

Homily 23rd March 2025 – Choral Evensong.

Texts: Psalms 12;13; Genesis 28:10-19a; and John 1.35 to end.

Title: The meaning of following Christ.

Some days ago, I discovered that the homily for today includes a similar passage from the Gospel of John about the first disciples of Jesus, which I had preached in January 2024. I asked Canon Daphne what to do in cases like this, because I did not feel comfortable repeating the sermon and she suggested, I try to explore another angle and perhaps, reflect my experience as an Ordinand, which is precisely what I will do in this homily.

The reading of this evening refers to the first disciples of Jesus, starting with Andrew (who was one of John's disciples), his brother Simon, who was named Peter by Jesus, and then Philip, and finally Nathanael. At least three actions are common in the case of these first disciples, to **hear**, to **find**, but most importantly, to **follow**. For instance, Andrew hears John talking about the "Lamb of God", and then he finds and follows Jesus. In Galilee, Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael. First, Jesus says 'Follow me' to Philip, and he not only follows Jesus, but also finds Nathanael and announces the importance of having found Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus announces to his followers a powerful prophetic gift, disclosing heavenly dimensions: 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' Here, we encounter a representation like Jacob's ladder dream found in the Book of Genesis. The difference is that there are no angels ascending and descending upon Jacob's ladder; here, Jesus is the ladder, he is the link between the Father and humankind. There is an invitation to see the Son of Man, and the revelation of the glory of God.

In the Gospel of John, the concept of follow has generally two meanings, first, as following behind someone, and second, as taking the first steps of real discipleship. In social media the two most popular English "influencers" are the

football player David Beckham with 88 million followers in Instagram, and the actress Emma Watson, famous as `Hermione´ in the series of Harry Potter, with 74 million followers. This could be an example of the first meaning of “follow”.

The second meaning is utterly different. I would say that the expression of `follow me´ can be understood as a model of discipleship, to experience Jesus’s transformative presence in the world, yesterday and today. This second meaning refers for example, to 28 million Christians in England and Wales; 5 million in Switzerland; and 2.2 billion Christians around the world.

As humble disciples, we follow Christ, even facing the demanding pressures of the secular society today...but we follow him!

I wonder what the message could be for us today. Indeed, to follow Jesus, to be his disciples is something very different from following someone on a social network.

During the last months of my Ordination training supported by the Church of England, I have been learning about *Ministry and Mission; Creating New Christian Communities; Christian Discipleship and Ministry in interfaith contexts; Christian Ethics or Pastoral Care*, all of them connected with discipleship. This training will definitely help me for future ministry!

I would say that some aspects of Christian discipleship may include:

-Read the Scriptures, worship and pray every day. For many of us, worship and prayer are fundamental aspects of our private and public life every day. For me, reading Scripture and quietly reflecting on that each day is challenging for my long hours of work. However, some phone “applications” like `Daily Prayer´, created by the Church of England, give us the opportunity to listen to the Bible at least three times a day.

-Share the Good News of the Kingdom of God in our words and deeds, as commissioned by Jesus in the last chapter of the Gospel of Matthew to make

disciples. I really strive myself to share in words the Gospel with family and friends, and in deeds, everywhere!

-Teach and nurture others about the commandments made by him in Scripture, which include `Love your God and love your neighbour`. I am trying to follow the commandments in every single action in my working life, showing the Christian character, and I think that my team, my supervisors and others can note it. Sometimes, it is extremely challenging to love your neighbour when we know of people behaving with hate, selfishness, greed and with no respect for human dignity. I honestly try and I am sure we all do!

-Strive to be dedicated to what we are doing, keeping in mind the importance of following Christ. Holy Trinity Church gives us many areas of involvement. Many of us have complex professional or personal commitments; however, we know that the opportunities to participate more are always there.

Two thousand years later, we have a standing invitation to follow Jesus Christ, to be witnesses of his transforming presence in us and in others. You and I are part of that endless chain of generations of Christians, and we are trying to follow Christ in every aspect of our lives.

We are approaching Eastertide in the coming weeks, and I think that the promise of Jesus when he says, "you will see greater things than these" to his first disciples, can represent an invitation to bear witness of his life, his ministry, his death, and most importantly, the wonders of his resurrection.

Finally, this week, I invite you to continue praying so that the message of the Gospel would be received with love and more people -of all ages- might come to faith and to reflect about what is the meaning of follow as disciples, embracing the calling to be a witness to Jesus.

Amen.