

2B 2023 SFX

The Call

We are reading John's Gospel. We are at Bethany beyond the Jordan where John had seen the Spirit of God come down upon Jesus. And John sees Jesus as he passes and points to him, makes his own confession of faith: *"This is the Lamb of God."*

Two phrases struck me in today's Gospel. John stared hard at Jesus. Jesus looks hard at Simon Peter. It is the same word: sometimes translated simply as "looked at" or "beheld." But it is more than a fleeting glance. It is not so much "looking at" but looking into. Seeing into. So Jesus doesn't just glance at Simon Peter there is a sense that he knows him and understands something about him.

It is the same word in Mark's Gospel in the story of the Rich Young Man. He wasn't up to following Jesus, he loved his riches, but even so the text says: "Jesus, looking at him, loved him." (*Mark 10:21*)

We read in the Gospel of John that *"Jesus never needed evidence about anyone. He could tell what someone had in them."* Jesus was able to look into the hearts and souls of those who stood before him. Nathaniel would cry *"Rabbi, how do you know me?"*. The woman at the Well would shout to the townspeople *"Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did."*

When we pray, I think one of the first things we might do is not start with words, but in a moment of silence simply stand before Jesus. He looks at us and loves us. He knows our hearts. I love psalm 138/139:

O LORD, you search me and you know me,
you know my resting and my rising,
you discern my purpose from afar.
You mark when I walk or lie down,
all my ways lie open to you.

"Lord, you are closer to me than I am to myself" said St Augustine. You understand me better than I understand myself. You know me. You understand me. There is a line in the Psalms again: "You keep a record of my tears." The Lord knows, the Lord understands.

When Michaelangelo looked at a raw block of marble he could see within the block the figure that could be released if he would just pick up his chisel and hammer to set it free. He said: "I have only to chip away the rough walls that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to other eyes as mine see it."

Michelangelo could see what was within the block of stone. I think that is what the Lord does with us. He looks at us. And loves us. And says: I can see what you can become, I can see what I want you to be. That is what we call vocation: what we are called to be, what we are called to become.

He is the master craftsman. He looks at each one of us, just as he looked at Peter and bit by bit unlocks, reveals, who are to be. When we talk of vocation, we are not just talking about careers and jobs – although that is part of it. We start with understanding why I am here at all, why God has put me on this earth.

Quite often we find our vocation in what we are to be for others, as Eli was for Samuel, as Peter was to be a rock for the Church. What have I been put here to become? That I am here for a reason – *not least because I am loved*, here for a purpose – *not least to be a channel of life and love for others*.

John Henry Newman could say of his vocation:

“God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission – I never may know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.

Somehow I am necessary for His purposes, as necessary in my place as an Archangel in his. Yet I have a part in this great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught.”

We don't always know what God is calling us to be and do. We try to discern the right path. Newman suggests we may not know fully in this life, but looking back we will be able to see the role, the purpose, the role, the tasks, given to us alone.

Each of us is trying to become true to the person God has uniquely made us to be. A Rabbi once wrote that *“there is nothing that is not holy, only that which is waiting to be made holy.”* Perhaps there is some truth in that. Seeking its full potential, like a seed becoming a flower. Each of us is in the process of becoming. Your vocation and my vocation is the story of our waking up to who we are, of us getting in touch with the person God can see – deeper than our weaknesses, deeper than our sin. Each of us God's Temple, as Paul says, each of us God's work of art.

One day Michelangelo looked into an enormous piece of Marble that was rejected by artist after artist because it was flawed. And what did he see, and what emerged from this enormous block: David. Perhaps one of the most beautiful, powerful, graceful sculptures there is made out of something flawed.

We see the flaws in ourselves, but God sees something more. We understand something of our vocation every time we come to Mass. We meet his gaze in the Eucharist. Like Samuel “Speak Lord, your servant is listening” we say as we hear his word. And here at this place, around this altar we find our home. It is the closest place to heaven on this earth, the place where Jesus meets us, speaks to us, looks at us and loves us.

“Come and see” says Jesus.