

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday (B)

14<sup>th</sup> January 2018

‘Remain with Him’

1Sam 3: *Samuel was lying in the sanctuary of the Lord* Ps 39: *Here I am O Lord, I come to do your will*  
1Cor 6: *the body is not meant for fornication*  
Jn 1: 35–42: *“you are to be called ‘Cephas,’ meaning ‘Rock.’ ”*

We have just a few weeks, this year, between the Christmas season and the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday will be on 14<sup>th</sup> February this year — Valentine’s Day, ... unfortunately for some! So we have just these 5 Sundays in Ordinary Time between now and then, to begin hearing of the early part of Our Lord’s ministry in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Mark’s Gospel, and this weekend, as an introduction to that, some verses from the first chapter of John.

In these few verses, we learn so much about the impact Jesus had within a short while on those who encountered Him. At the very first meeting, Andrew and the other disciple remain with Jesus “for the rest of that day.” There is something immediately engaging about Our Lord, that these early apostles are grabbed by. Jesus goes from being called by Andrew, at first, ‘Rabbi’ (‘teacher’), and then by the next day, ‘Messiah’ (that is, the ‘Christ’). This is a huge claim by Andrew, and yet he is convinced of it, and fetches his brother Simon (Peter) to meet Our Lord, too. But it is by John the

Baptist that He is referred to by a higher title still: “Lamb of God,” indicating that Jesus is to be the sacrificial lamb in a new covenant with God, a new Passover. That title for Jesus, of course, we acknowledge in each and every celebration of the Holy Mass, as we ourselves gaze on Jesus before Communion: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.”

As we listen to the Gospel, and as we hear what impact Our Lord had in those first days, we need to let Him gaze on us in that same way as He did to Peter: loving him, seeing his gifts, renaming him, and giving him a mission. That attentive gaze of Jesus is one which reaches in to Peter’s heart, and reaches in to our heart too. Have we let that loving attention of Jesus be acknowledged in our lives? Have we given Jesus the time and space to excite in us a real Passion for our faith? If we have really let Jesus speak to our hearts, then we would want to spend more time with Him. We would want to, as the Gospel said, “remain with Him the rest of that day.”

We need to ask ourselves, then, as practising Christians: are we actually allowing the Lord to draw us to Himself in an increasingly close way? Do we allow Him

access to our hearts and minds every day, several times a day? As we start this year, 2018, we want to make sure that we give Him the greatest chance of coming close to us. He is true God, made true man ... but He does not force Himself on us. He asks us to bring ourselves to Him, bodily, whether in the silence of prayer, or physically, into the Church to be with Him in His real presence at Mass and in the Tabernacle. Just as Andrew, Simon, and the other unnamed disciple made their way to be with Jesus where He lived, so we need to make our way into that place of prayer, often. We cannot expect the Lord to do all the running. He constantly invites us, calls to our hearts, draws us by His love and goodness. But He can't make us be with Him. He desires it so much, but He will not force it. He wants us to love Him, come to Him, remain the rest of that day — the rest of our lives — with Him.

So, as 2018 begins, and maybe we have been looking at some New Year's resolutions, where does prayer and faith come in to those resolutions of living a better life? The most obvious ways are to ensure that we spend some time each and every day with the Lord. The most perfect way, of course, is to strive to beat Mass more often. If we are not making it to

Sunday Mass each and every Sunday, then that is the greatest priority, without question: to be here in the presence of the Lord Jesus, hearing His Word, kneeling and adoring Him in the Holy Eucharist, receiving Him devoutly, if we are able, in Holy Communion. This is the priority, and to make that absolute commitment to 100% attendance at Sunday Mass is a *must* for every Catholic. But for those for whom Sunday Mass is already a given, I would say: work towards a daily attendance at Mass. Our Lord is here in Mass, really and truly present, every single day. Work towards coming daily if you are able. If you are retired, or work a variety of hours that give you some daytime hours off, then try to come once or twice a week to weekday Mass, and make that offering of your time to Jesus, who will reward you abundantly. He made the ultimate sacrifice, on the Cross, as the lamb of God slain for our sins: may we truly offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, especially in devotion to Him at Mass, and make 2018 a blessed year, and year of new and close encounter with our loving Lord. He will change our lives, if we come to remain closely with Him. His presence, His gaze, His indwelling, will bring a peace that the world cannot give.