

Ordinary 3A 2014

Follow Me

In today's gospel Jesus calls his first disciples. He sees Peter and Andrew fishing, and he says to them, "Follow me;" and they follow him. He sees James and John mending their nets, and he says to them, "Follow me;" and they follow him.

This is a rather remarkable story. Jesus simply says "Follow me," and these men follow without hesitation or question. Jesus does not explain why they should follow him or what they will receive if they do; and they do not ask what they will receive or why they should follow him. Instead they understand that the moment of grace has arrived, and it may not come again. The call of discipleship has come, and it may not come again. And so leaving behind their old way of life, they follow Jesus in a new way of life, a way of discipleship.

But why do they follow Jesus so readily and without question? The answer, I suspect, is found in today's gospel, which describes the beginning of Jesus' ministry. When Jesus hears that John the Baptist has been put in prison, he knows that the time has come for him to begin his own ministry. And so returning to Galilee, he proclaims that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Something is happening that will change our lives and the life of the world forever; for God is

entering our life in the person of Jesus. Therefore it is time to repent; it is time to look at ourselves in a new way so that we can enter the kingdom of heaven.

Perhaps Andrew, Peter, James and John had already heard Jesus. Perhaps the light of the gospel had already begun to shine in their lives. Whatever it was, when they heard the call to discipleship, they did not bargain; they did not question; they did not negotiate; they followed Jesus without question or reservation.

The Christian life is a life of discipleship. Every one of us has been called to follow Christ in the way of discipleship. Just as Christ called Andrew, Peter, James, and John, so he calls each one of us by name. He says to us, "follow me," and must make a choice. He says, follow me, and we must decide whether we will continue in our present way of life or follow Jesus in a new way of life. He says follow me, and we must decide if we will live by the light of the gospel or remain in the darkness of sin. He says follow me, and we must decide because the call may never come again.

The life of discipleship is a life of following Christ in order to learn from Christ. We follow Christ to hear what he says so that we will have the words of life. We follow Christ to see what he does so that we will know how to act. We follow Christ to see how he lives so that we may live as he lives.

The poet Robert Frost ends one of his poems in this way:

Two roads diverged in yellow wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference

The call to discipleship is a matter of deciding which road to take, what path to follow. It is a matter of choosing between two ways of life: a way of life in which we make ourselves the center of our life, and a way of life in which Christ is the center of our life. The road we take will make all the difference.

During the coming year, we will be reading from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. As we hear this Gospel week after week, Christ will invite us to follow him in the way of discipleship. As we hear this Gospel, we will hear what Christ says, we will see what Christ does; and we will learn what it means to be his disciple. But at some point, we too must decide follow to Christ in the way of discipleship without question, without reservation, with a generous heart.