

Leavening Church

Thought for Sunday 24th January (Janice Clark)

The lectionary reading for last Sunday, from John's gospel, gave an account of Philip, Nathaniel, Peter and Andrew encountering Jesus. Andrew, having met Jesus, goes to find his brother and tells him "We have found the Messiah". The next day Jesus encourages Philip to follow him, who then tells his brother, Nathaniel, that they had found "the one Moses wrote about in the law".

The reading for today ([Mark 1: 14 -20](#)) gives a completely different version of how Peter, Andrew, James and John encounter Jesus. They were working, casting their nets, or getting their nets ready to go fishing. All four of them respond immediately to Jesus' invitation to follow him. No excuses, no hesitation irrespective of what the impact might have on life of the extended families of these four men.

Their response was to allow Jesus to become part of their lives. Everything would have changed, and the influence that Jesus had on their lives, led them to places and situations, as fishermen, they were unlikely to encounter. Their lives were to become fruitful, productive, in a new and revolutionary way. They had access to an amazing teacher, they observed the exchanges that Jesus had with religious leaders, that they would have never dared to have. They experienced how Jesus treated people, especially the marginalised, and women. Later they would be expected to practice their new found faith in similar ways.

Today (Sunday) we are almost at the end of the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#). No longer able to meet with our sisters and brothers for worship, all of the material is available online. The worship and material for reflection has been prepared by the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland. This is a women's community, women from different generations, Church traditions, countries and continents. In their diversity the sisters are a living parable of communion. They remain faithful to a life of prayer, life in community and the welcoming of guests. The sisters share the grace of their monastic life with visitors and volunteers who go to Grandchamp for a time of retreat, silence, healing or in search of meaning.

When asked to prepare the material, they could not have foreseen the pandemic and its impact. The theme they chose is "Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit", based on [John 15:1-17](#) and expresses Grandchamp Community's vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the Church and the human family.

Those first disciples discovered over time how they were abiding in God's love. They discovered that life did not have to be 100% full on, but that worship in the synagogue, and time away from the crowds for quiet and rest were just as important. Abiding in Christ is an inner attitude that takes root in us over time. It demands space to grow. It can be overtaken by the struggle for the necessities of life and it is threatened by the distractions, noise, activity and the challenges of life.

Spirituality and solidarity are inseparably linked. Abiding in Christ, we receive the strength and wisdom to act against structures of injustice and oppression, to fully recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters in humanity, and to be creators of a new way of living, with respect for and communion with all of creation.

In the material provided for each day there is a section Do and Go. Here is an example:

Global: Find out about and join the prayer chain for climate justice.

Local: Campaign together for climate justice in the lead up to the United Nations climate change talks in Glasgow 2021.

Personal: Take action for climate justice in your own life.

Pray and work that God may reign. Throughout your day let the Word of God breathe life into work and rest. Maintain inner silence in all things so as to dwell in Christ. Be filled with the spirit of the Beatitudes: joy, simplicity, mercy. (Words said each day by the Sisters of Grandchamp)