

JANUARY 14, 2018

Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Reading 1 [1 SM 3:3B-10, 19](#)

Responsorial Psalm [PS 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10](#)

R. (8a and 9a) **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

Reading II [1 COR 6:13C-15A, 17-20](#)

Gospel [JN 1:35-42](#)

John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" — which translated means Teacher —, "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" — which is translated Christ —. Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" — which is translated Peter.

HOMILY:

I had a nice visit with my father, brother and sister-in-law, and five of their seven children—all daughters—during the week after New Year's. In the course of our visit, the topic of my homilies came up, which proves a fact: there's no place safe from homily critics! Specifically, my niece Alexis asked a pointed question: "why am I not mentioned more often in your homilies?" When I assured her that, as the very role model of Christian living, I needed to correct this homiletic failure, she agreed. Here goes:

As with this visit, and with each recent previous visit, it's not long before their ogre-uncle will say, after my 8-hour drive to their home, something like this: "Put the cell phones away—the humans are here!" While I have tended to get an insolent look of annoyance from Alexis (and her sisters!), I find a quick, willing and relieved ally from my sister-in-law, who interprets my command in her terms, with something like: "Yes, uncle Scott drove a long way to get here—put away the phones." Maybe it's pride, but it is pleasing to be valued above a piece of electronics!

However, if I really want to annoy my nieces (and sometimes uncles do!), instead of the "humans are here" quote, I have, in the past, simply said to them, as they stare at their phone or computer screen, "What are you looking for?" At first, they'll say something like, "this funny video," or "this Facebook post" or "this photo so-and-so downloaded." After a few minutes, comes the next question, like the first, "Now what are you looking for?" More claims for what they needed to see, right then. Again, "Now what are you looking for?" Less enthusiasm for the question. After the fourth or fifth repetition of the question, usually the phone is put down—at least for a while.

As it turns out, my questions to my nieces are a covert, hidden homily, pressing to consider their endless searching and what is it that they are looking for, endlessly looking for. Why “preach this homily?” Of course, because I love them. Having lived some 54 years now, I have uncovered the truth of life—and it is about searching. It is the single reason for life, which is why the cell phone, the tablet, and the computer is so seductive. They seem to fit the bill completely—the perfect tools to search! However, in the end, out of love, I want my nieces to seek something worthy their search! With this precious gift of life, all-too-often shorter than we could imagine, what will be the object and aim of our searching? And, while in our youth, when we seem to have unlimited time to live, we might not regret aimless searching for videos of cats riding bicycles or trick basketball shots, later on we know how precious is each radiant moment of life and how, as we search for a use for that moment, we’ll want to choose something worthy of our time.

It’s for that reason that, when asking my nieces “what are you looking for?” I choose to quote only the best, the Author of Life, who, in today’s gospel, asks THE question of each of our human lives, when he says to Peter and Andrew, followers of John the Baptist, “what are you looking for?” For, like others in the crowds, they have come out into the desert, looking at the radiant vision of the holy man John the Baptist. Then, when John directs them away from himself with the words, “Behold, the Lamb of God,” the gospel tells us, “The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus,” the next object of their searching. It is then that Jesus asks them the question of all our lives, not “who are you looking for?” but “what are you looking for?” In this, he presses the disciples to consider the current object of their fascination and WHAT it is about him that has caught their attention. Jesus is calling them to what is called discernment—to a deep reflection at to the attractions of their hearts. So, because I love you as well, I pose Jesus’ question to you: “What are you looking for?” Across the endless clicks on your computer, the endless reaching for your TV remote, the searching on your cell phone, the endless driving, shopping, eating, drinking, racing, out of concern and discernment, I ask you to consider, each time, “what are you looking for?”

While each click, each search might deliver a temporary distraction, know that you have been created, not for temporary distractions, but for lasting joy. And, as the great St. Augustine taught, our hearts will remain restless until they rest in God, the one who is the single and worthy end of our search. So, in the midst of your next searching, which is the very nature of how we were created, I hope you can have the courage to ask, “what am I looking for?” The answer is that same one given by John the Baptist to the searching disciples in the desert, the true and singularly satisfying end of each of our searching hearts: “Behold, the Lamb of God.” That’s what I really need—God.

For, while we spend our lives in endless searching, we will remain frustrated until we find that for which we, created in God’s image, have been made to seek: the God who created us with God-sized holes that only He can fill. Enough frustration, when satisfaction awaits us! So, today, “Behold, the Lamb of God,” the single-satisfying end of our searching hearts, is right here, ready to fill us. That’s what we’re looking for—and, here at this altar, God’s searching too—searching for you.