

Come and see

The gospel reading for the Second Sunday of the Year in Year B is John 1:35-42: the 'Lamb of God' encounters two of his disciples. Rob Marsh SJ invites us into their conversation and encourages us to think about where we might have our own epiphany, where we might find God.

Epiphany pursues us. In these early weeks of the year, each gospel speaks about the way God is discovered in our lives. Today the epiphany takes the form of an awkward encounter. In an unexpected question: 'What are you looking for?' In a question given instead of an answer: 'Where do you stay?' In an answer that itself is a question: 'Come and see.'

You cannot make anything of this prickly conversation without letting yourself get inside it. From the outside it's just words. Just noise. Just some story of dead people, long dead people. But from the inside it's alive – it's epiphany. So step inside with me for a moment or two. Join those two travellers on the road, step inside their skins, and feel what it is like to be walking the dusty roads, trailing after someone you hardly know, on some fool's errand, for someone else. Following this guy, trying not to be seen, because, for the life of you, you don't know what you are supposed to do if he spots you. How long have you been trailing him? Too long perhaps and the midday heat is annoying you and the thirst is annoying you but you don't want to risk losing him to stop. And then in your daydreaming you almost run into him. He's stopped. He's right in front of you, staring right at you. And, scared out of your skin, you are trying to put together some apology or explanation, when he smiles a little and, never taking his eyes off yours, says, 'What are you looking for?'

What *are* you looking for? What can you say? You start to say something lame but you are still caught by his gaze and you realise you don't want to lie to him. So what are you looking for? What are you searching for? For a good, cool drink? For a place to sit down? For peace and quiet? Oh, for some sense to life, and some security from debt, some safety from disease, some hope for tomorrow, some love to give and receive. What *are* you looking for? What are you *really* looking for? For peace on earth? For an end to death and dying? You don't know! Too small or too big those desires; too easy or too risky. You don't know what you are looking for but you know you want something, you know the voice that wakes you in the night and whispers your name and won't let you sleep as you chase in circles the fears and the hopes of twilight. You know you are searching – and searching for words to express the search – but all that comes out in the end is, 'Where do you stay?'

It seems to be a good answer because his smile broadens and his eyes cloud as he goes inside to search for an answer worthy of *your* question. You've surprised him. Where does he stay? Where does he call *home*? Where are his *roots* and his sanctuary? He too is drawn deeper. Where does he find the sap for his vine, the blood for his body, the breath for his spirit? Who does he belong to? He's quiet for a long time – as long as you took to answer his question – and then he reaches out his hand to take yours and says, 'Come and see.' And you do. And both your lives are never the same again.

'Look,' says John the Baptist, 'there's the Lamb of God.' A promise of great revelation, of great epiphany, of great mystery. But the revelation comes on a street corner. The epiphany shines in the obscurity of a restless, searching heart. The mystery unfolds in a late afternoon of conversation. Look where we find God – where God finds us. Look how the kingdom comes, look how we become disciples, look how God comes among us. In a human voice, in a human yearning, in the touch of a human hand.

But are we looking for Jesus? Are we ready for him? And, above all, are we willing for our lives to never be the same again?

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