

17 JANUARY 2021

Sunday Message

2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 2



Image in Grace Church, Chiang Mai, Thailand, of John the Baptist talking about Jesus

Today's Gospel reading (this week from the writing of the evangelist John) illustrates the fading of John the Baptist from the story. He had his own disciples, but when Jesus appears, he identifies Jesus to them as "the lamb of God", at which point two of his followers leave him and go to Jesus.

However, they appreciate Jesus simply as a rabbi ("teacher"). They ask where he lives, where his place of instruction is and spend the next few hours with him. One of these is identified as Andrew, who tells his brother Simon that "we have found the Messiah". On one level, this may be true, but in fact he is still speaking according to his own understanding of who the Messiah will be: it is also not quite true that he and his companion actually "found" Jesus – they were pointed in his direction by their previous master, John, and then were invited to spend time with Jesus. In the Fourth Gospel, it is usually Jesus who takes the initiative, and when Simon is presented to him, he tells Simon who he is and who he will be.

This episode shows the beginning of Jesus' forming a circle of disciples. He gives Simon his more familiar name of Cephas (Rock/Peter), which is associated in the Gospel tradition with his position as leader of the disciples: a change of name indicates a change of function or identity. To be a disciple is to answer Jesus' invitation to spend time with him and to learn from him. ■

REFLECT

The old Catechism defined faith as "a response to revelation". In the Bible, people do not find God: God always takes the initiative and communicates with human beings. In the Gospel, Jesus calls disciples and within the larger group he chooses an inner circle, as it were, of twelve apostles. Faith is essentially a positive response to the invitation of Jesus to each one of us. We can learn about the teachings, the dogmas of our faith, but this is not the same as believing.

From the titles the characters in John's Gospel story use for Jesus, we see at what level their appreciation of him really is. Sometimes we see it developing: sometimes a person can meet Jesus, even be healed by him, but not see him as anything more than a human being, albeit with extraordinary powers.

It is easy to identify ourselves or other people as Christian because we or they act in a certain way and hold certain values, but often these apply to anyone

SAY

Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All,
how can I love you as I ought?
(F.W. Faber)

LEARN

In the original Gospel text, the verb "to believe" can also be translated as "to trust".

In the Bible, a change of name signifies a change of function or responsibility.

Jesus as "the Lamb of God" is the one through whom human beings are now reconciled to God.



DO

Look at a picture of a person close to you. Think how your friendship and appreciation of that individual has developed over time: take that as the model for your relationship with Jesus.



who is trying to be a decent human being. There has to be more to it than that, and it is a lifetime's work. Just as we can keep discovering more about our spouse or friend, our understanding of who Jesus is and what he means to us must keep developing and deepening, or our relationship with him will wither and we will be left only with the outward practices. ■