

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Jan. 13-14, 2018

All three readings today are about God's call and about our vocation.

When we consider the topic of vocation in our life, we generally think that it means making a choice about what we are supposed to do with our life.

However, when we listen to the Word of God today, we hear something different. What we heard in today's readings is that our vocation is not about us making a choice, rather it is about us being chosen.

Yes, we do search for our vocation and purpose in life – and this search, if it is authentic, is really a search for God and not just for ourselves. This is why Jesus asks the men he noticed were following him: “What are you looking for?” Jesus makes every person aware of their own searching within, and makes them wonder about the reasons for journey of searching.

But ultimately, it is not us making a choice, but rather God putting forth a call to Samuel, to John the Baptist and the disciples and to us.

As Jesus says later in the Gospel of John: “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you.” (Jn. 15:16). Deep within all of us is a search for our true home – which is in God – but the one who calls us and searches for us is God.

We see this same message in today's second reading where St. Paul writes to the Christian community at Corinth about the unlawful sexual activity that some had fallen back into. --- Corinth was a major seaport and market center for the whole Mediterranean area. Because of all the different people and ideas coming and going there, it became also a city of much immoral behavior.

In order to help the people change their behavior, he tries to change their understanding

of their bodies. Many seemed to have little or no regard for their bodies or the bodies of others. Using terms that they as a community of marketing and commerce would clearly understand, Paul says to them that as baptized Christians, their bodies do not belong to them anymore, but they belong to God who has bought and purchased them at great price. Since their bodies belong to God and are temples of the Holy Spirit, he says they should use their bodies to glorify God.

So again, we learn from today's readings that it is not we who first of all have to make a choice, but rather it is first of all God who has called us or purchased us and then we who make a response to God.

In looking then at our response --- here again we can learn something new from the Word of God. We usually think that God calls us first and foremost to carry out some action or project.

However, what we learn in today's readings, especially in the Gospel, is that our first invitation from God is to come and be with Jesus and dwell with him. --- To John and Andrew who asked Jesus – “Master, where do you live?” – Jesus answered, “Come and see.” He invites us to be with him before we do anything for him.

Samuel was brought to the temple and spent many years there helping to take care of the ark of the covenant before going forth among the people as one of the most important judges and prophets in Israel's history.

St. Paul tries to help the Corinthians see first their dignity as members of the Body of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit before specifically speaking about how to change their behavior.

Yes, God has from all eternity created us for a certain purpose and work in this world, but before that, God in Jesus calls us back to our true home of union with God and a loving

relationship with him. And then, from that relationship, he calls us to go out and take up the tasks that he has for us. Then, it will be out of love and union with God that we act and not just out of duty or obligation.

St. Jose Marie Escriva says it well to one of his students – “My enthusiasm is gone, you write me. -- Yours has to be a work not of enthusiasm, but of Love. --- What is the secret of perseverance? Love. Fall in love and you will not leave him.” --- God wants us to be in relationship with him before asking us to do things for him.

St. Augustine in his book, Confessions, which is his spiritual autobiography, writes about all the years that he sought for truth and love. Then, after having encountered them in the person of Christ, he remained fruitful to God forever.

Even to him, Christ asked – “What are you looking for?” and to the questions, “Master, where do you live?” the reply was still – “Come and see.” -- Come and learn first who I am and who you are.

I am really happy to begin this new year with these readings that get us to thinking about God’s will and purpose for our lives, because in just two months from now – March 17-21 – we will have a parish mission – the first one in a long time – and it will be on the theme – “Anointed for a Purpose – confirmed for life in the 21st Century”.

One of the goals of the mission will be to help us understand why the anointing we received in baptism and confirmation matters beyond what we may have imagined, and how discerning and claiming your place in the world is of greatest spiritual importance.

So, if not already doing so, I hope that this weekend you will begin reflecting more deeply

on your relationship to the one pointed out to us
by John the Baptist and pointed out to us at
every Mass --- “Behold the Lamb of God –
behold him who takes away the sins of the
world.”

Take time these coming weeks to dwell with him,
and prepare yourself to soon hear and learn
more clearly the unique purpose for which God
has anointed you for in this 21st century.