

## 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – A Calling (John 1:29–39)

**John 1:29-39** - The story picks up after John baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’ I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.” John testified further, saying, “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

The next day (again) John was there 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 following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?”

They said to him, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” 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.

**I began mulling over what it means to be called** when I read the Gospel passage(s) - I did a little additional reading of some of the verses before and after this particular encounter. Jesus calls to us constantly, yet we often resist, considering it something to put off, and pushing the snooze button on the alarm clock so we don't have to get up right away.

When I was younger (33 years old), I was home one Sunday morning. It was early and I had just gotten the Sunday paper to read while I was having my morning coffee. And on that particular day, I came across a short article about a local attorney who was a deacon. I found myself with an overwhelming urge to contact him, and I did so the next day.

We spoke on the phone and I asked him about the diaconate – what is it? How does it work? How long did it take to go through the program? He gave me a contact and I received an application to the program.

I went to my pastor (Fr Dan Schreiter) with application in hand and talked to him about my wanting to apply. His non-verbal response was less than enthusiastic (more like deer-in-headlights) and I came away from our meeting disappointed. So I put the application in my desk drawer and the whole idea behind me (or so I thought) for a couple of years. When I looked at the application, I saw that the minimum age for application was 33 years, so I would not have been eligible at the time anyway.

In 1983, a new pastor took over (Fr Bob Maher) and at the same time came two deacons (Capt. Bob Perry and Col. David Casey) to Wright Patterson AFB. A few months after his arrival, Capt. Bob had a meeting at the chapel of men who might be interested in the Diaconate and I was invited to attend...I surmised he must have asked for names of possible candidates. Afterwards, Bob came directly over to me and asked if I were interested. I

laughed and told him I already had an application waiting. Bear in mind that I had only just met Bob and he knew nothing about me. Also bear in mind that the military does not call clergy to orders. Priests are ordained in their dioceses and then (with their bishop's approval) they volunteer for military service. But there are no deacons in the military. They come to military service from some secular field but they serve in voluntary positions as deacons. Now I was 35 years old and I met the minimum age requirements for admittance to the program. My ordination date was June 20, 1987.

There are hundreds of U.S. military bases throughout our country and the world. What would be the odds of two deacons arriving at Wright Patt together just at a time when I thought I might have heard a whisper from God? From GOOGLE: As of Jan 14, 2017, the US population was estimated at 324+ M people. To put things in perspective, the permanent deacon ministry in the U.S. is growing; today there are over 15,000 deacons active in U.S. – that's 0.005% of our population. And in the 1980's, it was quite a bit smaller. I believe this was God call to me to something beyond myself?

So, here I stand, 30 years later...am I perfect? Hardly! Am I a sinner? Most indubitably! Am I faithful? I strive to be. Thirty years from now I will be 100 years old. If I am called home before then, I pray that I will at least achieve the lowest place in heaven because I will be with my Lord and Savior. And, if by chance, we are all still here in 30 years, know that I will be at this altar still striving to be a faithful member of God's holy people.

We're not all called to be wandering minsters or preachers, but we are called to lives our lives as disciples of Jesus, just as were the Apostles. He is always there waiting to embrace us when we finally receive that call. Do we stay asleep and keep hitting the snooze button, or do we answer the call and come home?

John the Baptist is a great prophet. Jesus once called him the greatest prophet who ever lived. And John picked up a few disciples along the way who are devoted to him as their spiritual leader. But now John has recognized that somebody else has come along who is far greater than he will ever be. In fact, when Jesus shows up, John realizes that he is now in the presence of One whose sandals he is not even worthy to untie. He may be a prophet, but this man - Jesus - is the Lamb of God, the Son of the Most High, the very Savior of the world.

In the best interests of his disciples, John prepares them to leave him and devote themselves, instead, to Jesus. This was the purpose of his life - from before he was born, God had determined that John's life would be spent pointing people towards Jesus.

Discipleship is an invitation from God -- it cannot be self-invented, self-invited. It begins with an inner call, a dream, an inspiration oftentimes in our lived, ordinary experience. It begins with having Jesus pointed out to us by the John the Baptists of the world. What will our response be? Will we immediately follow? Will we make a fundamental decision to orient our lives toward Jesus?

So John seizes the moment and he says to his friends, "Look, there goes the Lamb of God." What are you waiting for? Go after him! He's the one you really want to follow." And they do – immediately they begin to follow Jesus.

They don't really know Jesus. All they know is what John has told them about Jesus. As they follow him at a distance, Jesus turns around and confronts them and says, "What are you looking for?"

It's probably safe to assume that all of us here are, to some extent, following after Jesus. Some following Jesus closely, right behind him, while others following at a safe distance, not wanting to get too close.

So what if Jesus stopped, turned around to face us, and asked us point blank, "What are you looking for? What do you want of me? What do you want me to give you?"

What would we say? How would we respond? Do we think Jesus has the answers? Are we hoping Jesus will fix our lives? Are we looking for security? Belonging? Peace? Forgiveness? Or are we just curious?

Jesus says, simply, "Come and see. Always with Jesus it's, "Come and see." Always with Jesus the invitation is extended and it always comes with a promise...a promise that if we seek him with open hearts and minds, we will find him.

When we seek God's leading and help in the things we face here – our problems, our challenges, our struggles, our pain – if we seek after Jesus with humble and open hearts, we will be provided with what we need. That is God's promise.

Everything in life changes when we seek Jesus. Among other things, we discover that Jesus has already come seeking after us, that Jesus isn't some great distance away. He isn't the proverbial guru sitting on top of the proverbial mountain we have to climb to reach.

(Quote from ~ Fr Timothy P. O'Malley, director, Notre Dame Center for Liturgy.) "The Lamb of God is still making himself known to the world. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we proclaim, 'Behold the Lamb of God.' Every time a fellow Christian dies for his or her faith throughout the world, this martyr manifests the kingship of Christ to the world. Every time we give ourselves over to care for the poor, the Word made flesh is made known."

It's not just John the Baptist who testifies to the Lamb of God's presence among us. It's you and it's me. It's the effects of Christ's baptism known throughout the world.

"We have received baptism, entrance into the Church, and the honor of being called Christians. Yet what good will this do us if we are Christians in name only and not in fact?" ~ St. Andrew Kim Taegon

Gregory J Cecere January 15, 2017  
(excerpts from Fr. Timothy P. O'Malley and Pastor Ed Morrissey)