

Our readings this weekend, when, once again, we begin the Ordinary Time of the Year, prepare us to live our vocation as Christians, by looking at three aspects of what it means to be a disciple, i.e. the dynamics, the dignity and the drama of discipleship.

It began with the call of Samuel where God called young Samuel in the middle of the night, - while in the Gospel we hear Jesus invite Andrew and his companion to “Come and See”, leading Andrew to bring and introduce Peter to Jesus.

Similar dynamics are still at work, as is witnessed to by the hymn “Here I am Lord” with the words: “I have heard You calling in the night”, but most of us have been brought into our relationship with Christ through the efforts of others. We were baptised as infants and brought to Church by others. We grew up in the Church and were taught the truths of our faith by others. It is others who encouraged us to live up to our faith, and so it is through others that God called us as surely as he called Samuel in the middle of the night. There have been ‘Andrew’s’ in the life of each one of us, and to continue that dynamic is one of the aspects of discipleship we are called to.

Another aspect is the dignity of our discipleship. What did Jesus see in Peter and in Andrew? He saw them as they were, of course, but He also saw what they could become. When we look at people, we often see them only for what they are right now, but Jesus saw more. He saw their potential. Just as a sculptor looking at a rock can visualise the image it can be, so Jesus looks at us, and through the Church He shows us what we can become. That’s the dignity of our discipleship.

And then there is the drama of discipleship, in how we give witness to the teaching of Christ. St. Paul is writing **about this** in today’s 2nd reading. We live, as did the people of Corinth, in a sex-saturated society, where the dignity of the body and its sexuality gets trivialised.

You hear it said sometimes that the Church is pre-occupied with sex, but the truth is that it is our society which is pre-occupied with sex. Sex is the subject of humour, of discussion, gossip, entertainment, novels, movies, news, all the media, and advertising. You cannot watch TV for even a short while without encountering sexual innuendo in some form or other. The proliferation of ‘experts’ on matters of sex and books written about so-called ‘sexual liberation’ have all left a society in shambles and families broken apart. People have not only **not been liberated**, but are rather trapped, addicted, driven, paralysed by the erotic.

St. Paul, in that 2nd reading is teaching us about sexual responsibility and sexual integrity. Sex is not a demon. It is a part of human life, - but only a part. There are other, more important dimensions to what a person is, - and the most important is our vocation as Christians. Every part of our life needs to be integrated in that vocation. If Jesus is not Lord of every part of our life, we can end up as a spiritual Jekyll and Hyde. We pray one way and live another.

Our witness to the world is that the sexual expression of love belongs to those who have made a public lifelong commitment to each other in what we, as Catholics, call marriage. Outside of that marriage, the sexual expression of love is irresponsible and wrong. That is the immorality to which St. Paul refers, and it is as common today as it was in Corinth. However, today it has become an industry. And today, society holds up the illusion that sex without responsibility, sex without commitment, sex without marriage, is somehow a key to happiness.

Maturity comes not from sexual experience alone, but from the commitment, the fidelity, the loyalty, the family life it was designed by God to imply. Not only has sex without marriage **not** brought happiness, - it has led to the use, abuse and distortion of people’s lives.

In this kind of world, we, disciples of Christ, are meant to bring a message of hope and respect for sexuality. We believe that our bodies are more than biological units. They are temples of the Holy Spirit. We can glorify God in our bodies by how we live. Here, at Mass, the Church calls us to the truth that we don’t have to settle for the lowest but can aspire to the highest.

Every Sunday, we are called to live in the image of God we were created to be. We can be peacemakers, we can respect the commitment of marriage (our own and that of others), we can honour the sanctity of human life and love, we can learn to reconcile, to forgive, to build a civilization based on the Gospel. The **drama** of our discipleship is to deflate the illusions of our society about what constitutes self-worth, about the purpose of sexuality, and about the tyranny of our emotions.

At every Mass, the Lord looks at us, as He did at Peter and Andrew. He sees us as we are, and each Sunday He shows us once more what we can become. The dignity and drama of our discipleship is not to settle for what we are, but to look to what each of us can become in Christ.