

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Sep 21st 2015

“I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received...”

For most of my life, at least since college, one of my recurring prayers has been for help to live up to Paul's words in Ephesians 4:1. “Help me bring my faith into my everyday life, Lord.” “Help me to integrate what I believe with the way I act, with the small decisions I make.” “Make me a woman of integrity.” “Help me become who you created me to be.” Paul's implication is that the Christian baptismal call is a special call, an important mission not to be brushed off. But what exactly is the call, if we were to put words to it?

“[Jesus] said to [Matthew], ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him.”

Jesus utters the call to Matthew in its simplest form. It is simple to say, but not easy to do, especially considering that Jesus leads Matthew and the other disciples to the foot of the cross after that call. And yet, Matthew shows us all it takes to start: he got up. He answered. He didn't know what his part was yet. (As it turned out, he took nearly all the roles Paul lists in Ephesians 4:11-13.) Matthew's answer, like Mary's fiat, made Christ known to infinite others. He helped make it possible for us to answer the call, too, though we were not sitting with him on the side of the road when Jesus walked by.

Paul talks about a community of faith supporting each other in following Jesus' call. He writes that “grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift,” and lists different roles to which the faithful are called. It can be difficult to remember that the Church, the Body of Christ, needs every role to grow towards maturity of faith. Some of the roles sound small - Apostle sounds more important than being just one of the holy ones – but they are just as necessary. It is a “hierarchy” not in the sense of a corporate pyramid whose goal is to support the top, but in the sense of a healthy ecosystem whose every member shares life with the rest.

Sometimes “mountaintop experiences” are literally on top of mountains. I have had the same feeling-thought on top of Hearney Peak in the Black Hills of South Dakota; standing barefoot on the dry riverbed in the gorge of Toughannock Falls in Ithaca, New York; on top of Skellig Michael off the west coast of Ireland; and on the rocks at Hook's Head in Wexford. It is apparent to me when I am in the midst of the grandeur of God's creation that 1) I am very, very small and 2) I am immensely cherished. Psalm 19 says, “Not a word nor a discourse whose voice is not heard” in proclaiming God's glory. We may not all be evangelists like Matthew, but our voices matter in the everyday following of Christ's call.

Molly Mattingly-Creighton University's Campus Ministry