

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle B, 1.17.21

1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19/1 Corinthians 6:13-15,17-20/
John 1:35-46

ONCE YOU FIND JESUS... YOU'LL NEVER BE THE SAME

A young man sought a position with a master jeweler. He wanted to become an expert gemologist as well, but the jeweler brushed him off, assuming the applicant was too young to have the patience demanded to learn the craft. The young man pleaded for a chance. The jeweler finally relented: *"Be here tomorrow."* The next morning the master jeweler placed a stone of beautiful, expensive jade in the boy's hand and told him to study it. The jeweler then went about his work, cutting, weighing and setting precious stones. All day long the boy sat quietly and waited, holding the jade.



The following morning the jeweler again placed the jade stone in the boy's hand and told him to hold it. On the third, fourth and fifth days, the jeweler repeated the exercise and the instructions. On the sixth day, as the young man was handed the jade stone, he finally spoke up: *"Sir, when am I going to learn something?"* *"You'll learn in time,"* the master replied and went

about his work. Several more days went by and the young man's frustration continued to mount. One morning, as the jeweler beckoned for the boy to hold out his hand, he was about to blurt out that he didn't want to continue. But the instant the stone touched his fingers, the young man exclaimed, without looking at his hand, *"Wait. This isn't the same jade stone."* The master peered over his glasses, smiled and said, *"You have begun to learn."*

Patience is one of the most difficult virtues for us to practice. It's one of the most frequently confessed sins. *"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I've been so impatient with my husband and my children lately."* The spiritual writer Evelyn Underhill says: *"On every level of life from housework to heights of prayer -- in all judgment and all efforts to get things done -- hurry and impatience are sure marks of the amateur."*

To grow in the spiritual life requires that kind of patience and training as well. So many of us resist prayer because nothing seems to happen when we sit quietly to open ourselves to God. We want results, and we want them now. We want some sign, some indication that something's going on. Just 'being there' isn't enough for us. It's too much like inactivity, laziness without purpose. However, our being fully and attentively before God is its own reward. Soaking up the divine presence in every bone of our body and every fiber of our being prepares us for the crashes we'll face, for the moments of dire need and the long roads ahead. Patience in prayer, that simple act of being and listening, makes of us successful disciples. And you can only learn to do it by doing it.

The Hebrew scripture today gives us the example of young Samuel in the temple, growing impatient as a voice wakes him up four times in the middle of the night. Once he recognizes who it is who's calling him, he's all ears: *Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.* And look at the results of that attentive listening: *Samuel grew up, and the Lord was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect.*



The gospel of John gives us the example of the first disciples. When they encountered the Lord, they asked Jesus: *“Where are you staying?”* Jesus didn't give them an address or any precise set of directions. He didn't tell them about the joys and struggles they would face if they chose to respond to his call and become his followers. He merely said: *“Come and you will see. Forget the demands of your jobs, your need for a tight agenda and a blueprint for your lives. Be with me patiently and prayerfully and I will change your lives. You will never be the same.”* With that, they ran to tell others: *“We've found the Messiah!”*

Only a couple weeks ago we sang the Christmas hymn: *Adeste fidelis – O Come, all ye faithful.* That's the only answer for people like Andrew and Simon Peter, Philip and Nathaniel, and you and me, who want to find out whether or not this is true – that Jesus can change our lives. Come all ye faithful, and all you who would like to be faithful if only you could; all you who walk in darkness and hunger for light; all you who are worn down and worn out by pandemic fatigue; all you who are anxious, even terrified, because of the civil and social tensions in our nation. Have faith enough, hope enough, despair enough, foolishness enough at least to draw near to see for yourself. Jesus says to ask and it will be given you, to seek and you will find. In other words, he says that if you pray for him, he will come to you, and as far as I know, there is only one way to find out whether that's true, and that is to try it.



Pray for him and see if Jesus comes, in ways that only you will recognize. I was touched to receive a testimony to the truth of our faith in an email I received recently from a friend. He wrote: *As I'm approaching the first anniversary of my wife's death ... I'm actually starting to think about where do I go from here. I'm drawing strength from my faith, family and friends. I continue to set aside time each morning to read the day's scriptures and listen to wonderful commentary on those readings from the*

U.S. Bishops' website. I really enjoy that time with God.

Jesus says to follow him, to walk as he did into the world's darkness, to throw yourself away as he threw himself away for love of the dark world. And he says that if you follow him, you will end up on some kind of cross, but that beyond your cross and even on your cross you will also find your heart's desire -- the peace that passes all understanding.

And again, there is only one way to find out whether that's true, and that is to try it. Follow him and see. And if the going gets too tough, you can always back out. But, if you discover that "pearl of great price" in your discovery of Jesus, you may just find yourself, as Philip did, extending that same invitation of Jesus to others: *Come and see*. That's the only way our faith spreads – not by "keeping the faith," but by "sharing the faith." *Adeste fidelis*. O Come and behold him, born the king of angels. Speak to Jesus or be silent before him. In whatever way seems right to you and at whatever time, come to him with your empty hands. The great promise is that to come to him who was born at Bethlehem is to find coming to birth within ourselves something stronger and braver, gladder and kinder and holier, than ever we knew before, or than ever we could have known without him.



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