



From A Bishop's Journal (698)

Songs for Becoming Better Christians

Iurge everyone in the diocese to make of the Sunday liturgy a very special occasion to pray for vocations: may we, like the young Samuel, always be ready to answer the divine call with: “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” And like the psalmist, may our words be: “Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will.” May we, like the apostles Andrew and Simon Peter, acknowledge Jesus the Messiah. Since songs are an expression of the depth of one’s being, I have chosen a few to help us be better disciples of Jesus.

“Here am I in Your Presence”

At my ordination as bishop, Daniel, a young nephew of mine, offered me a song he had composed for the occasion. The words are very plain, and stick closely to the biblical text. “Here am I in your presence today, turned to you, O my shepherd, to you my sweet Saviour. My soul thirsts for your presence, open the path at my feet, guide me to the waters, come and quench my whole being. My heart yearns for you, my feet are ever searching, tell me your secrets, reassure me. Amidst the ravages of life, you are my saving rock, I place my trust in you, your open heart comforts me. Ready to strike out into deeper water, I shall bring them the ‘Good News’. Even more convinced that you love them, I shall sing ‘Alleluia’.” These words describe an entire journey of faith and urges us on to greater trusting availability to the Lord.

“If You Hear”

Father Robert Lebel has kept closer to the text of Samuel. “If in the midst of the night you hear Someone... Someone who is constantly calling you, perhaps it is God who draws near and says to you that he needs your youth. Then you shall say, ‘Here am I, I am listening.’ Then you shall say, ‘Speak to me, I am listening.’ If you hear in the depth of your heart a song more beautiful than your human songs, perhaps it is God who sings in your joy a song whose meaning is: ‘I love you.’ If you hear footsteps on the road, steps that seem to follow you, perhaps it is God walking in your footsteps, as he continues to call you to follow him. If you have been hearing from always in you a cry that is stronger than your dreams, perhaps it is God who is opening you to love and who waits for you to rise. If you hear voices around you of people trying to find a brother in you, perhaps it is God talking

to you and who sends you forth so they can discover the Father. Then you shall tell him: ‘Here am I, I am listening,’ and he will answer, ‘Talk to me, I’m listening’.” They are truly mysterious, the paths that the Lord takes to come to meet us, to challenge us.

“Following Jesus”

Sister Madeleine Dubé, a Dominican Missionary Adorer, has written *Suivre Jésus* : “Following Jesus, being his witnesses along the Gospel journey, presence of love, sign of hope at the heart of our world, this is our daily gift. Lord, you call us to follow your path, you have guided us, you our light, keep in our hearts a thirst for truth, to speak your message. Lord, you call us to follow your path, you have filled us with your riches, maintain in us a taste for poverty, to proclaim your Kingdom. Lord, you call us to follow your path, you have loved us, you who gather us, keep in our hearts our taste for unity, to witness to your presence. Lord, you call us to follow your path, you our hope have blessed us, keep our hearts turned to the future, that we may talk of your wonders.” These words are all action-oriented, like with Andrew and Simon Peter who followed Jesus, who saw where he lived, and who answered his call. The mission is always at the heart of these calls “to tell others of his Covenant, proclaim his message, announce his kingdom, tell of his presence, and work his wonders.”

“Journeying with Jesus”

I, too, wanted to add my note to the symphony on vocation, and I titled it *Journeying with Jesus*. “We want to make humankind free, we want to lead it to God, we want to journey with Jesus. Perhaps take the route to Bethlehem, the glory of God, the promised peace. Perhaps the route to Nazareth, manual labour, and joy to the poor. This call is the path to Jesus. Perhaps the road to Jacob’s Well, the Messiah to the people, as living water; perhaps the path to Mount Thabor, the Son shining bright, and the tent set up; this call is the path of Jesus. Perhaps the raised cross, and blood poured out: this call is the route to Jesus. Perhaps the route to Emmaus, hope given and Friend recognised; perhaps the road of Galilee, death overturned, Christ raised up: this call is the path of Jesus. We want to make humanity free; we want to lead it to the Father; we want to journey with Jesus.” In the words of this song I could see the great availability of Mary: “I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your will.” I glimpsed also the great availability of Simon Peter: “When you are old, others will lead you where you would not want to go.” Abraham did not know beforehand where his response to Yahweh would lead him, and Moses did not know either where the mission given him by the Lord would take him. Jesus’ disciples did not know beforehand where he would lead them. They did not enjoy the Mount Thabor experience every day! I believe that in each of our lives we find elements of poverty and riches, of service, of the cross raised but also of death overturned, moments of resurrection, moments of new-found love.

Disciples of Jesus

The Gospels of Saint John introduce us to Jesus’ first disciples, Andrew the first-called, and his brother Peter. The call of Jesus took them to the very sacrifice of their lives, and they share today in

the glory of the Risen One. It is important for us to first consider our condition of disciple of Jesus: through baptism we have become disciples of Jesus. My 2006 Pentecost pastoral letter points out the greatness of this calling, a calling we must often consider. This is the call which leads us later to married life, consecrated life, celibacy or the priesthood. May we answer these calls with the words of Jesus: "Here am I, Lord, I come to do your will."

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