

Ordinary A 4 January 31 and February 1, 2026 Greenwich

That Gospel text of the Beatitudes is so familiar, it's hard to remember anything else from today's scriptures. But I first want to point you back to the opening line of the second reading. It probably went past our ears unnoticed, yet it is a bombshell of a line.

“Consider your own call, brothers and sisters.”

In scripture the word “call” has three interwoven meanings: God calls to someone by his or her name— Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Samuel, all of them heard God call them by name. And sometimes that call bestows a new name: Abram becomes Abraham, Sari becomes Sarah, Jacob becomes Israel, Simon becomes Peter;

that call then becomes a summons, out of a place or a situation, into a new reality: God calls Abraham out of Ur and into Covenant; calls the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt into a promised land; calls all humanity out of darkness into God's own wonderous light.

And God calls upon such people to take up a mission on behalf of the Reign of God: become a light to the Nations; follow Me; proclaim the Good News to the ends of the earth.

Sure, you may protest, God called them; but I'm not like one of those great ones, those saints. God doesn't send angels to me, doesn't speak to me from a burning bush.

And besides, I'm not sure I'd want to hear God speak that directly. He might yell at me or ask me to do something I don't want to do.

You may be tempted to say, "Here I am Lord; send him!"

The cynical wag jokes: when we talk to God, it's called praying; when God talks to us, it's called schizophrenia!

Those objections may be understandable, but they are not honest.

Paul wrote to the ordinary members of that community at Corinth; and today that same word applies to the ordinary members of this ordinary church community at Greenwich. "Consider your own call."

In passing, let me note that the word in scripture for "church" is "ek-klesia", that is, the folks who have been called out of their former ways and called together to be the body of Christ. So just by coming here you are implicitly recognizing that you have been called! Amen.

Anyway, the call of the Lord isn't just to someone else; it's to each one of us; and it is at the core of our identity as disciples.

And what does God say?

The first word God spoke is not a rebuke, not a demand.

The first word God speaks is a word of goodness and love: “Let there be light!” And all creation declares the glory of God.

And God creates human beings to give voice to that glory, to receive that love, to share that divine life and goodness.

And the first word God speaks to humans is a blessing: “Be fruitful and increase in number.”

So, the first “command” each person receives, simply by being human, is to receive the gift of creation with awe and gratitude and praise.

We do that when, as the Prophet Micah said, we love tenderly, act justly and walk humbly with our God. (Micah 6:8)

And more than this: God has spoken a second word of Good News to us: His Son Jesus, God's Word Made Flesh.

And the Lord Jesus has called us into Covenant with him, a Covent made in his Blood, the Blood of the Sacrificed Lamb of God.

He has bestowed upon us our truest name, Christian:
anointed one, one who belongs to Christ.

And that name becomes more than a label; it becomes our true identity, when we finally discover that we are indeed blessed,

whenever we are meek and merciful and singlehearted;
whenever we struggle to establish peace and justice.

In these ways we are fashioned in the likeness of Jesus, who lay down his life for us.

To such disciples Jesus speaks a third word. More than just “Do good and avoid evil;” more even than just “Follow me and be my disciple.”

To each disciple, Jesus speaks a unique word: “I want to bless with my grace your particular talents and abilities, and limitations, your personal history and story, so I may make of you an everlasting gift to My Father and My Church. I want you to serve me and my people in your unique way, as a married person, or a priest, a teacher, healer, deacon, prophet, catechist, nun, parent, administrator, preacher, artist, poet, pray-er.”

The crisis of vocations in the contemporary Church is not that fewer young men and women are entering seminary or religious life.

Our real crisis is that too few of us really listen to the Lord speak to us individually; too few of us really believe that the Lord can and does speak to us.

We will not be a community where some of us hear a call to public ministry in the Church unless each of us and all of us are attentive to our own unique calls for incarnating God's grace.

Certainly, we want more individuals to respond to a call to ordained ministry:

people already tested and proven by their service to the community,

people whose lives are fashioned by the Word of God and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit;

people whose lives reflect the profound moral transformation of having died to sin and come alive in grace;

people capable of reconciling members in their differences with each other, and making credible God's reconciliation;

people trustworthy enough to speak hard and uncomfortable words, as prophets do, and courageous enough to remain faithful to God's word and to the Church, even when the community might reject that word and that ministry.

I keep hoping to meet someone who fits all those criteria; I keep hoping to become such a person!

In short, we look for leaders who recognize our charisms and gifts of Christian ministry, and call them forth, coordinate and empower those charisms---leaders who, in the words of the Letter to the Ephesians, equip us for our shared ministry of building up the Body of Christ.

But this will not be a community where some of us hear a call to public ministry in the Church unless all of us are more attentive to our own unique call to incarnate God's grace. And that's not always easy. We need one another to help us listen more profoundly for God's Word to us.

So let me be very specific:

I ask you married people to pray for a deeper sense of vocation in your marriage, a deeper awareness that God called you from all time to be husband and wife to each other, and so to be a sacrament, and effective sign in the Church of God's presence and fidelity.

I ask you widowed to listen more deeply to God's word to you, so as to appreciate your role in the Church in testifying to the Lord's upholding you in your aloneness.

I ask you who at this time are single, to testify to the fruitfulness of your chastity in your singlehearted embrace of God's Kingdom.

I call upon my brothers and sisters in religious and clerical life, to stir up anew the Spirit of God who first led us to our present vocations, so that our lives might not be a burden but a joy and a delight.

And most especially I ask you young people to pray for the freedom to hear God's Word to you on an even more intimate level.

Ask that you might know how much God loves you, as you are, for who you are.

Ask that you might have the courage and the freedom to give yourselves to an ever-more intimate friendship with the Lord Jesus.

Ask for the freedom to make Jesus the touchstone and definition of your life, the polestar by whom you direct your journey.

To some of you, the Lord will extend the invitation to become servants of the Word, those entrusted with passing on in public ministry the gift that all of us have received.

The Church needs people who are conscious that they have been called by God, called

into love and justice,

into Covenant,

into service and witness to Christ's Kingdom,

so that we continue to hand on what we have received:

the Word of Life,

the Word of Good News,

the Word Made Flesh, Jesus Christ.

In the coming days, pray to recognize and discern such people in our midst.

Pray to be such people, who hear the call of the Lord and respond, “Here I am, Lord, send me.”

And the people of God said, Amen.