

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – January 14, 2024

“Teacher, where do you stay?” What Andrew and John ask Jesus on first meeting Him seems a trivial detail in light of so many other questions they must have had. John the Baptist had just named Him the Lamb of God. We know the term, but what did it mean to them, who had never seen Jesus before? Was this the Messiah they awaited? How had they missed His coming? What would He do? Perhaps Andrew and John had so much to ask they couldn’t find the words to say it all: and so they stammer out this apparently minor question: Where do you stay?

But nothing in John’s Gospel is ever trivial. “Where do you stay?” means something like **“where can we see you again? How can we know where to find you?”** And Jesus’ first words to them are also a question: **“What are you looking for?”** This question, worded in slightly different ways, punctuates John’s gospel – here at the beginning, with the hopeful search for the Savior of Israel; later in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus asks the soldiers who come to arrest him: “Who is it you want?”; and finally, when the grieving Mary Magdalene encounters the risen but unrecognized Jesus in the Garden, and he asks her: “Why are you weeping? Who is it you are looking for?”

Here, Jesus answers their question, “Where do you stay?”, with an invitation: “Come, and you will see” – in the same way that Eli counseled young Samuel to say “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” The same God who spoke to Samuel says to the first Apostles, and says to us: **“This is just the beginning. Follow me, and you will be leaving the familiar and the convenient. You will hear my Word, even when it makes demands that cost you. You will not first see everything and so decide whether to follow; you must take the risk to follow in order to see.”** Later, of course, they will understand that to follow also means the Cross; to stay with the Lamb of God means to share in His sacrifice.

Where does Jesus stay? He is present in the Tabernacle, in the Eucharist, in the other sacraments, in His Word in the Scriptures; but that is not all. Paul's words make it clear: "your bodies are members of Christ; you are a temple of the Holy Spirit." God dwells in each person, made in the divine image. It is perhaps the most decisive, enduring – and demanding – gifts that Christian faith has given to the world: this conviction that every person is made in the image of God and has equal, inviolable dignity. It can be hard to recognize Christ in the faces of those we do not know or do not like. And sometimes, it can be hard to recognize the Lord present in the mirror ... that Jesus stays with ME, in my best moments and in my worst, when I follow Him well and when I leave Him out of my thoughts and actions. But the patient love that forgave Peter and that endured the Cross will certainly never abandon us, either.

Not long ago, in the Christmas story, we heard the angel invite Joseph: Do not be afraid; and that when Joseph awoke, he did as the Lord commanded him. Each new day is also a new opportunity to do as Joseph did ... to awake and follow where God leads us, even when we cannot see the end clearly, to find out where Jesus is staying that day. Come, and you will see, Jesus promises; and we want to answer each new day with Samuel's sincerity: "Speak, Lord; your servant is listening."