

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jul 5th 2013

I have always been amazed by the subtle and not so subtle ways that God gets our attention! A little over five years ago, a dear friend sent me a greeting card which contained a ministry job position advertisement which she had cut from a Catholic, Jesuit magazine. She wrote a short note which read: “This job at Creighton University sounds like you.” I chuckled to myself when I read her note because I had a subscription to the same magazine. However, since I was very satisfied with the pastoral ministry work which I was involved in at the time, I wasn’t looking for a new position and I hadn’t read the advertisement.

My immediate reaction was to think: “Why did she send this to me? I’m not looking for another position.” I shrugged and put it down. However, after her note sat on my kitchen counter for a few days, I picked it up again and re-read the ad. While reflecting on the description of the position and studying the university ministry website, I began to feel a growing sense of excitement. As those feelings stirred within me I remember thinking, “God, are you involved in this?” I knew I needed to pay attention to my heart.

I prayed and reflected about the possibility that this might be an invitation from God and eventually decided to apply for the position. This week I am gratefully celebrating my fifth anniversary at Creighton. I believe that God worked through my friend. If I had seen the advertisement myself, I doubt if I would have thought, “This sounds like me.” But when I read the ad through her eyes, everything changed. God calls us in a variety of ways; we just need to pay attention.

In today’s Gospel, we read that: “As Jesus passed by, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him.” I marvel at what seems like Matthew’s immediate response to Jesus. Unlike me when I drew back and hesitated upon receiving the note from my friend, Matthew seemed so sure of himself when he “got up” and followed Jesus.

Or maybe he was like me and he had been reflecting for some time about this man called Jesus who everyone was talking about. Had he watched Jesus as he moved through the crowds; listened as he spoke to people with kindness; wept as he touched those who no one else would touch? My guess is that Matthew was ready to answer the call of Jesus because he had been paying attention to his heart.

Creighton is a Catholic, Jesuit University. Saint Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits discovered the grace and benefit of the practice of reflection. He learned how to prayerfully sense God’s movement

in his life by paying attention to both his thoughts and his feelings. He taught the community of men with whom he practiced outreach to the poor and disadvantaged, his method of reflecting about how God was directing his life. The Jesuit religious community learned to follow the call of God and continue to teach countless others to do the same through the spiritual exercises written by St. Ignatius.

How has God called you or me lately? God speaks through people, events, literature, relationships, prayer, fine arts, nature, scripture and countless other ways. Have you and I spent time recently reflecting and paying attention? Sometimes God's message is very subtle. Other times the message is very clear. If we put aside our everyday distractions and take time to reflect upon our lives, we might just hear God say: "This sounds like you. Come follow me."

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