. Come and see.” And Andrew went, experienced the presence of Jesus and then ran off to his brother, “We have found the Messiah, the one we’ve been waiting for for hundreds of years. He is here.” He can’t wait to share this good news.

Well, what are these scriptures saying to us today? In what way might they be relevant to us? I think they are telling us, first of all, that discipleship is the very same for us as it was for those early followers of Jesus. We don’t earn it. We don’t merit it. It is an invitation from Jesus to be intimate with him, to abide with him, to see who he is, and then to go out and bring others to meet him. Baptism was the response to this invitation, but it is only the very first step. At every stage, as we mature as Christians, Jesus keeps asking us, “What are you looking for? Why are you following me?... Why are you following me?” Most of us would probably reply, “Well, we

don't know anything else. That's how we have lived since we were born." We are, what is called "Cradle Christians" or "Cradle Catholics." Some continue to follow Jesus because they want to feel safe. They want to feel that they are saved. Others turn to Jesus in times of crisis in their lives, or times of illness, and they look for some wonderful intervention, some miracle. So, I think today we should really take a good look at our personal motivation for following Jesus. Ask ourselves, "What am I looking for?"

I believe that a true disciple follows Jesus simply because an invitation has been given. Love has called and love answers, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening." And Jesus says to each one of us, asks us, "What are you looking for?" ... We reply, "I am looking for you, Lord. To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. You are the one who gives me life. I have nowhere else to turn to. I turn to you. I follow you." So, I suggest that each one of us take to ourselves and make our own the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola, words that were made very, very popular by the musical, "Godspell." You'll recognize them. "Let me know you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly." That is really discipleship.... "Let me know you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly."

Within that title of discipleship, there are, of course, particular ways of following Jesus, as married persons, as parents, as grandparents, as single people, as religious brothers or sisters, as priests. These are all particular ways of responding to the loving invitation of Jesus to know him more intimately and to bring others to know him. We, each of us, have heard our own call. Or there may be some who are still struggling to understand what God is calling them to. And our attitude then should be simply one of openness. "Your servant is listening. Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening." This weekend, in particular, the Church is asking us to pray that everyone may be able to really understand what God is asking of them, and that those who are still seeking may at least consider the possibility that God is calling them to religious life, as a brother or sister or to priesthood. Now I know that this is not the first thing that a person thinks of perhaps. But there are some who are definitely called, just as most are called to the married life or to single life in this world, but serving God in their own way. This is something that is very important for us to realize.

All of these ways of serving God are equally honorable, equally good, equally holy. What's important is that we seek out what God wants us to do and then we try to do it to the best of our ability. And whatever work, whatever profession, whatever you may be, whatever work you are doing, whatever way you are earning your living, do it to the best of your ability. That's what God wants of each and every one of us, and, through that, honoring God, praising God, thanking God for the abilities that the Lord has given us, the gifts that he has given us in this life. "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

The great example of that, of course, is Mary, the mother of Jesus. She did not fully understand what was being asked of her. She was puzzled by the message of the angel at the Annunciation. But she was open to whatever God was asking of her. "Be it done to me according to your word." Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening. Amen.