

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Who Are You?

Today we listen to John's story of the calling of the first disciples. It's radically different from the way Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell it. They depict Jesus *summoning* the fishermen at the lake of Galilee; leaving their boats they follow him. In John they are already disciples of John the Baptist, and when he points out Jesus as Lamb of God, they leave their master and follow Jesus. Then the questions begin: searching questions with telling answers.

What do you want?

A Barbie doll and a bicycle...a Mercedes and a farm...the worship of Samantha Clutterbuck...the Chairmanship of the Board...these disciples want nothing like that. They answer *Rabbi*, which means Teacher, *where do you live?* A Jew could ask to be a disciple - or pupil - of a Rabbi in this way. Jesus invites them to him: *Come, and see.* So they go with him and spend the rest of the day with him. In the Gospel that lies ahead, the same sort of questions will appear: Jesus claims to have *come from above*, he claims to have been *sent by God*, he claims to have been *appointed to judge the world in the name of God*; when he has fed the multitude he claims to be *bread that has come down from heaven*; in the Temple he claims divine authority for all that he teaches, and warns the authorities that they do not know where he has come from, and that soon he is destined to return there. In chapter eight he says: *My testimony is valid, because I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I came from or where I am going.* They ask him: *Who is your father?* and he answers: *You do not know me, nor do you know my Father; if you did know me, you would know my Father too.*

You are to be called Peter

Just as Jesus knows who he is, where he has come from, and where he is going, he also knows who Simon is and where *he* is going. He displays this

when he gazes steadily at him and then gives him a new name. In this detail the two stories of the calling of the disciples are at one: Jesus gave them new names as they entered his company. This has a deep symbolic meaning. In their following of Christ *they are going to learn who they really are.* It will be a long series of surprises, and the people they *think* they are will be exploded to make room for the truth. Peter thinks he's a faithful, reliable, genuine friend who will be with Jesus to the end. He will see himself differently before the end comes. But still Jesus gives him this impressive nickname: "Rock!" Did he mean the long-term Peter who, after he has recovered from his moral disaster at the Passion, has the vocation to strengthen his brothers (Lk 22:32), and to feed the lambs and sheep (Jn 21:16)? Or is he gently debunking the man who makes grand promises and claims, but who falls to pieces when the going gets tough? Maybe both thoughts can be present. What is very clear is that the relationships that begin in these stories are not going to be trivial ones. They are going to redefine those who enter into them.

We do not know where you are going

says Thomas at the Last Supper: *so how can we know the way?* Jesus reminds him gently that he is himself the point of their journey: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* For those who seek for bread. *I am the living bread.* For those who look for trust and safety, *I am the true Shepherd.* For those who live in the fear and shadow of death, *I am the Resurrection and the Life.* The questions are different for various people at various times; but the metaphors are comprehensive. Jesus tells us he is the answer, not only to the small questions of every day, but to the ultimate question life asks. Peter sees the point, and says: "We believe; we know that you are the Holy One, and that you have the message of eternal life." That is enough. *Fr Philip*

