

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jan 5th 2018

Memorial of Saint John Neumann, Bishop

I love the story in today's gospel by John telling about Jesus' dialogue with Nathanael. It makes me imagine the wonder and awe that these men must have felt as Jesus came and called each of them one-by-one to join him. I cannot imagine the overwhelming spirit that they must have felt.

But, as I reflect upon the readings of today, my attention is pulled back to Christmas and the Christmas season. I think about what the season means to me and not just what the day means. It seems that every year I scramble to get everything ready for Christmas and it goes by in a blur. Then, after a day or two with family and friends, I return to a routine – which most days also seem like a blur – and sometimes I have forgotten about Christmas all together.

The end of the Christmas season will come with our celebration of the Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord. Over the next couple of days, I plan to spend some time reflecting on what the Christmas season meant to me. Was I present (mindful) in the season and not just a day or two? What are the messages that God has called me to receive during the Christmas season? And, can I carry those messages with me into the coming days?

As I am writing this reflection, it is becoming clear that I may need an additional resolution to those I made a few days ago. To add to my New Year's intentions to eat better and exercise, this self-care resolution has to do with being mindful. It is all too easy to go through the daily grid just to get to the end. I believe there is real meaning in most everything we do throughout the day, if we just stop for a minute to recognize what is there. I do not want to have a goal of just getting through the day. I would like to experience meaning and purpose of each day as the day is unfolding.

These thoughts bring me back to the Christmas season. The goal of Christmas is not to get to Christmas day – but, rather, to find meaning and purpose in the season. Just the same, the goal of every day is not to get to the end, but to find meaning and purpose as the day unfolds. Thinking about this reminds me of the Jesuit charism, contemplative in action. Being a contemplative in action means that we pause during the day and think about what we have done that day through reflection. This gives us an opportunity to find where the Holy Spirit is working through us and where he is calling us to action. The Examen prayer is a wonderful example of a tool we can use to become a contemplative in action. I guess it looks like I have found a “new” New Year's resolution!

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