

**Sunday 15th January 2017 (2<sup>nd</sup> of Epiphany)**

**St Faith, Havant**

**8.00am – Mass & 9.30am – Parish Mass**

*Isaiah 49.1-7; 1 Corinthians 1.1-9; St John 1.29-42*

“Rabbi, where are you staying?”

“Come and see.”

We don't know what it was that Andrew and his unnamed companion saw. Whatever it was, Andrew was convinced enough after a few short hours to go and find Simon his brother and tell him “We have found the Messiah”.

“Come and see.”

We don't know what it was that Simon saw when he went with his brother to Jesus. Whatever it was, it was enough to convince him to accept the new name of Cephas, or Peter. We know from other gospel stories that Simon Peter was a man not short of an opinion, and not backward in coming forward; but apparently he accepts without argument this new name given to him by a man he's only just met.

“Come and see.”

John the Baptist knew that his role was to point beyond himself. He openly says that the point of his baptising was to

reveal somebody else who ranked ahead of him, somebody more important. And he shares his experience of seeing “the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove”, and resting on Jesus. We can imagine that he has told that story a dozen times, a hundred times and more, to anyone who will listen. John has gathered disciples around him not to keep them for himself, but to point them onward to somebody else.

And when that moment comes and Jesus turns up, John says to his two disciples, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” And off those disciples go, no longer followers of John but followers of Jesus.

“Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

“Come and see.”

Our role as Christians, as the church in this place, as part of the church universal, is to be a bit like John the Baptist. We are to draw people to us so that we can point them beyond ourselves, point them onward to somebody else, to God in Christ. We are called to proclaim the truth of Christ as John the Baptist did – and, as John the Baptist did, we are called to show him to people and say, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

This is why we must work to grow the church. Not because we seek the social or political power that comes with greater numbers. Not because it makes our statistical returns to

the diocese look better. Not even because we live in fear of decline and eventual closure if we do not grow numerically. But to enable us to be more effective witnesses. Every single thing we do as a Christian community must be a step in the direction of pointing people beyond ourselves to Christ. Every single thing we do must, as its fundamental aim, tell the world, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" Because to you and me and every single person in this world, Jesus is saying, "Come and see", and waiting to transform our lives when we do.

And yet at the same time, the church universal, the church in this place, we as Christians, have another role. Because we are not just messengers. It is not enough for us merely to point to another and say, "Look".

Because the church is the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ. Just like those Christians in Corinth, we are those who are "sanctified in Christ Jesus". We are called into his fellowship. We are "called to be saints". It is through us that Jesus says to the world today, "Come and see."

This is why we must work to grow the church. Not to increase our social connections. Not to satisfy our own desires for success. Not even just to make Havant a more pleasant place to be. But because the church is the body of Christ, and Christ longs for every single person to be a part of his body. Every single thing we do as a Christian community must be a step in

the direction of showing Christ to the world. Every single thing we do must, as its fundamental aim, invite the world, "Come and see." That is Jesus' constant invitation to every single person, and as part of the body of Christ it is our role to play our part in extending that invitation to everybody we can.

"Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

"Come and see."

When we make an effort to point beyond ourselves to God, we are already showing God to the world: and it is by making an effort to show God to the world that we point beyond ourselves to God. That is our calling as Christians, because Christ says to every single person, "Come and see."

And if it sounds like a paradox too hard to understand, let alone put into action, then don't worry. Because we don't do it by our own efforts or understanding. Just as Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians, "God is faithful", and he will strengthen us. When we are faithful to him, when we put our trust in him, we will not lack in any spiritual gift. Christ says to us today, "Come and see." I do not know exactly what I will see. I certainly don't know what each of you will see. But I am sure that when we come to the Lord with open hearts and minds, we will see what we need to see, and it will change our lives. And our lives will

keep being changed, for at every moment of every day Christ says to every one of us, "Come and see."

And through our lives, we who are called to be saints will be able to fulfil our dual role of pointing to Christ, and of being the body of Christ. Every single thing we do will meet its twin fundamental aims, and our church will grow. We, who know that in Christ there is one greater than us, we will draw people to us, even as we point them beyond ourselves saying, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" Let us open ourselves to God afresh today so that he may change us, so that we as the body of Christ may live lives which give to the world Christ's own invitation:

"Come and see."