

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
(1Samuel 3:3-10.19 / John 1:35-42)
14.01.2018

What do you want? Where do you live?

In our Gospel reading today there are two important questions. The first one is from Jesus to the disciples: “What do you want?”

This questions is addressed to us today: what do we look for? What is our goal in life? What do we aim at? What do we really want?

We have to be honest. The point is not to give the answer we think Jesus expects from us or the answer that will make us look smart or good, but the answer that comes from our hearts. What do I really want?

Jesus’ question is not a way for him to learn something he does not already know. It is a way for us to become more aware of the force which is directing our lives and where this force is leading them.

Jesus wants us to know what our lives are about. We have to remember that our lives are shaped and directed by our desires, we become what we want. Abraham Heschel reminds us that “a person is what he aspires for.” (*Man is not Alone*, p. 259). For his part, Miroslav Volf warns us: “Our hopes are the measure of our greatness. When they shrink, we ourselves are diminished.” (*Against the Tide*, p. 41)

Here lies the problem: the smaller we become, the more difficult it is for God’s grace to accomplish its work in our lives, the more difficult it is for God – the one that nobody and nothing can contain – to come and dwell within us.

The question: “What do you want?” provided an opportunity for Jesus to put the disciples in front of the challenge which lies ahead of them: to be a follower of Christ means that they must be ready to be stretched beyond the narrow limits of their petty, self-centred expectations.

St Gregory of Nyssa sums up Jesus’ challenge in an eloquent way when he writes: “He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows.” (*Hom. in Cant.* 8).
What do we really want?

The second question is the disciples’ answer to Jesus’ question. They ask him: “Where do you live?”

What would be our answer? For us where is Jesus living? Where is he staying?

This question is linked to the previous one because if we are supposed to want to be with Jesus, to long for him, it matters for us to know where he is.

Obviously Christ is present in the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist, there we find him as strength and solace for the journey. However Christ himself assures us of his presence in his – and our – brothers and sisters in humanity.

In faith, we are called to discern Christ’s presence in the Sacrament of the altar and in the lives of all those we meet – particularly the poor and the needy. In order to see Christ in the Host, we cannot rely on our physical senses or on our feelings, we need faith. In the same way we have to rely on faith, not on our personal judgement or on our mood, in order to see Christ in our brothers and sisters in humanity.

The point here is that we do not need to go very far in order to find where the Lord is. To the disciples who ask him: "Where do you live?", Jesus answers: "Come and see". If we want to discern Christ where he is, we just need to open wide our eyes and to want to see.

In 1989, St Teresa of Calcutta gave an interview for *Time Magazine*. When asked what motivated her work, she replied: "We try to pray through our work by doing it with Jesus, for Jesus, to Jesus. That helps us to put our whole heart and soul into doing it. The dying, the cripple, the unwanted, the unloved they are Jesus in disguise."

She was also asked what is God's greatest gift to her, to which her response was: "The poor people." Because with them "I have an opportunity to be with Jesus 24 hours a day."

Here maybe it is important to be clear on the fact that we may have to deal with some forms of poverty very different from those encountered by Mother Teresa in Calcutta. All around us, in our families and communities, there are many forms of emotional, psychological or spiritual poverty. There are many children, women and men who crave for love and encouragement, who are plagued by shame and guilt.

Jesus reveals himself also through us each time we forgive somebody, each time we bring light where there is darkness, peace where there is conflict, hope where there is despair.

Our celebration today is a good opportunity for us to reflect on what we want in life, what really matters to us. Is Christ at the centre of our lives, of what we do and say? Do we allow him to shine through us? Is our claim to be Christ's followers just mere words, not really transforming us and opening our hearts and eyes to his loving and challenging presence in others?

To you and me, this morning, the Lord says: "Come and see". What do we really want? What are we going to do?