

Homily 2021.01.17 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

This Sunday is something of a bridge between Christmastide and Ordinary Time.

This year in the Sundays of Ordinary time we will steadily work our way through St. Mark's Gospel, but we don't start that until next Sunday. Why not? And also having heard St John's account of the call of Andrew and Simon (Peter) today, we will hear St. Mark's account of their calling next Sunday. Why the repeat?

The answer is that this Sunday is a remnant of what might be called 'Epiphanytide', something that existed in earlier calendars, and still remains in some today, but was phased out by the Roman church in the reform of the calendar. Another remnant is the tradition of keeping of the crib until Candlemas.

We tend to use the word 'Epiphany' to mean the visit of the wise men, and that alone. But strictly speaking, 'Epiphany' simply means 'showing' or 'revealing'. And the church sees a number of early events in the gospels as having this epiphany quality about them: the baptism of Jesus, and the early events in St. John's gospel, up to and including the Wedding at Cana, when through the changing of water into wine 'He let his glory be seen'.

So we approach today's readings still with our Epiphanytide glasses on. The Word of the Lord is revealed to Samuel. The sanctity of the body is revealed to St Paul. The Lamb of God is revealed by John the Baptist, and the handover from John the Baptist to Jesus begins. His disciples become Jesus' disciples. As John the Baptist says elsewhere 'He must increase, I must decrease'.

How is the Lord revealing himself to you today? Where is he to be found in all the strangeness of these times? He may not present in anything neat and tidy, or clear and certain: remember the confusion of Eli and Samuel before they get it, and the dramatic conversion of St Paul. And without the generous 'letting go' by John the Baptist, there would have been no Andrew, and so Simon (Peter) would never have been led to Jesus.

The Word of the Lord may come to us at any time, in many guises. Let us be ready to reply, 'Speak Lord, your servant is listening.'