

Year B, 2 Epiphany

January 12, 2018

✠ In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

I have had friends and colleagues share their “call” story with me. Some of them were quite dramatic – I have friends who say they actually heard God’s voice say to them, “I want you to become a priest.” I have friends who say they sensed a call to the priesthood early on in life, but spent years ducking from it – kind of pulling a full Jonah, who tried to flee from God’s call by sailing across the ocean. My own sense of call wasn’t as dramatic...in fact, my own call was more of a slow, building awareness that I was being called to the vocation of priest. There were no lights or sounds or special effects. No burning bush that was never consumed...no cosmic voice calling to me. In fact, it was the voice of friends and fellow parishioners that I heard...yes, God speaks through us.

The reality is that everyone perceives or experiences God’s call in some uniquely different way. And, I’ve said from the pulpit on many occasions, that we are all called. Jesus calls each of us to some ministry. And that call is not a generic, general call to the public. No...each of us is called, specifically...by name, even...to a ministry or work or task that is uniquely suited to our unique and special gifts. Simple gifts...gifts of leadership...gifts of teaching...gifts of hospitality...

And notice that Jesus didn’t call out into the crowd looking for volunteers. Can you imagine the response if Jesus had addressed the disciples in this way: *Excuse me. I’m Jesus, and if anyone is interested in following me, I’m having an informational meeting at 1:00 on Tuesday, so if you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask.*

No, the calls were unique...the calls were directed. And I wonder if Nathanael, in this morning's Gospel reading, didn't have the same reaction we sometimes have. Nathanael almost seems to be saying: *Wait...how do you know me? Why would you even ask me to follow you?*¹ And Jesus responds to Nathanael, *I saw you...I know you...* Jesus responds to each of us... *I see you...I know you...I need you.*

Now, I see some scoffers out there. I know what you're thinking - *Jeff – I don't have any kind of special gift.* This is one of those few times when I'll put my pastoral approach to the side and say, *you're wrong.* You just haven't found your gift, yet. Or, you know your gift, you just don't now how it applies to the Church and to ministry. We are all called, by name, to a ministry that is uniquely suited to our unique and special gifts.

And you've already answered a call. You've already answered a tough call - each of you, except for those of you who are here under duress, each of you responded to something that called you here, and calls you back here... to this place... to this faith community. Over the past few years I've asked some of you to share on Sunday morning what called you here...and why you chose to make this place church family. All the stories you have shared have been beautiful...they've been quirky...but each story shared the common thread that you were called here.

Hopefully you each received a half sheet with two questions on it: "What called you to St. Alban's?" and "Why do you keep coming back?" I invite you, at some point between now and the offertory, to jot down a short answer to those two questions - unless you put your name on the paper, the answers will be completely anonymous – and put your paper in the offering plate when it comes by. And what I'd like to do is share some of your answers in the

¹ John 1:48

newsletter...perhaps in SAM... on our Facebook page, to share with the world and each of us, what is good and vital about St. Alban's.

And then, what I'd like *you* to do, is share your answers with someone – a friend, a neighbor. And think about his...we tell our friends about a great movie...a good restaurant...we recommend this garage for excellent, affordable car maintenance or that trustworthy stockbroker... We tell a friend about our great hairdresser... or go to this place for an amazing massage... why can't we share with our friends a good place to be spiritually fed? And that sharing becomes an invitation...a call. *We have something good here. Come and see.*

Jesus is alive here. The Holy Spirit is alive here. God is present here. We are a people of faith that are making a difference in our community. We have something good here...and it is worth sharing.

Come and see.

AMEN

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam