

There is one hope in God's call to us. In the name of God. Amen.

I.

If someone had told me when I was a little girl spending so much of my youth growing up on Key Biscayne that I would one day be the priest at the Episcopal church which by the way did not exist at the time, I doubt very much that I would have believed them. When one says, *Here am I Lord*, one just never knows where the Holy Spirit will lead! And now, 10 years later, we are almost to the end of our journey together.

"The trouble with the idea of vocation," writes Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, *"is that most of us, if we are honest, have a rather dramatic idea of it."* We tend to think of it as God finding us a part to play in the ongoing work of God in the world. We look at it as a role that God chooses for us to play in the grand scheme of things, a part for which we have been uniquely selected and set apart.

While this is true and even *"central to the Christian doctrine of vocation,"* Williams goes on, *"there is a lot that it doesn't say. On this pattern, the will of God is seen as still being something very like the preferences of God: God would like so-and-so to be a priest or nun or something, and that is what so-and-so must be."*

"God has decided . . . It may seem arbitrary, but the clay doesn't argue with the potter." There is another way of understanding the idea of vocation, Williams claims, and that is to understand it as part of God's calling us into being. *"In the most basic sense of all, God's call is the call to be."*¹

II.

Today, the Gospel of Mark tells the story of the call of Simon and Andrew and James and John. Aside from Peter, I have often wondered why we don't know more about the other disciples. We know very little, for instance, of who Andrew is or what eventually becomes of him. We do know that he is a fisherman from Galilee, the younger brother of Simon, who comes to be called Peter.

The gospel of Matthew tells us that when Jesus calls Andrew and Peter, they immediately leave their nets and follow him. In John's Gospel account, Andrew and another disciple, encouraged by John the Baptist, are first to follow after Jesus. Andrew then goes off to find his brother Simon, and announces to him that they *"have found the Messiah."* *"He brings Simon to Jesus,"* the gospel writer tells us, who then welcomes him and gives him his new name, Peter (Jn 1:40-42).

In Christian memory, Andrew lives in the shadow of his older brother, Simon Peter. While Peter is portrayed as the primary spokesperson for the twelve and one of Jesus' closest friends, Andrew stands off to the side or in the background. Though he is always named in the list of the disciples, he does not become part of Jesus' "inner ring"—only Peter, James and John receive that distinction. The brief mentions that are made of Andrew are both revealing and endearing.

At one point in John's gospel, two strangers come to Philip, asking that they be allowed to see Jesus. Philip tells Andrew, and together they bring the two men to Jesus' attention (Jn 12:20-22). The two men are Greek, and it seems that Andrew's unassuming, faithful action helps set the stage for a ministry of Jesus that will move beyond the confines of Judaism to reach so many of us who are Gentiles by birth.

¹ The above quotations are taken from "Vocation," a sermon by Archbishop Rowan Williams in *A Ray of Darkness*. (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1995), pp.147-149.

In yet another scene, there is a huge crowd who gathers around Jesus out in the countryside. They are hungry for Jesus' words of life; they are also hungry for lunch, desperately hungry. It is Andrew who, among the thousands of people, finds a little boy with loaves of bread and fish to spare and share (Jn 6:8-9).

As with so many of us, God's call to the disciples seems to come as a "call within a call." The primary vocation, of course, is to be a follower of Jesus. Simon, Andrew, James and John lay down their nets in obedience to the call of Jesus, and follow him.

III.

But within that call, there is a unique call for each of the disciples. With Andrew, for example, another call seems to take shape, a vocation that is especially Andrew's, and that reveals to us some of who he is and what he comes to be as a follower of Jesus. Though his older brother Peter outshines him in almost every respect,

Andrew seems to have been given a unique ministry – a "ministry of introduction," we might say. His particular role seems to be that of pointing to the One who is the Way, and then getting out of the way. He introduces Peter to Jesus. He brings the two Greek men to Jesus. He brings the small boy with bread and fish to Jesus.

It is impossible to know whether Andrew has to deal with the kinds of "developmental issues" that inform the psyche of us who live in western society in the 21st century. Does he feel inferior because of his less prominent role among the twelve? Might he feel self-conscious of his lack of training or formal education? Does he have to work through issues of jealousy or resentment towards those who are more prominent or polished? Does he have trouble finding his own voice?

We don't know this about Andrew, or any of the other disciples. But we *do* know it about ourselves. And amidst all the competition of this society in which we live – so consumed with success, recognition and achievement – Andrew's is a refreshing witness.

He obviously knows that Jesus calls *him* – not who he *could* have been or maybe felt he *should* have been, but *him*. And Andrew says, *Okay*, and follows, and brings others to follow as well.

IV.

As I said in the beginning of my sermon, if someone had told me when I was a little girl spending so much of my youth growing up on Key Biscayne that I would one day answer the call to be an Episcopal priest, and go on to answer the call to be the Rector and Head of School of St. Christopher's By-the-Sea on Harbor Drive, I doubt very much that I would have believed them.

In the late 1950's and 60's, Key Biscayne was definitely a quieter, kinder, gentler place. Weekends and summers visiting my Aunt who worked at the Key Biscayne Hotel and my Uncle who served as a Miami-Dade police detective, riding my bike through the rain puddles with Billy, my cousin, cutting through the lobby of the Key Biscayne Hotel to get to the beach, skating on Friday nights at the open air skating rink in Crandon Park are all part of my favorite memories. My first pet, a miniature Dachshund, came from the Key from a neighbor who lived behind my aunt and uncle. Her name, High Born Lady of the Key. We called her "Lady." It is fitting that Billy's ashes, as well as my mother's and my sister's, are in the Columbarium and now forever a part of the fabric of Key Biscayne.

This is the last sermon I will preach at St. Christopher's By-the-Sea on Harbor Drive. Harbor Drive - Harbor by definition, a place of refuge. Our red doors a symbol of sanctuary, by definition a place of comfort and safety and welcome.

On January 20, last Monday, a young woman shared her poem, *The Hill We Climb*, during the presidential inauguration. Her performance of her work was graceful and lends a new definition to “poetry in motion.” Her words strike me as insightful, poignant and timely.

Particularly these words which I have taken some literary license:

When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade.
The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.

We have learned that quiet isn't always peace and
the norms and notions of what just is,
isn't always justice.

And yet the dawn is ours before we know it,
somehow we do it,
somehow we've weathered and
witness a community that isn't broken but simply unfinished.

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone
shall sit under their own vine and fig tree
and NO ONE, NO ONE, NO ONE,
should attempt to make them afraid.

If we're to live up to our own time,
then victory won't lie in the blade,
but in all of the bridges we've made.

That is the promise to glade,
the hill we climb
In this truth, in [keeping] this faith, we trust,
for while we have our eyes on the future,
God has God's eyes on us.

The new dawn balloons as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.

Jesus calls each of us to follow him. The particular way in which we follow will be an expression of who we are and of what we desire to become. And in the tradition of a John Donne pun. We are never done. . . .

“To be is to be where you are, who you are, and what you are . . . a person with a certain genetic composition, a certain social status, a certain set of capabilities . . . And to . . . recognize at each moment that it is [God's] desire for you – and for me – to be, and [created in God's image, how dare you not] be the [very best] person you are. It means [God] is calling you by your name, at each and every moment, wanting you to be you.

There is one hope in God's call to us. Amen.