

Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows



Ordination

Saturday, the third week of Lent



Reading: Matthew 4:8-22

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and **I will make you fishers of men.** And they straightway left their nets and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father and followed him.

Commentary

The fundamental calling of all Christians is the same: to become who we were meant to be in Christ by being brought into the dynamic exchange of love that is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the universal calling of all people: to become truly human under God.

We answer this calling via the medium of jobs, tasks and ministries through which we are able to use our God-given gifts and talents to serve Him. For instance, some are called to be teachers, doctors, journalists, tradesmen, homemakers, shopkeepers, diplomats, politicians, to be in business or trade, and some to be priests.

The sacrament of ordination is about receiving the grace to answer and live out a particular call and to occupy a particular place within the Body of Christ. Like other vocations, it's a way of life taken up and lived on behalf of the whole Body.

The calling to be with Christ originates in His initial calling of his first disciples. In the passage above, Jesus says to Peter and Andrew, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Down the centuries, bishops, standing in the authority of the apostles, have echoed Christ’s call to his disciples via the sacrament of ordination. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, the priest is given the grace to celebrate Holy Communion, to absolve, to bless, to baptise and to anoint.

In the Church of England ordination liturgy, the Bishop says that priests

‘share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church, delighting in its beauty and rejoicing in its well-being. **They are to set the example of the Good Shepherd always before them as the pattern of their calling.** With the Bishop and their fellow presbyters, they are to sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of word and sacrament, that we all may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God.’

The example of the Good Shepherd as the pattern of vocation for priests speaks not just of their pastoral responsibilities for their congregation but their participation in the ministry of the Bishop in the ‘cure of souls.’ ‘Cure’ means more than care (although it is built on love). At its centre is the ministry is the saving of souls, that reconciliation between individuals and God and between people and communities through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is ministry of pastoral care, worship, sacramental feeding and spiritual

advice for everyone: for the 99 in the wilderness as well as for the one that has been lost.

Meditation

At every ordination, the priest is asked a series of questions by the Bishop about the kind of priestly life into which s/he is to be ordained. Each time those about to be priested answer: 'By the help of God, I will.'

This dialogue between the Bishop and those to become priests displays the profound truth that those called by God to the ordained life cannot bear the weight of their vocation in their own strength. It is a calling that involves sacrifice, endurance, faith, hope but above all, the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Then the Bishop asks the people present to continually pray for those being ordained and to uphold and encourage them in their ministries. These prayers are vital in sustaining the calling of those deacons and priests.

Think back on your lives and call to mind all the ordained ministers: bishops, priests, deacons who had a part to play in helping you answer the call of Christ, who guided you in your faith or who provided counsel during difficult times.

Wherever they are, take a moment to give thanks for them and pray that they would be filled with the Holy Spirit, be sustained in His love, and be true to the pattern of their calling.

Prayer

Through your Spirit, heavenly Father,
give your servants grace and power to fulfil their ministry.

Make them faithful to serve
and constant in advancing your gospel in the world.

May they follow the example of Jesus Christ your Son,
who washed the feet of his disciples,
and set the needs of others before his own.

May their life be disciplined and holy,
their words declare your love
and their actions reveal your glory,
that your people may walk with them in the way of truth
and be made ready for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;
to whom, with you and your Holy Spirit,
belong glory and honour, worship and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

Portion of the ordination prayer: common worship