

**“WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?”**  
**Epiphany 2 – January 20, 2008 – Rev. Dr. Patrick R. Close, Haddonfield**

The season of Epiphany is usually thought of as a time of revelation. By that, we mean the nature, the role, the purpose of Jesus is made known to us. The Gospels all seek to reveal to us who Jesus is ... and this time of year begins to unfold the wonder of God’s action to us. But there is another part of Epiphany that is just as important. It is the time when we have to consider how we will respond to the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As we learn about Jesus, we have to remember that we are called to be his disciples. The call of the Church, that’s us, is to carry on the mission and ministry of Jesus. The question we might ask ourselves is how we will live out our faith in the light of the understandings of Jesus that come our way.

We get a big hint today in the reading of Isaiah. Isaiah is one of our favorite prophets. In his writings, we see the ministry of Jesus reflected clearly to us. Isaiah talks about the chosen one who will be a servant. Clearly, we understand Jesus to be God’s servant and that he calls us to be servants. Isaiah also talks about the servant being a light to the nations. We have come to understand that Jesus’ mission is universal, meant for everyone. Somehow, this means our mission is universal as well.

So here we are in Epiphany, thinking about revelation and response. Herbert O’Driscoll asks, “Do we see ourselves as instruments of God’s work in Christ in the world?” He infers that we are called not just to come and receive, sitting in the pews. We are called to speak, to offer a message of Christ’s love and hope beyond ourselves to the whole world.

Let’s look at some of the more important passages in today’s reading from the Gospel of John. They speak to us about revelation and response. First, we hear John the Baptist speak as Jesus walks by, “Look! The Lamb of God!” Remember the readings last week? Jesus came to be baptized, and now we have the story of Jesus unfolding more. John points us towards an understanding of who Jesus is ... the Lamb of God. Why is that significant? Remember why lambs were important in this time? They were the animals used for sacrifice ... to take away the sins of the people! Now look at the crucifix hanging in our Church ... it shows us Jesus hanging on a cross. He is the sacrificial lamb who gives up himself for our sins ... and not just ours ... but the sins of the whole world! How’s that for revelation? The gift of John is a reminder of all the people, family, teachers, clergy, friends and others who point us towards God.

There are disciples hanging with John, two men who have been following him. John’s words struck a chord with them and they go after Jesus. Jesus’ turns and speaks to the men. His words are deeply profound, spiritual and religious ... they are the age old question that so many of us wrestle with, “What are you looking for?” What are we looking for? Is it peace? Love? Happiness? Success? Money? Power? This question makes us pause and reflect ... we have to look deep within ourselves to answer this one. Jesus has this ability to cut deep to our soul with the questions that truly matter. Jesus asks the tough questions!

And what’s the response of the disciples? They are caught off guard, they stumble and bumble their way into an answer. You can almost hear them blurt out the first thing that comes to mind ...”Ah ... Ah ... Where are you staying?” We can almost see them getting red in the face. You know what, when the deep questions come at us, we too stumble. Instead of answering from the

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depth of our being, we too just blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. It would have been easy for Jesus to dismiss them. We can imagine him saying “Get back to me when you know what you want.” But this is not what happens. The true nature of Jesus is revealed in his next words. The disciples are not met with rejection or made to feel ashamed. Despite our stumbling, we can bumble our way into the presence of God!

The words Jesus speaks are these, “Come and see.” There it is ... the invitation. This is the nature of Jesus, and of God. They invite us into their presence. Jesus invites everyone he meets ... the fishermen, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the tax collectors, the lepers and the prostitutes. Will we accept the invitation? Have any of you ever received an invitation? Of course we have! How many of you act upon the RSVP? Fewer and fewer people respond today. I am working with couples whose weddings are coming up this year. They are so annoyed because they have sent out hundreds of invitations and only received a couple of responses! God continually invites us into a relationship ... and we often fail to respond. But God, and Jesus, don't quit. We have standing invitations ... waiting for our response!

We could easily stop here ... but there is more! We have all this revelation ... but there is one more thing ... a response ... on our part. It is reflected in the way Andrew acts in today's Gospel. He and the other disciple have spent most of the day with Jesus. They look at their sundial, or the sky (remember, no watches!) and realize that it's four o'clock. This is the time workers would begin to finish their work to end the day. Women would begin to prepare dinner. Andrew realizes that he has lost track of time, because he has been so engrossed in the presence of Jesus! Have you ever experienced that, being with someone or in a place where you lose track of time?

Andrew now goes to seek out his brother, Simon. I have this picture of Andrew being the younger brother, not taken very serious by the older brother. Simon is the hard working, serious older brother. You know the type don't you? But here comes Andrew. He is excited, there is something in his eyes that captures Simon's attention. “We've found him! He's the one! The Messiah!” Andrew witnesses to Simon ... he responds to the revelation he encounters by sharing the story with others. This is the response that we are called to make. This is a key to our faith and discipleship ... we are to share the Good News with others.

Peter comes to meet Jesus ... and he is changed, transformed! Jesus renames him as Peter, the Rock. The presence of Jesus will change us. We will come into a new life, and a new name! We see Andrew's response as bringing joy into Simon's life! Think about it, who do you know that needs to hear this story, along with our story. Who will we share the good news of Jesus with and perhaps bring them the transformation we need? God continually puts people and events in our lives to bring us closer to the Holy One ... when will we be God's instrument?

It happened to me just yesterday. I did a funeral for a long time, well known member of our parish. She died after suffering a stroke months ago. We interred the ashes in our memorial garden out back. After the service, I came back to finish filling in the hole with dirt. I like to wait until the family and others have left. One tall, young man lingered. I left to give him time and space. When I came back ... he was still there. This time I decided to approach him. He shared with me that the woman was his mother ... the shock for me is that this woman, who I

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knew so well, never mentioned she had a son! The man spoke of how he and his mother had be estranged for many years, that he never knew his father. He went on to share that he had recently gone through a divorce, and just gained custody of his daughter. I simply listened.

I thought how remarkable his story was ... my mother died a few years ago, she was this woman's age. My father died 35 years ago. I could easily identify with what this young man was going through ... because in many ways I have already been there. I shared some of my story ... and he talked about how he and his mother had begun to be reconciled in the last couple of years. We talked, and I offered to listen more ... and invited him into a conversation. That's how it is for us ... we can be the right person in the right place at the right time ... and God is behind it all.

So here we are in Epiphany. Jesus is revealed to us ... and now it's time for us to respond. We can say to another, "Tell me your story, and I will tell you mind. Tell me what you are looking for ... then, come and see what I have found." Good luck!