

HOMILY ORDINARY SUNDAY 10 – A

“Call and Response”

(Hosea 6:3-6; Psalm 50; Rm 4:18-25; Mt 9:9-13)

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Are you answering God’s call?

Strive to live your baptismal call and follow Jesus more closely.

Our baptism is a call to live like Jesus. The gospel today is about Matthew’s call, and his response. We are invited to reflect on our own call and response:

First, like Matthew, God calls some of us to a life commitment as priest, religious brother or sister, or married life.

Second, God calls all of us to be like Jesus; to live fully our baptism into Jesus. At baptism we were anointed priest, prophet and king. By baptism, then, we are all priests. God calls all of us to live the priesthood of the baptized.

Baptism is about being like God, like Jesus. In the readings, Hosea tells us that God wants love, not sacrifice; knowledge of God - not burnt offerings. Jesus says almost the same words: I desire mercy, not sacrifice; and I came to call sinners, not the righteous.

Jesus came to reveal God as love, mercy and forgiveness. God loves us by accepting us as we are, and forgiving us. Sr. Teresita Kambeitz OSU once wrote that God’s unconditional love accepts us as we are, and believes in who we can become. God calls us to respond to that unconditional love through conversion, transformation, change, and to become merciful and forgiving towards others as followers of Jesus, in whom we are baptized.

The evangelist Matthew is an example of this loving call by God and a heartfelt response. Jesus sees Matthew, accepts him as he is, forgives him, and calls him to follow. Matthew leaves everything, follows Jesus and becomes one of the Gospel writers. In a sense, he becomes an apostle and a priest

But Matthew also changes. He gives up his sinful, cheating ways, receives the forgiveness of Jesus, makes amends for what he has done wrong, and shares the Good News with others like him at a banquet.

I was also called by God to priesthood, though I avoided it for years. One day after French class a priest professor at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon asked me if I had ever considered being a priest. That did it – I knew that God was calling me to priesthood. Finally I accepted and was ordained in 1974.

Years later, God led me to live my baptismal call more deeply, by healing my relationship with my father. I did not understand Jesus' words in the gospel, "I want mercy, not sacrifice", and tried to earn my dad's love for years by hard work and arguing with him about the way he had raised us. Finally, with the help of the 12 steps, I came to my senses, was able to forgive my father, asked him to forgive me, and we were reconciled. That was when I really lived out my baptismal priesthood.

The 12 Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous is another way that God is calling us. Steps 4, 5, 8, 9 are all about receiving forgiveness from God, ourselves, and others. Steps 6 & 7 are all about healing – learning to forgive those who hurt us, and letting go of anger and resentment. That is another way to live our baptismal priesthood.

Jesus summed up the bible in two simple sentences: God who is mercy and forgiveness loves you; now love him back with your whole heart, mind, strength and soul, and love your neighbor as you love yourself. Do this and eternal life will be yours.

The Eucharist we celebrate today makes present the merciful, forgiving love of God that Jesus showed us on the cross. To listen to God's word and to receive communion with faith is to be healed and sent out to be like Jesus, a source of mercy, forgiveness and healing to our broken world.

So remember, God accepts you as you are, and believes in who you can become. Live your baptism, the priesthood of the faithful, follow Jesus more closely, and be agents of healing and forgiveness in a broken world.