

Gospel Reflection Epiphany 2A

January 19, 2014

John 1:29-42

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

Reflection

Here's a story of gradual unfolding. Could John possibly have known the full purpose and meaning of his call in advance? Even with his remarkable gifts and insights, John had to learn, one day or moment at a time, just as we do. How did his awareness of his call unfold in action and in his heart and mind over time? How does anyone's?

John knew something we can all trust – that God is active in the world. Knowing this, he kept his eyes open, his heart open, paying attention to how the work of the Messiah might be revealed. Clearly he sensed that he had been called for a particular work at that particular time – but the rest of it unfolded day by day throughout his life – as it does with us.

In this brief excerpt from John's version of the story, we hear John describe his first recognition that Jesus was the one he had proclaimed was coming. He was given a moment of revelation after Jesus – whom he hadn't known from Adam – came up out of the baptismal water. The next day when he saw Jesus again, he knew he had to take the next step – to point his own disciples in Jesus' direction and away from himself. Then, in this Gospel, John fades from the scene and we learn nothing more about him. He knew that his next steps removed him irrevocably from center stage and that that was the right direction for him to go. From that point forward, the story of how John's remaining life and vocation for service unfolded is left to our imaginations. We are now invited to focus our attention on Jesus and his disciples – disciples who would continue along the road on which John had started them, but that forked off from his.

The unfolding continues as the two disciples accept Jesus' invitation to "Come and see", and, as Andrew brings his brother to Jesus and two disciples become three. Simon is given a name that will take the rest of his life to fit the person he has not yet become. Because they stayed on that road, often stumbling and falling and needing help to get back up, we, too, know what John knew. God is active in the world. Jesus came to reveal more and more of that loving action, but not often in the ways we expect. Each step we take as we, too, respond to the invitation to "Come and see" unfolds our part of the story a little more and helps us to understand a little more and have more to pass on to others we meet on the way.