

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jan 5th 2019

Memorial of Saint John Neumann, Bishop

Today's gospel describes how Jesus recruited some of his disciples. Can you imagine what that would look like today? Would Jesus be using social media to try to get us to follow him? Can you picture videos posted on Facebook or YouTube?

But Jesus did not use anything so high tech, he simply said "Follow me." And Phillip did and after disparaging Nazareth, Nathanael did too. "Follow me" and people who were searching for something more, did. And many people continue to try and follow Jesus today.

However, I have found that following Jesus is not a simple task. I wonder if Phillip and Nathanael ever doubted their casual consent when the going got tough. I know I do. Somedays it seems so easy and other days I think, "you have got to be kidding me."

When I think about Jesus and his path, the first reading comes to mind. As Jesus' disciples, we are called to love and to love everyone. How is that even possible? I have so many excuses....and too many other demands on my time already. However, the first reading is very clear: "we should love one another". But how do we do that and continue to so? That was very puzzling to me until I remembered the week I spent at Sinsinawa, Wisconsin.

One summer my eleven-year-old daughter, Emma, and I spent a week at the Sinsinawa Dominicans' Motherhouse to help with an Art Week they were offering to children from surrounding communities. That week was so holy, so peaceful. The nuns were so loving towards us. Trying to follow Jesus was not complicated that week.

On the six-hour drive home, I kept pondering why the nuns seemed to be so grounded, so full of love towards us and others. After several hours, I remembered they gathered three times a day as a community to pray. Three times a day their attention was pulled back towards God. Three times a day, seven days a week, week in and week out. No wonder the nuns seemed calmer, more at peace. When you are reminded three times a day about what is truly important, it can be easier to follow Jesus. That pattern must have been what made it easier to be as kind and gracious as the nuns were to Emma and me.

So, for my New Year's Resolution, I am going to try to carve out three times each day to circle back to God. If this practice can become a pattern in my life, it will help me follow Jesus.

Happy New Year to you! I pray that you find what works for you to help you "love one another" as today's first reading compels us to.

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