

Homily 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B (14.1.18)

## **"What do you want?"**

### **The real secret of fulfilment, contentment and peace?**

"What do you want? That's the big question in life, isn't it? What do you want? What am I trying to achieve? What do I want to do with my life?" And so on.

These questions happen early on in life. We could all make a huge list of things we want - it's a good question isn't it? I think the part of today's gospel that catches my attention most, is when Simon Peter is brought by his brother Andrew, to see Jesus. It says there in the opening sentences

"Early next morning Andrew mentioned to Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah" - which means the Christ. When Simon encountered Jesus for the first time, we are told that Jesus looked hard at him. That means Jesus gazed and stared into his eyes. There must've been something very penetrating about Jesus because Simon ends up giving Jesus a compliment saying

"Jesus could 'read' people"

- Jesus could look into their very soul. That's sometimes one of the hardest things for us to do. And the words of Jesus - "What do YOU want?" We need to gaze a little at our wants and needs and test them in the light of Jesus's teaching.

If you asked most people what do they want, they can answer for others, especially their children. They can say exactly what they want for them, even if the children don't want it. We can find it easy to answer that question for other people. But what do I want? I was looking back recently at my life. When you're young, and certainly because of the experiences of family, I think one of the biggest things, that probably everybody wants is security, and to know that you are safe and loved, and that things are stable and so on. That's a theme that runs throughout our lives. I think I'm still learning, perhaps I think we need to learn to grow. What we want is not just security, although that's one of the basics of life and is so important. But when we learn to love or treasure someone else, or really respond to life, then we really find that security and peace, even in difficult times. That's the irony. We start off with external security, but if you learn that people matter more than things, you grow and mature.

Then, I remember when I was a young man. I joined the Civil Service and I loved it. I think achievement is a thing we all want. We all want to achieve. I certainly had a career then, and was told I was on my way. All that is very exciting, especially when you're a young person, and you see your life mapped out before you. But maybe as you get older, you look at things slightly differently. One of the things that I've realised is that achievement becomes better, richer, more fulfilling when you think you've contributed to someone else's life. Achievements are initially about 'me' getting on, a career, money, so on. I can

always remember looking at my pay rise on the incremental system in the Civil Service, and saying

"Ooh, I'll be able to buy more wine now, next year!"

Maturity, and certainly the example of Jesus, teaches us that life -and real joy and satisfaction - comes from giving rather than receiving.

When you suddenly find you can contribute to life and contribute to others, there's something about that achievement. Even Jesus taught that, didn't He? It's better to give than to receive. So, Jesus's question to the two new disciples -

"What do you want," is really a very important question. I love that opening dialogue here in today's gospel because when Jesus turns to the two disciples and says,

"What do you want?"

They say,

"Well, where do You live?"

Sounds so blunt doesn't it? Is that all they want, to know - where He lives? Do they metaphorically want Jesus to give them His address and telephone number? No. The question -

"Where do You live?" is really a euphemism for,

"Can we join your company? Can we be with you?"

It's a polite way in the Ancient World of saying,

"Can I be invited into your inner sanctum, as it were?"

These new disciples called Jesus - Rabbi, which is very interesting, because that's like a servant master relationship, student with the master. They wanted knowledge and not just any old knowledge. They, like all of us us, wanted the wisdom of God, the word of God. That's why Andrew tells Peter,

"We have found the Messiah."

Simon Peter is converted from this first encounter with Jesus. So maybe we too should gaze a little more into the eyes of Jesus as we get older and say, we've gone through all these things in life - achievements, security, friends, family, but what deeper things do we want, for ourselves, and for others too? Maybe the answer is found in asking the Lord, in prayer -

"Where do you live?"