

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

CHOSEN BY NAME

John 1:29-42

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany Analysis by Michael Hoy

29The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." 31I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' 32And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." 34And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.' 35The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' 37The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' 39He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. 40One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is

translated Anointed). 42He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

DIAGNOSIS: Rejection

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *"What are you looking for?"*

"What are you looking for?" That question is the only question our Lord puts to the disciples (and to us) in the Gospel for this Sunday. It involves for us a definition of choice (note: "choosing" is a dominant theme in all the readings for this Sunday after the Epiphany; not simply our choices, but God's). It is a question that calls for an answer, even when it is not vocalized. In our increasingly nihilistic culture, (see Cornell West's *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*, 25-62), perhaps "nothing" is the more common answer today-or, at least, "nothing significant." In the lives of these disciples of John the Baptist who come after Jesus (only one of whom we know by name, Andrew), their answer is curt enough so as not to give Jesus the credence he deserves. "Rabbi," they call him. [In the Gospel of John, "Rabbi" is used throughout the Book of Signs (chs. 1-12). In the Book of Glory (chs. 13-21) the title is "Lord" (kyrios). See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John, I-XII*, Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 75.] Rabbi? Is that all that John's accolades (Lamb of God, Son of God) mean for them? Or would they prefer to err on the side of caution, because so many great ones, great leaders, have let them down?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Not knowing*

The greater problem is that they may "not know" who this Jesus really is. Even John announced, twice, "I myself did not know

him" (vv. 31, 33). This not knowing, or not "seeing" (note: in John's Gospel, "knowing" and "seeing" are synonyms-note the use of the verb "seeing" in vv. 29, 32, 33, 34, 36, et passim), is really more than simple ignorance. It is spiritual blindness. And this ignorance is not bliss. It is being left in the dark of searching without answers, without hope. The disciples do not yet know or see who this Jesus is. Even their answer, "where are you staying," is hedging their bets: wanting something more, but not wanting completely; at least not trusting completely.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Not known: the search that ends in death*

The greatest fear is that the search could prove fruitless, ending in death without an answer, without anything more than rejection from God. Our own reputations, our own names, can be rendered useless if, in the Final Analysis, there is no being "known" by God. Is God "staying" with us? That question isn't directly raised by the searching disciples (rarely is it directly raised by us either), but that is the question they (and we) most need answered. The initial signs from all the negativity and criticism experienced in life doesn't bode a favorable answer. It may, in fact, and with good (godly) reason bode doom.

PROGNOSIS: Chosen

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *Come and see!*

The second word issued from the mouth of our Lord, though, is an invitation: "Come and see!" Come and see where Jesus is "staying." And what we find is that he is staying with us. He is staying all the way with us, through all the doom and criticism, through all the anguish and fear, through all the emptiness and nothingness that has filled our lives, in this late hour (note: the reference to the time of "four o'clock" may point forward to another Friday afternoon when the sky turned black). The good

news is that God is searching for us, in this One who stays with us, who invites us along for the journey through the cross and the open tomb.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Seeing, Knowing*
The full journey of that coming and seeing will fill the rest of John's Gospel-ours, too. But it is the good news that in this Jesus the Christ (as Andrew would come to call him, naming the name, v. 41) there is One in our midst who can truly lead us beyond the shadowy searching in condemnation into life and joy. Note the joy in the seeing, in the knowing, in the faith, as if Andrew cannot contain himself. He can't, happily. Read on.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Testifying*
All of this changes the whole nature of our search. It is no longer for our own sense of meaningfulness, freedom, and wholeness. That has been the gift in the One who has come to stay with us. There is now the manifest change of going out ourselves and searching for others (like Andrew for Simon), to "bring Simon to Jesus," to get them named with the promising ring of being chosen by this Christ: "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (v. 42). You and I become agents of promising testimony because of the Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world-all those wonderful accolades inherent in the name of Jesus-in whose name we are named, chosen, called, and now sharing with one and all.