

Saturday, January 14, 2017 Sunday, January 15, 2017 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Children's Liturgy at 9:30am First Reading: Isaiah 49. 3, 5-6 Psalm 40 Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1. 1-3 Gospel Acclamation: John 1. 14, 12 Gospel: John 1. 29-34 Donna

We are in the very early days of 2017. Liturgically we are in 'ordinary time'. This refers to two specific periods in the Christian calendar in which the Sundays are not directly related to the Christmas or Easter. Rather than referring to something common, 'ordinary' in this sense, comes from the word ordinal, meaning numbered. This references the manner in which the Sundays of the period are numbered. The term was coined at the Second Vatican Council and took effect with the Season of Advent in 1969.

Today (Sunday) is also the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. We know that many people in the world today are not safe and have to leave their families and their homes. Later we will pray for all people who need a safe place to stay and all those working to make that possible.

Did you make any New Year's resolutions? I have to confess that I did not. Maybe I'm being a bit complacent and not feeling a need to dig into anything in a deeper way. Maybe I look ahead to some imminent changes in my life because I'll retire for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time at the end of March and John, my husband, will retire for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. It will be enough to bring intentionality to that and live it well.

Two streams emerged as I reflected on these readings. Both streams require commitment, support of others and a deep desire to walk in the love of Jesus and be that face of Jesus to others. Our readings today ask 'What is my call?' and 'How do I encourage and support others to live their call?'

What is your call? Who called you?

Are you called to be a woman of justice? A man of integrity? A person who does the neighborly kindnesses that makes a particular area of the city a wonderful place to live like the neighbor that uses his snow-blower and cleans a number of driveways? An employee who remembers the birthdays of co-workers and makes your workplace a place of celebration on those special days? A person who is an active member of a non-profit board of directors to make our community a better place for those marginalized by society? A person who smiles readily at the stranger as a sign of welcome? What do you do with your unique gifts to honor what you have been given and to enrich your community?

Today's readings invited me into those sorts of questions. John the Baptist is clear that he is part of God's plan and that it is Jesus 'Who takes away the sins of the world'. John declares that his role is to reveal Jesus. What is my call? What is your call?

Sometimes our calls become confused with our jobs and we might think that if we don't have work, or the work we really want to be doing, that we are not living our call. I'd like to consider that our call is much bigger than what we do in terms of paid work. And most of us have many roles or facets of our lives. We may be sons or daughters, children or adults, students, employees, employers . . . this list can go on and on. Yet it doesn't get to the essence of our readings today.

What is your call?

Let me share a story about my friend, Beth. She was a woman born in the 50's with Down syndrome. She moved to a large institution when she was 6 and lived there until she was 35. Then she moved to a small town in southwest Ontario and lived in a large group home. She was a happy person and brought a lot of life and fun to those fortunate enough to know her. Beth had a dream. She wanted to live in an apartment and get married. She and a friend moved to a small apartment. Beth met Tom and they were engaged. She decided not to marry when it became clear her husband to be expected her to stay home and 'take care of home things' once they were married. Beth valued her work in a sheltered workshop and she loved the people she worked with. She wasn't willing to give this up so she never married Tom. Beth taught many of us to ask for what we wanted, to explore and be curious, to take risks, to love others and yet be true to ourselves. She had clarity and wisdom. She was brave and loving. She saw the best in others and expected people to be kind and honest.

All those gifts Beth lived were her call: Curiosity, risk taking, loving others, being true to herself, clarity, wisdom, bravery, kindness, honesty.

What unique gifts have you been given that you share with the world, with those around you? What do you have to give that only you give or give in a unique way?

I think of the men and women who volunteer at the Supper Table and those who come together to create and tend the 2 gardens in our parish community, those who share their musical talents and lead us in song every week, those who coordinate various aspects of our community so we can come together and worship and pray. I think of people like my friend Robert who comes to St. Joe's on occasion and welcome others with a smile and gratitude for their presence. Robert may say 'Bravo!' rather loudly at the end of a song we are singing because he finds the music so wonderful. His appreciation for each person and for music is heartfelt and he shares these passions freely, with enthusiasm.

The other piece of our call is the act of being called. Who noticed that you had a unique ability or talent or passion in some area and encouraged you? Paul's letters, like the portion of his letter to the Corinthians that we read today, are full of encouragement. He reminds the Corinthians that they have been "sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints". This has implications and we'll hear more about right conduct in the next 6 Sundays. For today, let's go back to the question 'who noticed you had a unique ability or talent or passion in some area and encouraged you?' For many of us, the first people who named our gifts were our parents. Some of us may have had parents that didn't do that and it may have been teachers or friends or someone else who noticed we had a particular talent or passion.

It is important that we take the time to name and appreciate one another. Some of us intuit that we have a gift or ability and some of us need it to be named. Most of us need our community, be that family, friends, coworkers --other people, to affirm us so we have the courage and the venue to share our talents.

For many years a community that I belong to gathered all the people working there together for a Christmas lunch. At that lunch we each got a new pair of socks and inside the socks was a small gift certificate. These were distributed one at a time as we sat together. When someone received their gift others in the group named appreciations for that person and his/her gifts as lived in community that year. Marsha, who like me is no longer employed there, said it best recently when commenting on the experience "Having your gifts celebrated

with everyone was the most awkward, uncomfortable and on the spot moment that left your heart so full. I miss that!”

We have gifts and talents given to us by a loving God, supported by the grace of the Spirit. Like God, who is Trinity, we live in relationship. We are invited to use our gifts, talents and passions for the good of all and to support one another in identifying gifts, talents and passions and developing them. As 2017 begins perhaps we can be intentional both about naming one another’s gifts and using our gifts to bring our community ever more into the fullness of God’s love. On this world day of migrants and refugees some of us may be called further into welcoming others, creating just societies where the most vulnerable truly have a place at the table.

That might be a New Year’s resolution!

Donna Rietschlin

### **Other readings**

If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together. African proverb

Pope Francis’ message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2017 [http://rcav.org/wp-content/uploads/papa-francesco\\_world-migrants-day-message-2017.pdf](http://rcav.org/wp-content/uploads/papa-francesco_world-migrants-day-message-2017.pdf)