

January 18, 2015 Second Sunday of Year at St. Matthew's Cathedral

During World War II there was a poster displayed in post offices and public buildings that I remember very vividly as a young boy. It depicted Uncle Sam, a goateed man with top hat and star on its broad blue band. **His** look is stern, his right arm and finger point at the viewer. Under it are the words, I WANT YOU for the U. S.ARMY. ENLIST NOW. Walking by it, I found his pointed finger and eyes following me. I was fascinated by that but too young to enlist.

In calling disciples Jesus could be in a way like Uncle Sam. He would come upon men fishing or at the customs house and simply say with a commanding voice, Follow Me! At other times as in today's gospel Jesus is more invitational. When John the Baptist pointed him out to two disciples, they went and asked Jesus where he lived. He answered with the welcoming, Come and you will see. So they went and stayed the day with him.

Today's scripture readings relate the special vocation of Samuel and of Simon Peter and Andrew. Not everyone is so dramatically called by name or given a new name the way they were. Yet these are reminders that God calls all of us to the primary vocation to be disciples of Jesus, striving to grow into his full stature. Our first vocation is holiness, which means being set aside for dedication, sacrifice, worship, and union with God.

Jesus is the incarnate Holy One of God. In the Old Testament we hear God saying to his chosen people, Be holy as I am holy. We are inclined to put that aside thinking it an impossible goal, knowing our inclination toward sin and disobedience. Are we though underestimating the power of grace and the love of Jesus to give us new life in God? We can grow in holiness by putting on the mind of Jesus in his self-emptying, in his coming to serve, rather than be served. However there is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle, as the Catechism says. .

That universal call to holiness applies equally to whatever state of life we are in, whether single, married, priesthood, or consecrated life. The chaste single life is just as authentic a vocation as any of the others. We know God said it is not good for man to be alone, so the majority of people seek to find a life-partner for companionship and intimate expressions of love, and openness to new life. The married state is a noble vocation with its challenge to the couple to grow out of selfishness by their vowed commitment to care for one another, in sickness and health, in richness or poorness, and in good times and bad times.

After the terrible casualties of World War I, there were few eligible men for women to marry in England. A woman once lamented to her parents and a friend, "I want a man and a family and not be a spinster with only the scriptures for my comfort." There is also the story of a rabbi who was chided by his brethren for not marrying. When they urged him to look for a bride, he responded, "Let others propagate the race. My love is the Torah."

Whatever our state in life, we should be inspired and sustained by love of the Sacred Scriptures. That is especially so for those called to priesthood and consecrated life. The Word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two edged sword. By meditating

and ruminating on it, we can know Jesus personally and through him know God our Father and Creator. That is the work of the Holy Spirit who has been poured into our hearts so that we cry, Abba, Father, to our loving God.

There are four words in today's readings I urge you to carry away to let them, as it were, ferment in your mind and heart: Jesus asks each of us, 'What are you looking for?' You ask him: "Where do you live, Lord?" so that I can stay with you. Then like Samuel you are ready to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening;" and add with the psalmist, "Here am I, Lord. I come to do your will." Let those words be like yeast raising you to a new and fuller life in God.

As we turn our attention to the altar, we as church, as members of the body of Christ, offer to God the perfect sacrifice, his gift of his beloved Son, our Savior and Lord of our life. To our gracious and loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be honor, praise, worship and holy obedience, now and forever. AMEN