

Sermon for 14<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

The readings today are about God's call on his people.

In the first reading we hear the beautiful story of Samuel's call by God.

And in the gospel story today, the call of Philip and Nathaniel.

In previous verses of today's gospel, we heard how John the Baptist sent two of his own disciples to follow Jesus and one of the two, Andrew, told his brother Simon Peter, that they had found the messiah.

Within the overall message about God's call, the readings also relate interconnected themes.

Firstly the theme of knowing is present. Knowing oneself, knowing God and of being known by God.

In the first reading God knew Samuel and God called him by name.

In the Psalm the theme continues: *O Lord, you have searched me out and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up..... Even before a word is on my tongue you know it completely.*

In the epistle, Paul tells us to know ourselves as holy temples and in that *knowing*, we are to refrain from abusing ourselves.

And in the gospel story, in the encounter between Jesus and Nathaniel, we hear that Jesus knows Nathaniel so intimately that he can describe him as someone who has no deceit.

Some theologians believe that Nathaniel represents those Israelites who were genuinely open to Jesus teachings.

Another theme in the context of call, is friendship. The first five disciples Jesus chose, are friends: they come from the same place. Through their friendship, they attract and call each other to Jesus. Friendship is a wonderful reality of human nature.

It is the treasure of each person and the basis of community.

In many cases it is people with the same hope and vision seeking meaning to their lives.

Friendship is helping each other, giving each other support when one or the other is in difficulty, working and struggling together, moving forward to new things together.

**Jesus knows** the importance of friendship. Friendship is at the heart of his message.

He wants to become the friend and companion of each one of us so that we become friends of God. He calls each one personally to follow him.

God's call on us in Jesus Christ is not a collective call.

Each call is unique.

The third theme, is that of positive response. Firstly Samuel to God, *Speak Lord for I am here, he says*. Then the disciples say yes to Jesus - they simply follow him.

The Christian faith believes that we are all called by Christ to follow him. We are all called into discipleship.

The gift of free will offers us a choice - we can say yes and we can say no to God's call on our lives. Anything in between, is usually yes with conditions or no with justification.

Sometimes we are called to do specific things. And sometimes we might be afraid to say yes because we may be afraid of our lack of ability or worth or confidence.

We **can** trust however, that we are never asked to do anything that is beyond our capabilities. The call of God can take many different forms – some of us might be called to pray, some to be a friend or companion to someone in need,

and some are called to move mountains –but whoever we are called to be, and whatever we are called to do, it will ultimately mean our transformation into our unique likeness in Christ. Hence any positive response to the call does mean change.

It also means that we have to be prepared to make mistakes and sometimes face our own weaknesses. We see this clearly in the first disciples. They made many mistakes in the early days of their fellowship with Christ –yet they continued on and with the help of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to be the disciples companion and guide, they persevered to the end.

The call of God on our lives in Jesus Christ is something that is multi-faceted- as we have touched on today. We **are** called personally, yet it does not mean that we will be on our own in that call.

Self-knowledge comes from trust in knowing God in our lives and also in knowing friendship in community.

To blossom and grow in spiritual maturity in Christ, is to respond positively to God's call on our lives whatever it may be.

As we begin this year of 2018, may we reflect and listen carefully in the days and weeks ahead, for that still small voice and be open to what it is calling us into.

The Lord be with you.