

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 1:41, 17b

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

We have found the Messiah:

Jesus Christ, who brings us truth and
grace.

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 1:35-42; L65B

John was standing with two of his
disciples,

and as he watched Jesus walk
by, he said,

“Behold, the Lamb of God.”

The two disciples heard what he
said and followed Jesus.

Jesus turned and saw them fol-
lowing him and said to them,

“What are you looking for?”

They said to him, “Rabbi”—which
translated means Teacher—,

“where are you staying?”

He said to them, “Come, and you
will see.”

So they went and saw where Jesus was
staying,

and they stayed with him that day.

It was about four in the afternoon.

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter,
was one of the two who heard John
and followed Jesus.

He first found his own brother Simon
and told him,

“We have found the Messiah”—which
is translated Christ.

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.

Reflecting on the Gospel

As we begin our journey through Ordinary Time, the gospel begins with looking and gazing and responding to the call to discipleship. John the Baptist stands with two of his disciples, ready to decrease in personal significance so that Jesus may increase (cf. John 3:30). After his testimony there will be no hanging onto or hankering for his former disciples. John watches Jesus pass by; the

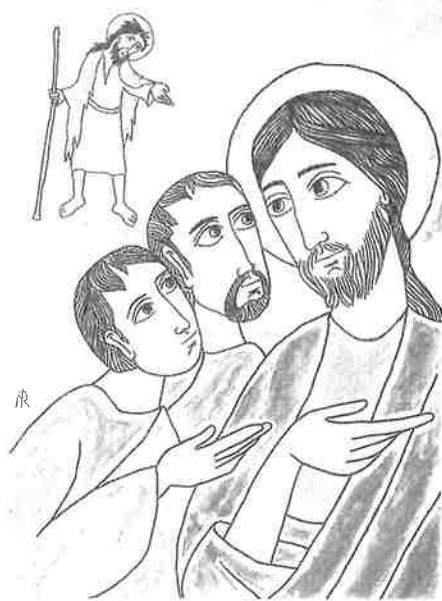
eyes of John’s heart penetrate to the reality of this man, and he points him out to his disciples as the Lamb of God. The Jewish religious experience of the lamb was as the sacrificial offering that overcame the alienation of sin and created unity between the people and God. In whatever way the Baptist’s disciples understood his words, they were spoken with an urgency that made them leave John and follow Jesus. Jesus himself turns and sees them. The word the evangelist uses for “saw” (*theásthai*) has the sense of gazing contemplatively and engagingly at these two followers. Jesus then asks them his first question in the fourth gospel: “What are you looking for?” It is a question that will persist throughout this gospel, from this first chapter to the garden of the resurrection morning, but by then the “What” has become “Whom” in the intimate encounter of Jesus and Mary Magdalene (John 20:15).

The two disciples ask Jesus, the Teacher (Rabbi), where he is staying, and he responds

by inviting them to “Come, and you will see.” Their question is about a place; their experience is about abiding for the rest of the day in a relationship with a person, about the beginning of a new communion between the people and this Lamb of God. The “where” is not as important as the “with whom.” The pattern of discipleship is established: through witness (of the Baptist), others follow and experience Jesus’s truth for themselves. They in turn bring others to Jesus. One of the first two who followed Jesus remains anonymous, perhaps as a Johannine invitation to future readers to see a challenge to themselves in the following, seeking pattern of discipleship. The other is later named as Andrew, who announces to his brother, Simon Peter, that he has found the Messiah. Like the first disciples, we all see something different in this same Jesus, and Jesus recognizes the truth in us, just as in this first chapter of the fourth gospel, Jesus’s insight into Simon’s role in the community of the disciples suggests his renaming as Cephas (in Aramaic, *kepha*; in Greek, *petra*; in English, *rock*).

This gospel proclaims that all discipleship is an active and involving relationship with Jesus: a following, seeking, staying, finding, and dialoguing with him. We hear how each decision to follow Jesus is a response to a statement about Jesus’s identity as Lamb of God, Rabbi, Messiah, by people whose ears and hearts are open to the Word of God, who hear his invitation through the words of friend or stranger, through events of joy or sorrow, or who discern a moment of religious significance in the everyday. As the nineteenth-century English poet Matthew Arnold wrote in his haunting poem “The Buried Life”:

But often, in the world’s most crowded streets,
But often in the din of strife,



There rises an unspeakable desire
 After the knowledge of our buried life;
 A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
 In tracking out our true, original course,
 A longing to enquire
 Into the mystery of this heart which beats
 So wild, so deep in us—to know
 Whence our lives come and whence they go.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: “Behold, the Lamb of God.”

To the point: John’s proclamation about Jesus is ripe with theological significance. In naming Jesus the “Lamb of God,” he emphasizes not only that Jesus is consecrated and set apart for a holy purpose, but also that Jesus’s life will end in sacrifice to save others, calling to mind the blood of the lambs spread above the doorways of the Hebrew people in the land of Egypt so the angel of death might pass over them. Hearing John’s words, two of his own disciples are intrigued enough to approach Jesus and then follow him to where he is staying. These first steps are the beginning of a path that will eventually lead them to the agony of the cross and then, finally, to the joy of the empty tomb.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: In the first reading, we encounter another story of an invitation accepted and a life changed. The youth Samuel hears a voice calling to him in the night. At first he is confused about who is summoning him, but after receiving direction from his mentor, Eli, he responds to God’s call, saying, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” In the reading we hear that “[a]t that time Samuel was not familiar with the Lord, / because the Lord had not revealed anything to him as yet.”

to experience: Both Samuel and the two disciples from the gospel begin a journey that will change the trajectory of their lives and bring them to the limits of their abilities, demanding all of who they are and even, in the case of Andrew and Peter, their very lives. They do not walk the road alone, however. In each stage they are guided and fortified by the light and life of God. Though we cannot see where our own journey of faith is leading, we can be assured of the presence and friendship of the same divine companion walking ahead of us to show us the way.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: In today’s readings we are given two similar prayers with which to ponder the life of discipleship. The psalm refrain “Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will” is very similar to Samuel’s response to the divine voice calling him by name: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” Both express an awareness of God’s presence and also complete trust in God’s plan and action in their lives. As the psalmist recounts, however, the life of discipleship is not always straightforward and can require a good deal of patience (“I have waited, waited for the Lord”).

to psalmist preparation: This week, take time to pray with the words from the psalm response. What does it mean to show up each day in your relationship with God and to be eager to do God’s will?

PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING

In the first reading, Samuel hears God’s voice calling to him as he sleeps. How do you experience the voice of God calling to you?

The psalm response for today echoes Samuel’s answer to the voice calling to him in the night, “Here I am.” How do you practice being present to God and to those who share your life?

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your body / is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?” How would you answer Paul’s question?

In today’s gospel Jesus is identified as the Lamb of God, as Teacher, and as Messiah. What do these titles tell you about Jesus’s identity?