

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [A]

Isaiah 8: 23 – 9: 3

1 Corinthians 1: 10 – 13, 17

Matthew 4: 12 - 23

I'm guessing that all of us like routine in our lives – with the occasional burst of controlled spontaneity to make it more interesting.

How many of us, if approached by a complete stranger, would leave everything we know and love to follow them?

Not many, I'm willing to bet.

Recently I was visiting with a man whose wife had died after they'd enjoyed 60 years of marriage together, and he told me of how they first met.

He was on holiday at the seaside, saw this girl walking towards him, and said to himself: 'That's the girl I'm going to marry!'

He spoke to her, walked along the promenade with her and, 60 or so years later, he and I were arranging that girl's funeral.

Love at first sight: and it had changed that man and woman's life in an instant, and forever.

If falling in love for life was like the driving test where you have to sit a written exam before taking the practical test, we'd all fail.

How can you define love? How can you encapsulate it into a few words on a piece of paper? You can't – if it's true love.

And, I believe that's what happened to Peter and Andrew, and James and John, that day by the Sea of Galilee.

They fell in love with Jesus and, in those four men, we can see what our reaction to Jesus should be when we too fall in love with Him.

Like the boy and girl at the seaside all those years ago, when we really meet Jesus, then our life is turned completely around to another direction.

That's what the word, 'Repent,' spoken by Jesus means: turn around to face in another direction.

Turn to face me, Jesus; I'm the Kingdom of Heaven, in the flesh.

But this quest for love isn't a one-way street from us to God.

No: God first loved us, and pursues us with unfailing love, even when we don't want to know.

As John, in his First Letter tells us: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" [1 Jn. 3: 1](#)

So it's a dual movement: on the one hand, the movement of God towards the world, towards humanity, towards each person – the entire history of salvation, which culminates in Jesus – and on the other, the movement of mankind towards God, whenever we seek out beauty, truth, and love.

And this dual movement is driven by mutual attraction; but what is it in us that attracts God?

It's because we're His children; He loves us, and He wants to liberate us from evil, from disease, from death, and to bring us into His Home; the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus speaks of in the Gospel.

On our part, at the heart of our spiritual DNA, there's also love and desire: goodness and truth attract us, truth, life, happiness and beauty call to us.

And Jesus is the meeting point for this mutual attraction, and this two-fold movement because He's both God, and a human being: Jesus: God and man.

But the Lord always takes the initiative: His love always precedes our own!

Just as we can see in Jesus going to find those four fishermen by Galilee to call them to leave their nets, and join Him to fish for people for the Kingdom!

The other insight I get from this Gospel is that Jesus calls each person as an individual, but does so to mould them into a body, and that Body is the Church: the Kingdom in embryo – a work in progress until Jesus returns at the end of time.

ALL the Church is inside this movement of God towards the world; and her joy is the Gospel, which reflects the light of Jesus: and the Church is made up of those of us who've experienced this attraction, and carry it inside, in the heart of their lives.

ALL of us have been called by the Lord to become, as Bishop Philip said in his Pastoral Letter the other week, a 'Missionary Disciple.'

In practise – in the everyday reality we live in – being a 'Missionary Disciple:' "Has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. Being a [missionary] disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey. [But we must never batter people over the head with our faith; we must] always [be] respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs."

Pope Francis: Evangelii Gaudium; 127 & 128

So, the Lord calls to us, seeks us, and awaits us; and one thing's for sure, we can't be complacent about our faith.

Because: "Christianity, if false, is of no importance; and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important." C. S. Lewis

Maybe, at present, you feel as if your Christian faith is in a sort of 'Shadowlands.'

If you're living that experience now, may the Lord's loving light shine upon you; and may you hear Him calling to you once again, to: "Come, follow me!" Mt. 4: 19