

### Homily 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Year B 2024

Deep down we want to live like Jesus even though deep down it seems far too difficult unless we recognise that Jesus was as human as any of us. He could not be our saviour unless he was fully human. His divinity, however, meant that his death and resurrection was not just for one human being but for all human beings ever born or to be born. Philip Cunningham paints this image of Jesus:

*Jesus grew up in the midst of family, friends and fellow villagers. Like his father before him, he pursued the trade of a woodworker, but there were also animals to care for, most likely fields to cultivate, bartering to do, all the daily tasks that make up peasant life... He was part of his world, not set apart from it. Later we will see him constantly surrounded by people. This did not mark a change in his lifestyle; he had lived that way for thirty years or more. Frequent scenes will show Jesus at table with disciples, even enemies, engaged in the banter that characterises such gatherings. These were continuations of the "family" meals he had been part of during his hidden years.*

The readings focus on being called by God so, what does this mean?

Jonah, Simon and Andrew, James and John all responded to the call which Mark presents as an invitation to drop everything, change direction, and follow where God is leading. We know, however, that doing this can take us where we don't want to go, where we never expected to go. It's tempting to think that the call of God and the invitation of Christ apply only to certain kinds of people e.g., someone who is profoundly holy or feels compelled to become a priest or religious. To avoid responding, we are tempted to tell ourselves, "That could never be me," and shrug it off.

Jesus never made those kinds of distinctions. He chose humble fisherman tending their nets and said plainly, "Come after me."

The gospel is addressed to all of us, no matter who we are or what we do. It is a call that attracts, challenges, invites and redeems. It summons us to sacrifice, surrender, to bear witness, to pray and to love God and love our neighbour as Jesus did, with profound gratitude, humility and trust. Although far from easy, Mark presents the call as one that is made to others - we are not alone. The apostles were called in pairs: Simon and Andrew, James and John.

Being a follower of Christ, therefore, is not a solitary act. It involves many others. The early Christians understood the call to be a celebration of Christ's life, death and resurrection in community. On their first missionary journey they went out in pairs. They supported each other. They prayed together, shared the Eucharist together, travelled together and preached together. They were persecuted together, martyred together, found resolve, hope, grace, consolation and renewal together. In community, they found sustenance and endurance during times of great joy, and great suffering. Many centuries later, so do we.

In following Jesus, we continue what they began. That first call of the fishermen, two by two, has echoed around the world, many times over. Today, we gather in community, to share our love for God, our love for one another and our passion for the gospel message. We proclaim what we believe, and we lift our eyes to a miracle: Christ present in the bread and wine. We, too, are invited to leave our old ways. We are challenged to follow another way, to do something new.

Have you heard the call? Are you listening?