

Jesus, Where are You Staying?

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time year B

John 1:35-42

We are in chapter 1 of John's gospel.

John the Baptist is in the desert.

He has just been interrogated by Levites and Pharisees about who he is.

He takes advantage of the opportunity to give a moving testimony to Jesus.

The next day Jesus, whose arrival He has been preparing with his whole heart, *arrives*.

How his heart must have been moved.

He exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Upon hearing this exclamation, the two disciples of John leave him to follow Jesus.

And, dare I say, how his heart must have been moved.

John the Baptist wanted nothing more than his disciples to follow Jesus.

(The Church has come to think that the two disciples are John and Andrew.)

This is a gospel of following Jesus, of discipleship.

The order is different than the other (synoptic) gospels,

in which the first disciple called is Peter.

Historically, we will never be absolutely certain who was called first.

In terms of *meaning*, both orders, however, are important.

There is an order of leadership: Peter.

There is an order of intimacy: John.

This is the gospel of intimacy.

It is important to look closely and carefully at these callings.

They reveal to us how Jesus calls and what it means to be called.

Jesus does not extend an explicit verbal invitation (like in the first reading: I Samuel 3:3-10)

John and Andrew follow Jesus upon the indication of their master John the Baptist.

They follow without hesitation, in a New York second.

Such is the attraction of Jesus.

They do not even say "goodbye" or "thank you" to John the Baptist

—which, contrary to what we might think, was not rude.

John the Baptist practices what he preaches regarding Jesus:

"He must increase, I must decrease." (3:30)

These callings are, in a sense, *odd*.

John and Andrew simply start following.

They do not ask permission, "Do you mind if we tag along?"

They express nothing, and Jesus says nothing (initially).

Jesus eventually does ask them a pointed question,

"What are you seeking?"

In other words:

"What do you want?"

"To what is your heart drawn?"

The response is odd: “Where are you staying?”

Why did they not simply say, “You”?

They are not expressing interest in Jesus’ address or living quarters:

“Do you have a cool apartment?”

They address him as *Rabbi*, which means teacher, whose wisdom they can only receive if

- they stay with him
- they spend time with him
- they are close to him

We discover that Christian discipleship is not so much about imitation of Jesus as it is about *staying with Jesus*.

We discover that Christian discipleship is above all a personal bond of love with Jesus who is

- teacher, i.e. source of wisdom
- lamb, i.e. the One who gives us everything out of pure mercy.

Jesus unconditionally invites John and Andrew (us!) to “come and see”.

Surprisingly, there is no discussion either way:

- Jesus asking them to agree to certain things:
 - “You will be clean.”
 - “You will be attentive.”
- The two disciples asking certain things:
 - “What will we do for meals?”
 - “What hours do you keep?”

John and Andrew simply go and see, and *stay*.

Nothing is said about John yet.

Andrew, however, moved by his encounter with Jesus, fetches his brother Simon.

From the outset, we see mediation.

We are in this together (!) –which does not mean, however, that it is any less personal.

Each of these first four disciples is called personally—without Jesus saying a word.

In the midst of the assembly, each of us is called.

We sometimes fall into thinking that this “church thing”

is the—sometimes burdensome—group phenomenon,

and, when we are not in the mood for crowds, we bail.

The “church thing” is those who have personally encountered the God-man, Christ, and discover that they are bound to one another by Him, and somehow mediate mercy.

Simon trusts his brother, and comes.

And, here again, the incident is odd.

Jesus looked at him and said,

“You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas” (Peter).

There is no discussion.

I might have said, “Uh, thanks, but I like Simon. Let’s negotiate the name change.”

Jesus, whose gaze is transformative, looks *into* Simon,

who is touched in such a way that he acquiesces, and follows.

It was love...

Discipleship is a response to a loving attraction.

It is not an obligation, nor is it a contract.

To follow Jesus is to enter into intimacy with Him, to “stay” with Him.

We have all been given the grace to be disciples, that is, to be *friends* of God.

How do we respond?

Do we express a desire each day, in the midst of the complexity of our lives,
for such closeness?

All we must really do is desire and desire again, and God will take care of the rest.

Let us go and see and stay, and we will be amazed.

My guess is that we will not want to leave...