

## 20120115: Jn 1:35-42: The First Disciples of Jesus

Besides being the editor of our parish magazine Caritas, I'm also the editor of the Cape Town Family history Society newsletter. Last month I was desperate to fill the pages of magazine and because I had an article about how a cholera epidemic in Mauritius had decimated the ancestors of a member of the society, I thought I'd link that with an article I had written on the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic and its affect on the St Paul's Parish. I used the Rector's letter written by John Brooke in the October 1918 edition of *St Paul's Record*. He speaks about how the Parish rose to the occasion in setting up soup kitchens, helping to bury the dead, lending motor vehicles so the clergy didn't have to cycle down to Maitland to do burials etc etc. One of the Family History Society members responded by saying "I was in tears reading about the epidemics. The parishioners of St Paul's were magnificent in their selfless response to social needs."

That was 1918. Would it be the same today? **Should** it be the same? Isn't it the church's task to bring people to Jesus - as Andrew did with his brother Peter in this morning's gospel? I found this short verse while preparing this sermon:

The gospel has to be proclaimed,  
Its truth we need to share;  
But sometimes seekers also need  
To see how much we care.

Jesus said: "Come and see." Andrew said to Peter: "Come and see. Let's walk together, and I'll take you to Him." This is what we should be saying to the people of Rondebosch.

John the Gospel writer's simple words require careful unpacking. What you read on surface is not necessary whole meaning of the phrases used. Often, too, the translation seems to miss the hidden messages.

Let me unpack some phrases to show you what I mean. "Where are you staying" two disciples of John the Baptist ask Jesus. What a ridiculous question! But in John Gospel to "stay" means more than just to lodge in a house overnight; he uses the same Greek word as is used for "abide" in those Christological passages later in John's gospel that speak of the Son's abiding in the Father. "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" So the question was not just where Jesus is overnighing but how he is in the Father. How he and the Father are one.

Jesus' response also has a more theological meaning than it appears on first sight. Jesus responds "come and see". See what? Well, here "see" means to perceive with the eye of faith the mystery of the Word in the flesh. Those two disciples, we are told, "came and saw where he was staying." They came and listened. They had remembered that earlier John the Baptist had said: 'I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal... a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me... I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel... I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him."

So the next day when John indicates Jesus to his disciples, "Here is the Lamb of God...", it was naturally that some of John's disciples in particular Andrew should begin to follow Jesus. But more than that, Andrew fetches his brother Peter with the statement "We have found the Messiah"

This Gospel, like the first reading deals with response. If we respond to a call, like that to Samuel, like that to Andrew, like that to Peter it means change. For starters notice how quickly Andrew transferred his allegiance from being a disciple of John to being a disciple of Jesus! How? Why? The instant John pointed Jesus out as the "Lamb of God," Andrew started followed Jesus.

Each week at the Eucharist we say or sing "Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us" How do we respond? What is your response? Firstly, you might say "I'm already a follower of Jesus so there is no need to respond." But are you really a follower? I'm sure the young boy Samuel thought he was a follower of God. But he mistakenly didn't hear God's voice thinking it was Eli. Sometimes the call and who is calling is not clear to us. Samuel thought it was Eli. After being woken up three Eli realised that God was calling Samuel and he told him to respond: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

Do you have an Eli in your faith history or perhaps even today in your life who can say to you: "Just go and listen to what is being said to you by God. Ignore the baggage you are carrying, about not being good enough or not having enough time or may or energy or being too old. Just do what God wants you to do." Do you have a friend, mentor, or director who can do this for you?

Secondly, if we look at Andrew's response we see that this encounter with Jesus was so powerful that Andrew immediately went to find his brother Peter, announced he had found the Messiah, and brought Peter to Jesus. Any encounter with Jesus is an encounter that elicits allegiance and allegiance will generate action. Action - ah, there is the rub! Most if not all of you here this morning have the allegiance, you are happy to call Jesus Lord of your lives? But does that allegiance turn into action?

It is the beginning of a new year. Soon we will be having our vestry meeting. We need to elect Churchwardens and Parish councillors. We need new lay ministers - if we approach you and ask you if you would like to be a lay minister, please take that call seriously and pray that God will direct you in making the decision God wants you to make. We need someone to be the 9.30 Service Reader co-ordinator to make up the roster of readers for the 9:30 Service. Most urgently we need people to take over and share the numerous roles that the Rev Pat vdR has been doing in pastoral care work. The soup Kitchen, the love packs and parcels the special collection - toys at Xmas, etc etc

Thirdly your response might be varied. Some calls are clear, like Andrew's some are less clear, like Samuel's. But either way, when we respond, our life is changed. So, are you willing to have your life changed? We prize our independence. But, by contrast, what comes through clearly in the gospel is the way higher value is placed on our relationship with Christ as our teacher and Saviour in the midst of a community of fellow disciples. Yes, we would love to be able to do our own thing at our own pace in our own time without interference (whether for good or bad) of others, but being Church means being community, means doing things for other with other in the midst of others and learning the value living working and being in relationship with Jesus Christ because he has called us and he said: "Come and See." This might mean change but as Cardinal John Henry Newman said: "To live is to change: to be perfect is to have changed often"