

This past Wednesday evening the children who are currently participating in First Communion training gathered along with their parents and me in the old fellowship hall for our second class. The curriculum we are using provides a different instructional video for each class session. As I prepared to teach Wednesday night's class, I went downstairs and attempted to get the DVD working in the new video player so everything would be set and ready to go at class time. And, not surprisingly, I could not figure out how to get the machine working. I still had not been able to figure it out by the time class started, so Nate Nelson had to do figure it out for me during the class. Thank God for Nate Nelson! Anyway, my point in telling this story is that I have always had difficulty understanding how to handle and operate technical and mechanical equipment. While such understanding comes very naturally to some, I always find myself befuddled and cannot seem to make sense of what to do. I have always been one of those people who needs to learn and verify things experientially. I am an experiential learner and I usually must seek out someone to show me what to do and how to do it and thereby, through that **experience**, finally understand.

Because I am an experiential learner, I appreciate the sequence of events described in today's gospel reading. Today we are told of John the Baptist who has the **experience** of baptizing Jesus. John has the experience of seeing the Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove and then is able to confidently point to Jesus as "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John's **experience** gave him insight and he could then assuredly proclaim who Jesus is.

Because of John's **experience**, two of his disciples decide to follow Jesus to try and learn more about this unusual man. As they begin following, Jesus turns to them and we hear the very first words Jesus speaks in the gospel of John. What is so fascinating is that Jesus' first words appear in the form of a question as he asks, "What are you looking for?" Jesus uses a question to draw these two men into relationship, into the **experience** of relationship with him. It is helpful to look at the original Greek when listening to what Jesus asks. Jesus' question would be better translated as, "What are you seeking?" or "What do you hope to find?" or "What do you long for?" And, Jesus speaks these same words to each one of us as **we** meet him. Jesus' words invite **us** to look into the depth of our being and ask, "What is my deepest longing, what is it I hope to find in this one called Jesus?" And, as a Faith community that desires to engage the

greater community, I believe there are many seekers around us who are asking the same questions. There are many in our greater community who are longing for something more, something deeper in life. As we work to connect to those beyond these walls, I have to ask each one of you, what is the hallmark of this community that we can lift up so that others may see who we are, whose we are, and what we offer in this place?

Well, it is interesting that the disciples reply to Jesus' question by asking where he is staying. Again, it is important to look at the original Greek as we try to make sense of this **experience**. The disciples' question to Jesus goes much deeper than simply asking about a geographical, physical location. The Greek word used implies they are really asking where he is dwelling, where he is abiding (a word we find used over and over again in the gospel of John). The disciples are asking Jesus where he is remaining and indwelling. They want to know where they can come and simply experience being with him.

We live in a culture that is all about doing. Our lives are all about what it is that we **do** or must get **done**. In a culture where more and more of us have our faces buried in our phones or tablets, simply being **with**, abiding **with**, intentionally remaining and being present **to** someone is

increasingly rare. What does it mean for us to reply to Jesus' question by desiring to come and simply **be** with him?

I find it fascinating that Jesus does not offer an answer to the disciples' question. Instead, drawing them ever more deeply into the **experience of relationship**, Jesus' response is a simple invitation to "*Come and see,*" an invitation that is profoundly relational. His invitation is non-threatening, simple and very clear. Jesus' invitational response is so beautiful because it is open ended and does not require any prior pre-judged concepts of Jesus. And, isn't that the miracle of the Jesus journey? Despite the countless layers of encrusted doctrine, dogma and determined identities that the Church has put onto Jesus as well as the requirements so many communities put on prospective followers before they even begin a faith journey, Jesus does **not** do this. His invitation is simply to come and **experience**. *Come and see*. It is an invitation to unprejudiced, undetermined encounter and relationship. It is an adventure where the disciple and the teacher live together in relationship. It is an invitation to come and participate in this Jesus reality and it is **the** pathway to life.

Living in relationship is what this faith journey with Jesus **is** all about. When we respond to Jesus' audacious invitation to **come and see**, we begin an **experiential** journey of continual discovery as we learn that this

God of whom Jesus speaks is all about relationship and love. We will discover true life that is always relational, life that is all about a flow of love and a dance of grace.

Jesus' answer, "***Come and see!***" is an answer that captures a primary message of John's Gospel: If you want to know the word made flesh, come and see Jesus. If you want to know what love is like, come and see Jesus. If you want to **experience** God's glory, to be filled with bread that never perishes, to quench your thirst with living water, to be born again, to abide in love, come and see Jesus. If you want to behold the light of the world, to enter into life everlasting and to experience life that truly matters, come and see Jesus. If you want to know God, **come and see Jesus!**

I said at the beginning that I am an experiential learner and I deeply want to live a life that truly matters. As I long for this in life, I cannot think of a better learning **experience** than responding to Jesus' invitation to **come and see** and experience the joy of living in relationship with Him. Let's make this journey together. ***Come and see.***