

DEACONS GEORGE'S HOMILY FOR SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Jews were never baptised. They were Jews simply because they were born of Jewish parents. Therefore, because of their Jewish birth, they were already within the faith of Judaism. The Jews believed that **they** were chosen ones of God, and **they** were already assured of God's salvation, and therefore they had no need of baptism. However, for a gentile, i.e. a non-Jew, to embrace Judaism and be allowed to worship in the synagogue, he had to become a "God Fearer" or "proselyte". And in order to become a "God Fearer", it was required that he be baptised. He had to be baptised, because he had to renounce his previous sinful way of life, or former religion, in order to be cleansed and become one with the chosen people.

But then along came John the Baptist, whose personal calling from God, was to make the Jews realize their own sins, and their need of God. In John's baptism the people were summoned to repentance, and in return, receive the forgiveness of sins. But when Jesus came to John at the river Jordan to be baptised, John was startled, because he believed that it should be the other way round, and Jesus should baptise him. because, Jesus, being who he is, does not need repentance, or the forgiveness of sins from his Father, because he was incapable of sinning, he is God.

I spent many days pondering this Gospel passage, and a picture was continually at the forefront of my thoughts. It was of Jesus saying something like this to Mary, "**that's it Mam, no more making and mending tables, chairs and doors, for me, I'm off tomorrow, I am going to see my cousin John, he is baptising down by the river Jordan**".

I thought to myself, one day, Jesus must have decided to leave home and change his job, so to speak. I could easily answer this, and say, "Well, it was God's plan, and Jesus was simply carrying out his part in it". But Jesus is also human, therefore he must have pondered this, or was it a spur of the moment thing, **Yes Lord, I'll go and do it now.**

How does God call? and how do we respond? When I think back, on some of the decisions that I've made, I can only speak for myself. One evening I parked my car, and set off to cross the road, to enter the pub and have a pint with my friend. Instead, I went in the opposite direction, 180°, and knocked on the door of a presbytery, and when the housekeeper opened it, I said, "I want to become a Catholic". She said, come in, Father will see you now". Why did I do this?

20 years after this, a strange young man tells me to, "Look for the road to Emmaus". I went, and looked for the road to Emmaus, and found it. This resulted in me, an introvert person, leaving my job, home and family, for 3 years, to work with people with whom I was very uncomfortable the homeless, drug addicts, alcoholics, and paying £40,000 for the privilege of doing so. Why did I do this? And later why did I go off and lead a mission.?

Now I am living with my family in Grange, having had a good job in Barrow shipyard. On 23 February 2002, whilst sitting in a grotto with a parishioner, sheltering from the rain, during a parish retreat, the parishioner says, "Why don't you become a Deacon". Why did I do this?

God speaks to us in many ways. I can think of at least nine ways, and I have just touched on 3 of them a vision, an angel, a prophecy. Jesus was called by his Father, to go and see John the Baptist. He went, and as a result, God's plan of salvation was achieved. In the same way God has lots of much smaller plans, in which we are called to fulfil our part. But, first, we must listen to the call, and the message. And second, we must do what the message tells us. We may never figure out its purpose or reason or see the outcome of his plan. so be it, but then, does anyone understand God.

Whatever the task is, large or small, short or long timescale, unpopular or difficult, The Lord will sustain us throughout our task, and we will not be tested beyond our strength, however, he may push us to our limits, but in turn, we will discover our real self. It may be something as easy as "**cross the road and say Hullo to that man or woman over there**", or perhaps **hug your wayward son**, or **change your job**, or it could be something really different, like "**go to a seminary in Rome then be a priest in Kendal**".

Who knows what God wants us to do for him. But then on the other hand, if we don't listen, we won't know. And for some people, don't listen is the easiest option. But then he might send an Angel to corner us, so we have no other choice but listen to him. I believe that each one of us is created for a purpose and if **everyone** responded to God's call, (or calls), and fulfilled their calling. **Then, we would bring about heaven here on earth.**