



The Gospel of Vocation

This column is adapted from a homily given on January 17 in the parish and missions of La Pine.

The Word of God confronts us today with the Gospel of *Vocation*, a word taken from the Latin *vocare*, “to call.” On the day of our baptism each of us receives a specific calling from God—a vocation—to be ourselves before Him, to be holy as only we can be. In the first reading, “The Lord *called* to Samuel” when he was just a boy—and he called him more than once. In the Gospel Jesus calls the two men trailing him to “come and see” who He is—and who they can become in His company.

Jesus’ words do not pass away. He invites you to “come and see” the person God made *you* to be. Samuel was created to be Samuel, not Eli. Simon was created to be Peter, not Paul. You were created to be yourself, and no one else.

This is “Good News” for us who often find ourselves deeply dissatisfied with who we are, with where our life has led us. Whether you’re six or sixty, haven’t you repeatedly been tempted to wish you could be someone else—someone more intelligent, more popular, more successful—someone you’re *not*? The *Gospel* of Vocation assures me that deciding who I am and who I want to be is not just about me. As St. Paul puts it in the second reading, “you are not your own.”

Someone Else is vitally interested in the path of your life and wishes to walk it with you from first step to last.

In today’s Gospel a deceptively simple question from Jesus opens up that path. “What are you looking for?” he asks. “What do you seek with all your heart? What is your heart’s desire?”

There is no easy answer, for our hearts are filled with desires beyond counting. If we had to choose just one, which would it be? That is what Jesus is asking: what do you find when you search the depths of your heart?

“If you discover the deepest desire of your heart,” Bishop John Corriveau contends, “you will discover *God’s desire for you*.” That desire came to perfect expression on the Cross. You have only to look at the Crucifix to find God’s desire for you represented with unsurpassable, unmistakable clarity. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Isn’t Bishop Corriveau right? Doesn’t God’s desire for you correspond with your desire for Him? Isn’t this the deepest possible desire of your heart? What greater desire could your heart ever hold than that the Eternal God take flesh for you, suffer and die for you, and rise to share his life with you forever? Your vocation comes to life when your desire for God meets up with His desire for you.

The fisherman in today’s Gospel had no desire to become a shepherd, but when Jesus looked into Simon’s eyes he saw

Cephas. With this new name came his vocation to be Peter, to be the Rock upholding the faith of the flock Jesus entrusted him to shepherd. It was not a vocation Simon expected, for Simon did not think he had it in him to be Peter. "Depart from me, Lord," he said to Jesus, "for I am a sinful man." But in time he came around: "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus looked into Simon's eyes and saw Cephas. When He looks into your eyes, whom does He see?