

The Fourth Gospel is never more profound than when it seems most simple and obvious. In our reading today, we have the bare bones of an encounter between Jesus and his first disciples. Peter and Andrew hear the Baptist's word and begin to follow the Lord, and there follows the short dialogue: "What are you looking for?" "Rabbi, where are you staying?" "Come and see." Nothing could be simpler, yet few accounts more directly unfold the essence of the Gospel-call or the nature of the response it demands--that call and challenge which, undergirding and sustaining the achievement and hope of every Christian, supply the enabling context in which all our celebration today takes place, that call and challenge which sound for us all again in this Eucharist.

The first words uttered by the Word made flesh are a question: "What are you looking for?" It is the question of questions, and throughout his Gospel John will portray in different figures and events how men can fail to find Jesus for their failure to seek him at all or to seek him as alone he can be found. He comes as light, but men can prefer the darkness to the light: "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but because you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." He brings the water of eternal life, but to receive it, the woman at the well must thirst for something more than fresh water. People will walk around a lake, but not in search of that Bread which, Augustine said, requires the hunger of the heart. It is, then, no idle question the Lord asks the disciples, "What are you looking for?"

"Where are you staying, Rabbi?" the two disciples reply. And again the question is fundamental, for it opens upon the Gospel's central theme of the dwelling place of God. We will learn that Jesus dwells with the Father and the Father in Jesus, and that in the Holy Spirit they will come to dwell with those who love Christ. There will be the call and the promise: "If anyone serves me, he must follow me, and wherever I am, there shall my servant be." No wonder the disciples must ask, "Rabbi, where do you dwell?"

"Come and see," is the Lord's response. Again, the Gospel opens before us. For this command is the repeated challenge of Christ's call. "Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light....But he who does what is good comes to the light." "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and they bear witness to me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger; he who believes in me shall never thirst." "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Coming to Jesus means believing in him; "come and see" means "believe and you will see."

The call of the first disciples is the call of every disciple. It does not describe some single, great, unrepeated moment, but the fundamental dynamics of every stumbling attempt

to walk behind the Lord. In every moment, Jesus turns and asks, "What are you looking for?" It is a question that judges us immediately, for we are what we are looking for, and there is a seeking that will never find the Lord Jesus. If we are seeking ourselves, we will not find him. If we are seeking confirmation of the selves we already are and of the worlds we already inhabit, we are not seeking at all. We must, first of all, be looking for something. We may all have had experience of not seeking at all, or of seeking only for ways to assure the continued comfort of familiar and unquestioned habits and patterns of living, or even of seeking not to seek in the way that some troubling demon within us keeps on insisting we must seek. We may even cry out with the disciples, "Where are you staying?" and that question can be more refusal than desire: Tell me where you live and I will come. But the gentle reply will always be, "Come and see"--not "Come because you see"--not comfort in advance nor sight before surrender--but, "Come and see."

That must be the story of our lives, seeking in order to find, finding in order to seek again. That a good deal of the business of our living is the purifying of our questions should strike no one here as novel, nor does anyone, I trust, pretend that it is any less difficult than it is central. The eros of the mind and heart, we know, is too easily deflected off into the pursuit of self, too commonly smothered in goals unworthy of its purity and power, too effectively imprisoned within horizons comfortable because familiar and mediocre, until its very ingenuity and power become the instruments of our enslavement. In such an experience, we may first feel the power of Jesus' call. For he comes asking us the question that cuts to our core, asks what we are seeking, what we are asking about, what we are asking towards. And to the desperate cry, "Where do you live?" comes the reply of welcome: "Come and see." And we are suddenly given to understand that we, not the first to love, are also not the first to seek, that the One we seek is off in search of us, "seeking though lacking nothing." And, knowing that the seekers have first been sought, we may then learn that in our seeking we have, all along, been drawn by the Father, drawn beyond our own desire, beyond our own doing, beyond our own selves, seeking because found. "Give me someone who loves," Augustine said, "and he will understand;" and we may end by discovering that we desire what we had shunned, love what we had feared, enjoy what we had fled. And then, finding that we have been found, we may seek again, confident now, with a hope "that does not disappoint," because there dwells within us God's own love, "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit he has given us."

That is the gift and the hope in which we now stand and seek, all of us, from whatever background, in whatever circumstances, with whatever responsibilities. We have, each of us, still our many, many questions to ask--alone and together, about ourselves, about our world, about our God. Like the disciples, we address Jesus as Rabbi and as much more, as Messiah and Lord and

Son of God, but there is still much more for us to "come and see." But what we have already seen and felt grounds the hope of further, deeper, clearer sight, and removes our seeking from a fearful or even dreadful, desperate clutching after a place in which to dwell, and enables us to be at peace even in our questioning, in the grateful knowledge that the One we seek seeks us, and has found us, and, even now, dwells with us.

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Homily for the Eucharist
In Celebration of the 70th Birthday
of Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J.

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