

Year B, January 14, 2018
2 Epiphany
Christ Church, Mexia

God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know it's me. AMEN.

"History is strewn with people who were living a comfortable, untroubled existence, until they experienced the Epiphany of God in their lives. Like the first disciples, they left everything and followed Christ. They weren't punishing themselves, as some kind of penance; they changed their lives because they had seen something better," observes Br. Geoffrey Tristram, SSJE.

"Here I am." - Just three small words that Samuel spoke, but such significant words, especially if and when we speak them. Today's lessons give testimony to people "going to God" (the theme of Epiphany) ... of answering God's call. In the OT it was Samuel, hearing God's voice while still a child and sleeping at night; in the NT it was Nathanael, who like Philip and 10 others responded to the call of Jesus, though some more readily than others.

Epiphany is an invitation to go on a journey we cannot order or control, following in a way we cannot fully comprehend. Maybe it is somewhat like what Frodo, in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, had to do. Sometimes it's not easy to do what God asks of us. For example, a wealthy retired corporate executive began to work as a sexton in a Roman Catholic church. One day he was dusting the statue of a saint and he heard a voice say, "go sell everything you have and follow me." The voice was so real to him that he went to his bank, withdrew all of his money, left it in the church's poor box, and went to a monastery, without even telling his family. When he didn't come home, the family notified the police, who were able to find him. When the family heard what he had done, they put him in a private mental hospital, but he was soon released as "mentally unstable" but harmless. Was he - mentally unstable? Well, surely in today's society such actions seem to be rash, irrational... but how many church "saints," canonized or not, have similar stories?

It's scary to give up control, almost any control at all, and especially to do something that seems to defy rational logic, to do something that is not self-centered, but God centered. And yet there is evidence to

suggest that giving control to God is very liberating, very satisfying... but it may not always seem to be by today's standards or worldly judgment.

I imagine that Philip's encounter with Jesus was somehow dramatic, and certainly it was lifechanging, but all we are told is that Jesus encountered him and said, "follow me." Maybe the fact that he was from the same town as Andrew and Peter, who had joined Jesus the day before, influenced his decision – maybe not. But Nathanael? He's skeptical based upon Jesus' origins, he is different from the others, and Philip just tells him to come and see. Now remember that according to John's chronology, Jesus hasn't done anything yet – healed people, turned water to wine, etc. – things that might compel people to be drawn to him. Yet when Nathanael meets Jesus, he recognizes him for who he is and follows him.

The Rev. Curtis Farr reminds us: "As members in a faith community, we too have opportunities to join God in what God is doing. Often those opportunities lead us down unfamiliar paths. Sometimes those opportunities require that we take a good, hard look at ourselves and correct our path. Sometimes we simply need to find our spirits nourished and our energies renewed. More often than not, we can find ourselves in a cycle that moves us from contentment in the familiar ways of our world into a whimsical curiosity, in an adventure that promises us joyful results." We don't often get a lot of information up front about what it will be like. It's more like, "come and see," and we let the adventure unfold.

But as the gospel story indicates, it begins with us and our Epiphany with God. And then we need to encourage others to "come and see." But we need to act, and to act in the way that God calls us. Let me conclude with a saying of Mother Teresa that I believe fits with the message of today: "I used to pray that God would feed the hungry, or do this and that, but now I pray that (God) will guide me to do whatever I'm supposed to do, what I can do. I used to pray for answers, but now I'm praying for strength. I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things." Come and see!

In the name of the one God, the Creator, the Word, and the Spirit.
Amen.