

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Nov 30th 2015

Feast of Saint Andrew, Apostle

Although today's gospel reading from Matthew narrates Andrew's calling for the first time, John's gospel brings that calling back to the very beginning of Jesus' public life and that narrative presents us with some remarkable insights into discipleship. Andrew was already a disciple not of Jesus, but of John the Baptist, yet he left the Baptist to become a disciple of Jesus. There is leaving and leaving. In the Eucharistic chapter of John's gospel Jesus spoke of the need to eat his body and drink his blood and a number of disciples left him, they quit. Andrew's leaving John the Baptist was not a quitting, it was a moving on.

He and his fellow disciple John were attracted to that person the Baptist had pointed to as the Lamb of God. They were not attracted to his teaching ?Jesus had not yet started teaching, but to his person. They did not ask Jesus what do you teach?, but where do you stay? An attraction to the person of Jesus is at the root of discipleship, even as a pondering on his teaching helps deepening that attraction.

Another characteristic of Andrew's discipleship is his desire ?indeed his urge? to communicate, to share with others his radically new experience. Andrew could not wait to tell his brother Simon about his encounter with that Jesus of Nazareth. It was an encounter that left a mark in him, as it left one in his fellow disciple. John will later in his gospel remember that it was around the tenth hour. We tend to remember the time and circumstances of events that have left a mark in our lives. That calling changed their lives. Andrew and John might have become successful fishermen and merchants, but we would never have heard of them. Of the rich man who balked at following Jesus we do not even know the name.

Baptism is our calling to discipleship. If baptized as children, at some point we are challenged to own and embrace that baptismal calling, to let it mark our lives. Because this is usually a gradually developing process, rather than an instant happening, we may not be able to remember that it was about the tenth hour, but we will realize that it has changed the direction and the meaning of our lives.

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