

Homily 3rd Sunday Ordinary time Cycle A year of Matthew

Matty, believes he should be a soul winner for Christ. In the parish Bible class he has learnt how to share his faith with people and lead them to Christ. But he has never done it. Matty prays to God to give him a sign so that he would know exactly when to start. One day Matty is travelling in the subway to meet his Bible study friends. He has his Bible in his handbag. A young man about his own age enters the train and sits next to Matty. He wears a T-shirt with the slogan, "WHO HAS THE MOST TOYS WINS." Matty bends his head and says a little prayer, "Lord give me a sign when to start." The young man's cell phone rings. His friend wants him to come and pick him up. After arguing with his friend awhile, he says, "All right, I will come to the church and pick you up, but I will not enter the church. You will find me at the parking lot," and hangs up. Matty bends his head a second time and prays, "Lord, I'm still waiting for the sign!" Finally, the young man turns to Matty and says, "You know, I got this weird friend who skips work on Sundays to go to church. I don't get it." Matty smiles, bends down his head once again and says, "Lord, the sign, the sign!"

We will get back to Matty in a minute but for now let us turn our attention today's gospel. We find Jesus, who has waited patiently to begin his public ministry, To wait for thirty years would have seemed like an eternity to begin to preach his message of eternal salvation. How many of us would be willing to wait to begin our career until we were thirty? Why did he wait so long? Did God the Father in his infinite wisdom know that he would not be taken seriously if he began to teach when he was in his teens or even twenties? Or was God the Father and Son waiting for John the Baptist to carefully prepare and till the soil of souls? The timing obviously was perfect for the people who had heard the preaching of the Baptist's of coming of the Messiah and salvation could be fulfilled in the teachings our Lord Jesus the Christ

As I read today's Gospel "**When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea**" (Matthew 4:12-13). I was struck by the statement that Jesus made his home in Capernaum. It should not be lost on us that he chose to make his home among his earliest apostles and he chose the sea as a site from which he called forth Peter and Andrew as his apostles along with Zebedee Sons James and John. The sea, a place from which all life on planet earth burst forth as does the salvation from the Messiah. If one listens to the peaceful and soothing sounds the waves make as they make their climb to mother earth is symbolic of the peace that Jesus brings to the souls that accept him as their Lord and savior.

From the very beginning the apostles responded to Jesus and came willingly and quickly making up their minds to leaving everything behind! What source of strength or gift of faith is so strong as engender someone walk to away from all that has meaning and value to them?

If we pause for a moment and reflect on the calling of the apostles, what you would feel like if you woke up tomorrow morning and you had absolutely no fear or worries? Being called by Christ gives those called the same feeling of total peace knowing that each desire and need would be met and you feel physically and spiritual enshrouded in God's total and unconditional love and understanding.

Hearing the voice and words of Jesus obviously had a dramatic affect on Peter, Andrew, James and John as they put down their former life and picked up a new one. God's people were searching for the Messiah and John the Baptist had stirred the souls of the people and the time was ripe. The soil had been carefully tilled and prepared for the seed of God's truth to be sowed into the souls of mankind. The words and teachings of our savior took root in thousands and thousands of God's faithful servants. Some were Jewish, some were gentiles, some were leaders others poor and some wealthy all were children of God.

Returning back to the story about Matty, what needs do we see in the world around us? Do you, for example, see the need for more messengers of God's love and peace in our world today? What can you personally do about it, given the personal circumstances of your life? When are you actually going to start doing something about it, or are you, like Matty, waiting for a special sign from God? Well, that sign may never come. We, like Jesus, must learn to read the "signs of the times" in which we live.

Let's all look at the example Jesus set of faithfully trusting in God our loving father and pray to him and seek him out whether it is by the sea or on mountain top let us rejoice in the knowledge he has chose all of us for salvation and to bring his message to all through our works, words, actions and prayers. We are all called to be Disciples of Christ.

Reflection for Clergy: Laying down one's life and rising to a new life with Jesus.

As we laid prostrate before the Lord at our ordinations we symbolically died to rise again to a new life with the Christ as new focus of our existence. But did we truly leave our old ways of self center indulgence and ego centric living behind for the freedom from fear and joyful life of living with Jesus every day of our lives? This is not a lecture and is written to myself and my brother and sisters in the service of God to turn our attention to an inward spiritual examination of our fulfillment to God's as his trusted servants.

As the age old saying of 'the proof is in the pudding' where do we find our spiritual devotion to God's service today? Do we still long for the material things of this world and the worries of what others think of us? Did we return home and pick up the very same lives. Did we put others first in all that we do with thinking about the costs in time or money? Of course we all 'back side' as they say but hopefully for all of us this is momentary and not a permanent return to the self centered existence we had know before ordination. All of us have examine our own life's journey and no one is to judge but you and God in regards to spiritual life. However, Just taking the time to reflect helps me to remind myself the vows I took before God and his church.

Sometimes we may still get caught up in chasing after the earthly pursuits of fame, fortune, titles, certificates on the wall instead of humbly following in the footsteps of Jesus. Our Lord did not have exalted titles or dress in expensive clothes or own earthly things instead his focus was on humankind. Setting our hopes and dreams of achieving an understanding of God's will in all that we do is what all of us promised at ordination.

Taking the time for weekly reflection of our dedication to priestly service and serving only Jesus brings back to consciously memory our vows of service, obedience and love of God's children. "Here I am Lord, It is I Lord" I have come to do your will.