

Dear friends,

As always I hope that this issue finds you well and coping with whatever the New year brings. Today we hear Jesus identified as 'Lamb of God'. When two people try to find out more about him, Jesus invites them to 'come and see'. They believe that they have found the Messiah and bring others to Jesus. This brings a clear message that we are not to keep what we discover about Jesus to ourselves.

With every blessing, Margaret.

Call to worship:

Come everyone – come and see the Saviour, the Lamb of God.

Come and stay a while with him – then go and tell.

Lord, help us to come with open hearts and minds, eager to spend time with you – longing to learn more about you – wanting to take more of who you are out to the world – until everyone has come to you.

"The next day John was there again, with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said:

'Look, the Lamb of God!'"

Lord, we don't always recognise you when you come towards us. There are so many things going on in our busy lives which distract us from you. Today we wait on you, ready to listen and obey.

The words to 'All heaven declares' written by Noel Richards [b.1955] & Tricia Richards [b.1960] StF 293

1 All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord.

Who can compare with the beauty of the Lord?

Forever he will be the Lamb upon the throne.

I gladly bow the knee, and worship him alone.

2 I will proclaim the glory of the risen Lord,

who once was slain to reconcile us to God.

For ever you will be the Lamb upon the throne.

I gladly bow the knee, and worship you alone.

Prayer:

Welcoming Lord, we thank you that you invite us to come and see. You extended a warm welcome to us.

We thank you that you invite us to stay and eat with you.

We thank you that we can draw ever closer to you.

We worship you, knowing that you have chosen us and we are honoured in your sight.

You have become our strength. Amen.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Father God, for those times when you invited us to come and see and we have turned away – forgive us.

When you offered us a warm welcome, yet we didn't extend that welcome to others – forgive us.

When you invited us to tell others about you yet we turned away and chose not to – forgive us.

When you invited us to come and eat, yet we chose to eat elsewhere – forgive us.

Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, we have been washed clean by your blood, by your sacrifice upon the cross. We have been made whole in you and you invite us to walk with you fresh each day.

Thank you for wiping the slate clean. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

John 1: 35-42:

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said: 'Look, the Lamb of God!'

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked: 'What do you want?'

They said: 'Rabbi' [which means teacher], 'where are you staying?'

'Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.'

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him: 'We have found the Messiah' [that is, the Christ]. And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said: 'You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas.' [which, when translated, is Peter].

Comment:

In a break this week from Matthew's Gospel, the compilers of the lectionary have inserted a reading from John's Gospel representing a carefully constructed summary of God's revelation in Jesus. In keeping with the traditions of his contemporary historians, John provides an interpretation of the events he describes through the words spoken by those in his narrative.

John's Gospel does not give a direct account of Jesus' baptism such as we had last week from Matthew, but the words of John the Baptist state that he himself did not know who Jesus truly was till he saw the Holy Spirit descend on him at his baptism. Now, however, he is able to proclaim five truths that have been revealed to him:

- 1 Jesus existed before John – that is, he is eternal.
- 2 Jesus is the one upon whom the Holy Spirit descends and remains.
- 3 Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit.
- 4 Jesus is the Son of God.
- 5 Jesus is the Lamb of God.

John the Baptist shares this revelation with his own followers, who put their faith in his words and leave him to follow Jesus. Andrew and his unnamed companion do not simply want to meet Jesus – they want to know where he is staying so that they can spend time with him. Jesus' words, 'Come and see', are no casual invitation but they offer the opportunity to understand and bear witness. This is exactly what Andrew does when he goes straight to find his brother Simon, and shares the astonishing news that they have found the Messiah.

Meditation of Andrew. [Nick Fawcett – An Amazing Man year A]

'Come and see,' he said, so we went to his lodgings and remained there the rest of the day, listening spellbound as he read the Scriptures and brought them to life.

The Lamb of God, John had dubbed him, and we soon realised why, for he taught unlike any we had heard before. He taught with quiet authority, amazing insight and awesome wisdom, unfolding the law and the prophets so that they spoke not just of the past but of the present.

Clearly God was with him – but it was more than that – he was speaking *to* and *through* him, heaven somehow touching earth in his person – the divine there beside us.

Could it be, we wondered?

Could he be the long-awaited Messiah, the one we'd all longed to see? Surely so!

And we rushed off finally to spread the news – to tell others of the one we had found.

He told us to come to see for ourselves – and, thank heaven, that is what we did. We followed him home – and we are following still, for he has shown us the way to life.

.....

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to know you for ourselves – to make time each day to nurture a meaningful relationship, dependent not on what others have told us or on what we have learned second-hand - but on a personal encounter, an ongoing experience of your presence.

Draw near, and keep us close to you, now and always. Amen.

Illustration [David Adam – Sermon Illustrations].

It is often proclaimed that the Church is suffering from a crisis in the West. There is a shortage of priests and ministers. Allied to this is a shortage of money. But more money or more clergy will not cure the crisis. The Church needs a dose of Andrews! It needs people who will abide *with* Christ and then bring others *to* Christ. The Church is not short of people, and it could grow like it did of old if we would learn to abide with Christ and seek to bring others to him.

The Church grew from twelve disciples who were with Jesus and who wanted others to know him. We must learn to bring others to the One we know and love. Just think how quickly the Church would grow if we were all committed to bringing someone else to know him.

Prayer:

"I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

Think about what this means to you. Prayer for opportunities to share Jesus with others.

Lord, our world is made up of many people with many different needs.

We sometimes forget the difficulties others have in very different aspects of their lives.

We pray for people who are visually impaired.

We thank you for modern technology that helps them communicate.

Jesus says: 'Come and see.'

We pray for people who are deaf.

We pray that they will receive the help that they need so that they never feel isolated in their own world.

Jesus says: 'come and hear.'

We pray for people who are living in a country that is not their own, facing difficulties of language – and just not feeling at home.

Jesus says: 'I am here.'

We pray for all people who are worn down by the pressures and troubles of life.

We pray for all who are ill in body, mind, and spirit.

Jesus says: 'come and be healed.'

We pray for people who have been devastated by the loss of a loved one.

Jesus says: 'I bring you my peace.' Amen.

A Personal Prayer:

Lord, I know there are times when I am not willing or able to take time out with you.

Help me always to make space for you in my life – not by pushing everything else closer together, but by truly putting you first where you belong, and letting everything else fall into place around you. Amen.

**The words to 'O God, you search me' written by Bernadette Farrell [b.1957] Singing the Faith 728
Based on Psalm 139**

1 O God, you search me and you know me. All my thoughts are open to your gaze.

When I walk or lie down you are before me; ever the maker and keeper of my days.

2 You know my resting and my rising. You discern my purpose from afar,

and with love everlasting you besiege me: in every moment of life or death, you are.

3 before a word is on my tongue, Lord, you have known its meaning through and through.

You are with me beyond my understanding: God of my present, my past and future, too.

4 Although your Spirit is upon me, still I search for shelter from your light.

There is nowhere on earth I can escape you: even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

5 For you created and you shaped me, gave me life within my mother's womb.

For the wonder of who I am, I praise you: safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, you invited us to come and see and you opened our eyes to your wonders.

We have been transformed by our encounter.

Now give us the courage to go and tell – to share with others we meet, so they too may be transformed by you.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and evermore. Amen.