

THE EMMAUS SERIES

2nd Sunday Year B

1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19

1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-30

John 1:35-42

“Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit”

After his baptism in the Jordan, Jesus set out on his great mission. Throughout this year, we follow the course of his mission in readings from the gospel of Mark. The gospel readings of this Sunday (from John) and next Sunday (from Mark) invite us to set out on this journey of discovery as disciples of the Lord. Just as he called the first disciples, the Saviour has a personal call for each one of us to become his ‘disciple’. The recovery of the long neglected theme of ‘discipleship’ is one of the signs of new vitality on today’s Church. The word, ‘disciple’, occurs many times in the New Testament. Why was it so important for the first Christians? Discipleship, the privileged relationship one can have with a great and inspiring leader, has been an important factor in the shaping of human history. The leader’s vision and commitment call forth admiration and confidence – the lives of their followers are changed, and they face life with a new inspiration and hope. Clearly, those who made up the communities of the New Testament experienced this kind of relationship with the Risen Lord. Today’s reading from John’s gospel helps us to understand how we too can have this kind of relationship with the Saviour.

Many factors are at work, as disciples come to meet and appreciate their leader. Those who met the Saviour in today’s reading, we are told, have been ‘disciples’ of John the Baptist. It is his selfless witness that leads them to ‘follow’ Jesus. In the gospel story, of course, the Baptist represents the faith and expectations of the Old Testament. Knowledge of the great themes of the old Israel’s hopes is fundamental if we are to understand the message and vision of the Saviour. Closer to home, it is often unselfish expressions of faith, hope and love on the part of other members of a vital Christian community that are important in our coming to know the Saviour.

It is important that we seek that incomparable intimacy with the Saviour that is our birthright through baptism – not relating to him as a remote figure, but confidently sharing our lives, in all their complex tangles, with him. Today’s story of the two disciples encourages this trust and confidence. Encouraged by the Baptist, they approached Jesus; he gave them a warm welcome – ‘Come and see’; and they spent the rest of the day with him.

As disciples of inspiring leaders, many men and women have had the experience of finding themselves, and giving a meaning to their lives. We can look forward to that same experience, if we accept the Lord’s invitation to share our lives with him. Today’s reading reminds us that Peter found his true self in the new name Jesus gave him. The Scriptures reflect the fact that for many cultures a personal name points to the mysterious identity of each person. For the wisdom of Christian faith, this personal identity has its origin in the eternal designs of God. Samuel was called by name. Simon’s unique place in the plan of God was declared in the new name Jesus gave him. He still had much to learn, but the path that was to lead to his eternal glory had been made clear.

John Thornhill sm