

Monday 1st week of Advent; Feast of St. Andrew

Romans 10:9-18, Mt. 4:18-22.

St. Andrew was a brother of (Simon) Peter and according to the Gospel of John, introduced his brother to Jesus (Jn. 1:41). Today's Gospel gives us Matthew's account of his and St. Peter's acceptance of Jesus' call, in the well-known scene where they left everything to follow Jesus and become "fishers of men."

The first reading is a beautiful explanation of the process of evangelisation from St Paul. He sets out quite clearly that unless people hear about Jesus, they cannot choose to follow Him. We could wonder, what if St. Andrew had not told his brother about Jesus? Many people need to hear the Good News of the Gospel many times before they accept it. From what we know about St. Peter's character, it could be that he needed to hear the call a few times before he accepted Jesus' invitation.

St Paul in the first reading sets out methodically that our salvation is from calling on the name of the Lord (Jesus Christ). This is not just a momentary use of the divine name in swearing, but a faith-filled cry from the heart. However, to make that cry, people need to know whom to call upon. And they can only call upon Jesus if they know who He is and can trust Him to hear and respond that call.

Every one of us owes our faith to other people. We owe them a debt of gratitude and need to thank God for them each day. Someone once joined a parish RCIA programme because as a child, her friend (a Catholic) had told her not to be afraid because Jesus was with them. Many years later, she recalled that event and decided to find out more for herself. The seeds we sow in general conversation with other people may take many years to germinate and bear fruit. Often conversion comes after several encounters with people of faith. St. Peter, in his first letter writes, "Always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (I Pt. 3:15). If people are going to ask us about the hope that we have in us, then we need to live as people of hope. Not just "I hope that this virus will go away" but a hope that goes deeper: hope in God Himself. We, as baptised Christians need to realise that in Baptism, we are united to Jesus who leads us to His Father, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. If we don't live as if that is a reality for us, how will other people be inspired to want to find out more? St. Andrew responded to Jesus' call and in turn was able to pass on that hope to other people. Let us, like him, not waste any opportunity to speak of our hope in Christ. St. Andrew, pray for us.

(Carol Ann Harnett)