

## Homily - Year 3 B - January 21, 2017

As you know, religions abound in our world. Likewise, people continue to develop and invent new religions or variations of existing religions. For example, we know about the various versions of Judaism, of Islam, and of Christianity. If we go back into history and truly search for their various origins, we will probably find that the variations arose due to someone's desire to be in charge, to be the leader.

Likewise, various forms of religion have evolved because leaders not only want to lead, but they also want to determine the goal of their quest. Let me explain.

The many manifestations of religion in the world focus on our search for God. St. Augustine taught that there is, what he called, a God hole in each one of us, a longing in each one of us looking for God that can only be filled with God. Thus, in this search, leaders emerge who develop the shape of this search.

Christianity, and especially Catholicism, takes a much different position. A careful reading of the Bible will demonstrate that in Christianity God searches for humanity, more than man searches for God. Christianity starts with God looking for us, not us looking for God.

Look at the example in our first reading. God sends Jonah looking for the Ninevites. God wants them because they have gone astray and because God loves them deeply. Jonah's mission will focus on arousing the Ninevites to understand how much God loves them and promote their returning to God's way of life, including regular worship of the one true God.

Something similar occurs in the gospel. Jesus calls people to have a personal relationship with God through him. Jesus had met these men before, but now he is calling each one by name to become his disciple. We believe that God calls each one of us by name. That call begins at Baptism. Receiving the sacraments, especially penance and the Eucharist reinforces that call. Obviously, the final call occurs when God invites us to his kingdom at death.

God invites. We respond. Our response must occur with our very lives. We call that response our vocation in life. Our lives, married, single, religious, are our way of answering God's call to follow him. Even our careers are opportunities to respond to God's invitation to be his disciple.

Yes, in our lives we respond to a God who is searching for us.

But, you know as well as I that many do not respond to God's search or, if they do respond, it's on their terms not on God's terms.

Maybe you have seen the movie *The Theory of Everything*. It's still on DVD, not yet in the download services. The story centers on Stephen Hawking, a physicist and atheist, who believed that everything could be reduced to a singular equation. In the movie he describes cosmology, his area of study, as a religion for intelligent atheists. In fact, the movie is really God haunted because it describes a search for something without defining the something, and a search that never ends.

I mention this film because it describes what has happened in the lives of so many people who keep looking but never find. Then, some no longer search because they are content with the here and now and do not want to clutter their lives with someone or something else.

What's the solution? We need to convince others, and perhaps ourselves, to stop and listen. Whether we are professional or amateurs, scholars or learners, successful or not, Christ is calling us even if it means dropping what we are doing. That "dropping" doesn't necessarily mean changing our profession, but it could mean changing our priorities which may lead to a life change. Jesus' call may lead us to see life differently, to see life through Jesus' eyes. God has given us life. Each one of us has a vocation in life, but we all share that common vocation of being disciples of Christ. Our individual vocations, careers, professions constitute the ways to live out that vocation of being a disciple of Christ.

Let us pray today that our response to Jesus' invitation will resemble that of Peter, Andrew, James, and John - an immediate response to a life-long vocation.