

FR HUGH'S HOMILY FOR 3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Simon and Andrew, James and John, are at work. Fishing is their business. That is how they feed their families. Everything depends on the sort of catches they make. So we have to translate that into the jobs we have today. In an office, on a factory line, driving a bus. Or perhaps we are retired so we have our own routines own home and have to work out the amount of money we have to live on. If we are unemployed our lives are governed by appointments at the DSS office which we cannot afford to miss.

Into this routine steps a man, dressed like us, who normally walks around without looking any different from anyone else, and he says, 'Come and follow me.'

What are the chances of us dropping everything regardless of family or any responsibilities and following him?

(You can imagine the gossip in the town if you or others did.)

For that matter family concerns and talk. "You have, he/she has gone mad. What are we going to do about them?"

Do you think you would do this? Drop everything and go. However great the guy was, wouldn't lots of other concerns come into our minds first? My first feeling is one of relief that Jesus has not exactly done something like that to me. It is true also that the older I get the more attached I am to my creature comforts.

Do I want someone asking me to drop everything now? No.

But...there is something happening here in this gospel today whereby Jesus is gently sidling up to us, through the story of the disciples, and saying to us, OK, I am not asking you to drop everything today (unless you feel called to do so), but I am letting you know that in whatever walk of life you are in now, 'The Kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'

I think he is throwing this into our lives, and just seeing what we do with it. The kingdom of heaven is, for us now as for the disciples then, the presence of Jesus in our lives. So the question he asks is 'what will you do with that?'

I think he is also saying, 'If you do not want to face it now, I, am still there with you waiting to see what you do.' As we know so well the word he uses to introduce this idea of a kingdom is 'repent.' Which we know means 'change.' How much change are we willing to make to our lives to explore this kingdom now. Because we can discover more about this kingdom if we change to do so, open our lives to his presence.

At the start of the gospel we get some odd stuff about land of Naphtali and Zebulun, Galilee of the Gentiles. Galilee had been invaded centuries before, people exiled, foreigners settled in it, so the Jews saw it as an area where the faith was pretty weak. Lots of Romans and others had settled there too.

So Galilee was in a way a place of darkness faith-wise. But the light they are to experience is now here. Jesus himself.

Our world today is a little like that. Faith-wise it is not strong except in certain places. But when we open ourselves, perhaps gently not immediately, to the kingdom, to change our lives to welcome Jesus, then we are the light. Each of us.

And just as Jesus began small, with four blokes who knew nothing about him, and then grew, that can be where we are. Trusting in the light.