



17<sup>th</sup> January 2021

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

1 Samuel 3:1-10 | Psalm 139: 1-5 | 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 | John 1:43-51

**Main Point:**

Jesus command for us to 'come and see', will always become 'come and be' when the Holy Spirit begins the work of transformation in our lives.

Greetings! It's great to be here with as our church family.

I must admit the message I have prepared for today, started out as a bit of a challenge for me, re connecting prayer & the Gospel message, of "come and see"? however, as usual the initial fear we have at the task, vanishes when you pray, and allow the Holy Spirits guidance, to reconnect to all that one has experienced and witnessed, and in my case, the last 30 of my Cursillo and Kairos Inside experiences, and like Mary, kept & treasured in my heart, so that today I can apply them in the message today .

Let us pray,

*Heavenly Father, may the words I speak today, encourage and help us to grow in wisdom, love and service as your servants in this community. Amen*

So onto today's food for action, and the connection between our prayers and the gospel message of invitation that Jesus offers us all to "come and see" !

In November last year, we had our Diocesan Cursillo get together called an Ultreya. (That's Spanish for onwards and upwards brothers & sisters, let's keep journeying together in Christ as our leader) and the witness speaker spoke on prayer, her opening song to introduce the talk was from MP 567, the words written by James Montgomery (1771-1854) 'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire."

I love that definition right at the start – prayer is the soul's sincere desire – uttered or unexpressed, the words of hymn resonate with me. The hymn starts (MP 567)

*'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire  
Uttered or unexpressed,  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.*

And then the verses go on to say in verse 3 "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, The Christian's native air" and then in verse 4 "No prayer is made on earth alone; The Holy Spirit pleads."

What beautiful poetry these words are provided me with the connection between prayer and the invitation Jesus extends to us to "come & see", and so now to the link!

Back in 1991, during our team formation for Men's 3 Cursillo Newcastle, a mate of mine, for his talk, made this beautiful cloth banner, with the Cursillo Movements motto embroidered on it. It read "*Make a friend, be a friend, bring that friend, gently, to Jesus*".

This is a wonderful saying.....the only problem with the banner, was that my mate misspelt friend 4 times ..... he had embroidered the letter Freind...the 'I' and the 'e' around the wrong way. The dismay in the training group was tangible, all was lost, the banner could not be used, but, and I love this, the Leader of the Cursillo said, 'Wait, there is a message for us here. In making a friend, put the 'e' before the 'I', the 'e' being *He*, pray to God before we commence our actions'. So, the banner was incorporated in my mates talk, to great effect!

This has always stuck with me about how we should approach all our life's endeavours. With prayer!

Now to our Gospel reading, John's Gospel is characterized by a variety of encounters with Jesus, from characters that range from:

- a devout if not sceptical Jew like Nathaniel in today's Gospel.
- to the religious leader Nicodemus (ch 3),
- to a "foreigner" like the woman at the well (ch 4)
- to an outcast in the man who received his sight (ch 9)
- and so forth.

Paying attention to this variety of responses to Jesus may help us to prepare to address the variety of responses we receive when we share the Gospel of Jesus, be it by action or word, as challenged by Phillips call to Nathaniel to "come and see" after response, Nathaniel's reply to Phillip, of '***Can anything good come out of Nazareth?***'

As we hear, Jesus genuinely compliments Nathaniel, affirming the very quality – "without guile;" that is, someone who doesn't (or can't!) hide his feelings and so speaks his mind that contributed to his Nathaniel's smart-aleck and sarcastic response in the first place.

Then, Jesus lets Nathaniel know that he *saw* him. ("Seeing" is more than mere physical site, of course; it's noting someone's presence, valuing them enough to pay attention.) Finally, he makes Nathaniel a promise that he will see far greater things than what Jesus has just shown him.

Throughout, Jesus' response to the varied reactions of these first disciples – and, indeed, throughout St John's Gospel – is what we would describe as "gracious invitation."

Jesus does not get defensive, or irritable, or boastful, or demanding – characteristics that seems regularly on display by too many our own "leaders" these days – but instead Jesus focuses on his dialogue partners, the people He is talking to, taking them seriously, and inviting them through word and action to "*come and see*."

Except when it comes to Jesus, it doesn't stop with come and see, but always moves to the deeper invitation to *come and be*.

- *Be* what God has called you.
- *Be* the person the world needs.
- *Be* all you can be.

- *Be* the beloved child of God who invites others to a similarly transformative experience of relationship with Christ.

Among other things, tucked into this observation is the good news that God is not done with us! That, indeed, God will never be done, never give up, keep showering us with grace and inviting us to become more, even as God loves us just as we are. So,

- Perhaps, our task for 2021 is to keep offering the “gracious invitation” of our Lord.
- Perhaps it will result in Nathaniel’s rather stunning reversal and confession.
- Perhaps it will take far longer, as it does with Nicodemus, who leaves his first encounter with Jesus utterly perplexed, only to show up again at his trial and after his crucifixion near the end of the story.
- Perhaps it will empower people to witness to their friends and neighbours what they have experienced, as it does with the woman at the well.
- Or perhaps it will give us the courage to face the adversity in their lives, as it does the man who receives his sight. We don’t know.

But we do know that Jesus keeps extending that invitation to all people – and to us! – to become the persons God has called us to be and the world needs.

- Even when we fall short.
- Even when we have a hard time believing.
- Even when we don’t feel worthy of God’s attention or care?
- Even when we have a hard time getting ourselves to church.

Yet Jesus is still there, always inviting and loving and forgiving and redeeming...and all out of the “grace upon grace” (John 1:16) that Jesus embodies, incarnates, and offers.

What a wonderful challenge to us all, to live our lives, so that those we know and meet, who haven’t fully understood the Christian message, might “come and see” and pray often, as, in the words penned by Corrie Ten Boone, *‘Let prayer be your steering wheel in our life, not our spare tyre. Amen.*

### **Some reflection and discussion questions**

1. When Jesus invites you to ‘come and see’ something, how do you respond?
2. Put into your own words what Bill means by ‘come and be’.
3. What are the greatest obstacles you face in putting Jesus call into action?
4. Bill said that Jesus is always redeeming. What areas of your life need redeeming?
5. Write out a prayer to the Lord about the areas in your life that you would like redeemed:

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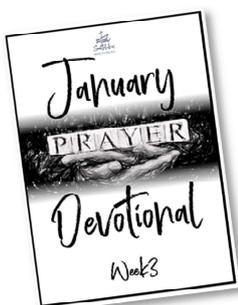
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### **Look out for the January devotional**

The January devotional has been developed using a number of prayer resources. At present, we are using, Darren Cronshaw’s ‘Dangerous Prayer’