

Third Sunday after the Epiphany, 22/1/2011, Holy Trinity

Mark 1:14-20

Do you realise what a great privilege it is for us to be here?

This is one of the places where the incarnation (God in the flesh among the people of this world) becomes very real.

This is a meeting place of heaven and earth.

This is a meeting place of God and nature, of earth, rocks, mountains, water, fire, wind, sea, trees, plants, birds, animals and humans with God embracing all.

It is in this Eucharist that we stand with God in God's word and sacrament.

We stand in awe and love with the God who loves us and gives us the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ in the forms of Bread and Wine, the Body and Blood of Christ.

We stand in awe and love with the God who gives us the good news of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

This Gospel is not about the after-life but about life in this world.

This is not denying a life after death but it is emphasising that the Kingdom of God is for the earth.

This should not surprise us because we pray in the Lord's Prayer "Your kingdom come on earth."

Or as one scholar says, "Heaven's in great shape – earth is where the problems are."

How awe inspiring this is as we are here in a place where heaven and earth meet!

It is here in this morning's Gospel reading that we are propelled into addressing the call of Christ in our lives.

This is a call for us to consider, not once, but continually.

This is how it was for the disciples in the first instance.

Every healing miracle, every public teaching, every incident, every encounter with Jesus furthered their call to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God for this earth.

The call is to one of growth: it is a call to journey, to follow the Way of the Lord.

There are a few things that I find most interesting about this incident.

First, it was a call to follow Jesus: this seems to me to be a call to belong.

At this stage they knew very little about Jesus, but they were called to belong to this group of followers, the knowing would follow as they continued on the journey with Jesus and the others.

Now apply this to ourselves in this parish: belonging to this community of faith often comes first and then it is up to us with the Holy Spirit to nurture, teach and assist them on their continuing journey.

Secondly, answering the call to follow the Way of the Lord is based on listening and being ready to respond.

Listening is an art in itself.

It requires more than hearing things that sound good to us.

It is really about being open to God, to the still small voice of God that often comes in the quietness.

In other cases we need to sift out the call of God from all the other noise that comes in an encounter with other people, and sometimes with a complete stranger: people who are used by God to bring something in front of us.

Finally, there were those who literally followed Jesus almost every inch of the way and they are generally known as the twelve disciples, but the vast majority who believed in Jesus' message stayed at home.

In today's language some are called to the priesthood or some other work within the Church but the vast majority live with family and friends whom they love and in the workstation where they spend eight hours a day.

It is in all these places that they are able to live the Way of the Lord and to proclaim the Kingdom of God and of God's enduring love for each of us.

It is indeed good to be here in this Eucharist where heaven and earth meet and where we hear and respond to Jesus' call to follow in the Way of the Lord.