

January 14, 2018
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
John 1:35-42

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." 37 The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus.

38 Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and

they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.

40 Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Christ). 42 Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

Background

John's gospel is distinct and different from those of Mathew, Mark, and Luke, in a number of ways. For example, the gospels of Mathew, Mark, and Luke all record that it was Jesus who initiated the call to the first disciples. (Mathew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, Luke 5:1-11) Also, this passage would suggest that Jesus changed the name of Simon to Cephas when he accepted him as a disciple. Other gospels record Jesus changing Simon's name to Peter after he has been a disciple for some time. Another difference is that, according to this text, Peter would have at least been told that Andrew his brother believed that Jesus was the Messiah from the beginning, when his brother Andrew first talked to him about Jesus. The other gospels give the impression that Peter wrestled with idea that Jesus was the Messiah for some time, and then came to believe.

In the gospel text, John presents a pattern for how people come to Jesus.

1. a believer tells another of Jesus
2. a title is used
3. the person is led to Jesus
4. Jesus sees and confirms the person's decision
5. the conversion is sealed

In the text here, John the Baptist points out Jesus to two of his disciples. He uses the title "Lamb of God." The two disciples go off to follow Jesus. Jesus sees them following, asks them what they are looking for, and invites them to stay with him. Because it is four o'clock and the sabbath has begun, there is a prohibition against travel. Jesus is inviting them to stay with him for the duration of the Sabbath. This pattern is repeated in the text, with Andrew going to tell his brother about Jesus.

When the text describes Andrew bringing his brother Peter to Jesus, the text gives the impression that Peter himself had no direct invitation from Jesus. Andrew tells his brother Peter who he believes Jesus to be, and then Peter seeks out Jesus. This is the same pattern of how Andrew came into relationship with Jesus. In the opening verses of the text, John the Baptist sees Jesus and points Jesus out to them, describing him as "the Lamb of God." The two disciples, having heard John's statement, leave John and begin to follow Jesus.



Probable site along the shores of the Sea of Galilee where the events in this Gospel occurred.

(Picture by Bro Alan)

Because John's gospel is believed to have been written about 100 AD or later, this pattern would have been true for everyone in John's community. None of them would have had an experience of Jesus as he taught in synagogues, preached to the crowds, taught his followers to pray, or argued with the religious leaders. No doubt some of the early Christians lamented not having had firsthand experience of being present when Jesus walked their roads and preached in their gathering places. Others might have even used it as an excuse for not being able to believe at all. For the early Christians to point to examples where the first disciples were led to Jesus by others would diminish the credibility of those kind of objections.

Reflection Questions

1. Do you ever lament that you did not have firsthand experience of Jesus?
2. Are there saints, sports heroes, or political or historical figures who have impacted how you live, that you have never personally met?
3. How did you come into your relationship with God? Who were the people that played important roles in the development of your relationship with God?
4. If you were Simon, what would you be thinking when you first meet Jesus and he says that you are going to be called Peter/Cephas?
5. If Jesus were to say to you from now on you will be called _____? What name do you think He would use? Why?
6. If Jesus would ask you what are you looking for, what would you say?
7. Who are the people who look for someone to say to them, "Come, stay with me and you will see?"
8. Who are the people who seem to have the capacity to invite those seeking a place to come and stay?
9. What sacrifice do you think they make to be able to offer hospitality? Why do you think they do it?
10. Can you talk to God about your need to be welcomed into God's presence, your desire to bring others to God, or some other awareness that arises within you as you ponder this gospel?

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The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM.
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