

Ordinary Time 3A

Have you ever wondered why Peter, Andrew, James and John followed Jesus? Jesus says to them: “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And they immediately leave their livelihood and follow him. What was it about Jesus that attracted them? Why did they leave everything to follow him?

What happened to Peter, Andrew, James, and John is something that has happened over and over again in the life of the church, not only in the lives of great saints but in the lives of ordinary people as well. It happened in my own life when I was very young. At a certain point, I knew I wanted to follow Christ; I wanted to be as much like one of his disciples as I could. I wanted to be a priest. I knew that priests said Mass and heard confessions, but at that stage of my life, I didn't know what it meant to be priest. Being a priest, however, was a way I could follow Christ, and so I entered seminary and began a journey I have walked to this very day: discovering anew each day what it means to follow Christ, and what it means to be a priest.

I imagine that Peter, Andrew, James, and John saw something in Jesus they had never seen before; they heard something in his teaching they never heard before. Exactly what it was, I do not know, but I suspect it had something to do with the power and presence of God. Jesus spoke about God in a way nobody else had ever spoken about God. Jesus acted in a way that radiated the presence and

light of God. And so, when he called them, they responded in a way they had never responded before. They did not ask why they should follow him. They did not ask what he would do for them. In an act of faith they had never experienced before, they followed Jesus in perfect trust and generosity.

But this was only the beginning of the journey of discipleship. In the weeks and months ahead Jesus would challenge them in ways they could never imagine. In the weeks and months ahead there would be moments of self-doubt and frustration. I have experienced such moments of doubt and frustration in my own journey of discipleship. And on more than one occasion I have wondered where the journey is going. But I have learned that it doesn't matter where the journey is going if we follow Christ faithfully.

Pope Francis describes the church as a community of missionary disciples and reminds us that all of us are called to missionary disciples. All of us are called to proclaim the gospel. All of us are called to leave something behind so that we can follow Christ more clearly. In the years ahead we will we experience a more secular world, and we will find ourselves in a very different situation than we did twenty-five or fifty years ago. We are entering a secular age when we will have to make a conscious decision to follow Christ in a way of discipleship that the world thinks strange. But there is no need to be fearful or apprehensive; there is no need

to apologize for our faith in Christ. For the one we follow is the light of the world,
the only one who can bring us light and salvation.