

### Contemporaries of God

From experience I know that many people in church don't really think of themselves as called by God. Perhaps they think they have chosen to come to church – and that is true, there is an element of choice involved. Some may think that the Christian faith is something to keep and a means to improve themselves. Those who do “church work” – as unpaid staff, or as a minister inside the church or in the community – may think of themselves as volunteers. Others might want to be engaged in God's ministry but don't know what to do or where to start. The result is this: God calls all people, but many are on another line, or have switched off their phone, so to speak.

My friends, a sense of unity and true belonging in church can only come from a common mission in Christ, a sense of being called, that fosters a vivid knowing that we are His people.

He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This is Jesus' call to his disciples – often called The Great Commission. This is what being his disciple is all about: We have nothing to do except to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commanded us. The point is, each one of us has been called by Christ to a ministry and mission, in partnership with Him, to some place, here or faraway. This Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, is one with the heavenly Father; and so, in him is found all the power of God, and this power he shares with us through the Holy Spirit. This is the meaning of the Holy Trinity – one God in Three Persons – giving us power to fulfill the call he speaks to us.

Recall how Moses turned aside to see a burning bush and from that God called him to a great task. But how many others had passed by that same bush? How many burning bushes have we ignored? How embarrassing to be created in the likeness of God and to be unable to recognize him. [There is a flaming bush in every field; a sermon in every moment.] At some point in our lives God calls upon each one of us to follow Christ and serve with him. God is even calling now - you can answer today.

These young people, about to be confirmed, are responding to God's call. What they have been prepared for in their class is to make a commitment to live their life as one of Jesus' disciples, even deferring to Him for life direction and choices yet to be made.

Some Christians seem to believe that the great acts of God are behind us, in the age of the apostles. Others focus on the future, a Second Coming that ushers in a new age. Yet the fact is, Christ's Holy Spirit is given to the church to aid in carrying out its mission. Didn't he say, “...I am with you always to the very end of the age.”? He is here with us now: the Son of Man and the Son of God, at the throne of grace which he holds open for us.

How embarrassing to be a contemporary of God and not sense it! How embarrassing for us to be deemed worthy of God's call, and yet we spill out our time and lives on things that have no

eternal value. If you are embarrassed by this, well good! It's a beginning. Our worldview, our life's meaning, our religion is what we do with this embarrassment. [It is our awareness that the world is too great for us; the awareness of the great beauty and mystery of our Creator and being present at the unfolding of an eternal saga. What is given us is purpose, yes, but even before that is an expectation.]

[When we look out on the vastness of the universe or just the intricacies of daily living, what we encounter is flowers and sidewalks, the heavens and the walls of our buildings, yes! But over and above all that, is a sublime expectation. Something is asked of us. Someone is waiting for us. You are called. We are called.]

Calling is not reserved just for clergy. Each one of us was ordained at our baptism, called by God to our vocation. Still, we hesitate, as did others before us, for not all of us are fully convinced. Maybe we're like those disciples with Jesus on that mountain; it says, "When they saw him, they worshiped him; some doubted." We wonder how this can possibly work. [God's resources so often appear minuscule and vague. His own Son, for God's sake, the one we call Christ, look at him: no PhD., no Oscar or Emmy, not chairman of the board, not head of state. He sat on death row, then the government executed him. Where's the sacred in that?] Yet God was in Jesus of Nazareth, and his death became the atonement that gives us life. He emptied himself for us, then he rose from death so that he could ascend to heaven and prepare the way for us.

We must not be afraid to speak aloud our faith in Christ's saving grace. We're not talking about religion, we're talking about life, life in its fullness! We must not be afraid to live uprightly in Christ's saving grace; even when that goes against the tide of popular thought or "political correctness." In many respects our church and country are crumbling for lack of direction, lack of spiritual foundation and moral fiber. Our answer to Christ's call is all the more imperative. You and I must stand up for Jesus! For if not you, who will? If not now, when?

The great Enlightenment philosopher Rene Des Cartes said, "I think, therefore I am." The Christian says, "I am *called*, therefore I am." The essence of existence is response to His call. In other words, life really begins when you respond to Christ's call. Today we confirm these young people as members of the church. In reality, we are recognizing their response to the call of Jesus. Church membership is not a status – something you attain and then put on your resume. No, these young people (and anyone who enters membership) are being confirmed into the fellowship of believers, who are on the journey of discipleship. These young people are initiated into adult responsibility for their relationship with Christ, and we promise to model for them a maturing faith in Jesus as our Lord.

Faith then is not something to fill our needs or substitute for our insecurity. Faith is the discovery of having a vocation, a calling. Have you sensed your calling? One important purpose of worship is to help us come alive to the challenge: to respond to God's call. This is the foundation of our unity in Christ: response to God's call. Isn't it time to answer?

Great is the challenge we face in every moment. Greater is the grace God offers. Think of the opportunities you have each day to begin making a disciple for Jesus. Each day you can ask the Lord to show you where and how He can use you to minister to another who needs him.

Pray not that you will receive challenges commensurate with your abilities. Rather, pray that you will receive grace equal to the great task God has called you to.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”