

We've left the Christmas season behind, but I want to go back there in memory one more time. For me, and maybe for you, Christmas is a time of many parties and social events – and for some of these I get electronic invitations in my e-mail. These invitations are filled with information: time, date, place, etc. But one of the features is the listing of the people who have been invited and how they've responded. So you can see . . . “Tommy and Gail are coming, and Jack. They should be fun. Let's see, Lisa can't make it – she says her mother is sick (is that the real reason? I know she doesn't get along with Gail . . .)” I appreciate the data because who wants to end up somewhere awkward or boring. Life is short. But . . .

I mention this kind of invitation because when Jesus invites people to come with Him He doesn't operate like this at all. “As [Jesus] was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, ‘Come after me and I will make you

fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.” When Jesus invites us, He doesn’t answer our questions or give us much of a clue about the future He has planned for us. The when, where, with whom, is all very sketchy. But, my point, an important part of the invitation to Christian Discipleship is precisely this mystery.

Back in the olden days, when I was a boy, I was taught by my parents that when you are invited to a party it’s bad manners before accepting, to ask who else was coming – or what is being served.

Seeking that information would seem to imply the company of the host and hostess wasn’t good enough, that you doubted their ability to serve you well. The point was – just go and trust them to put on a good time. The mystery of what would happen was part of the fun of the party.

We want to control our lives, including our spiritual journey with God. And we get nervous or back off when we can’t see where following Jesus will go. But faith is trusting in the unseen. As I preached last week, I’ve been getting more interested in the Divine Mercy

Devotions and St. Faustina. You may know that on the picture Jesus asked Faustina to have painted of Himself, He directed that the words “Jesus, I trust in you,” be painted at the bottom. He doesn’t say those exact words to Peter and Andrew on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, but that is what His cryptic invitation means. Trust the Divine Host who invites you to His banquet.

And Peter, Andrew, James and John took Him up on it. They left their resources (nets and boats), their relationships (father and families) and trusted that Jesus’ event was going to be worth it. I sometimes joke about how foolish and thick-headed the Apostles were. But at least they trusted in Jesus enough to leave their lives in His hands. What about us?

Yes, I was raised not to ask too many questions about an invitation . . . but that information about fellow-guests provided by electronic invitations is kind of nice. I also like to know about what I’m getting into. Part of the adventure of being a priest is the same mystery

experienced by the Apostles in our Gospel. The Archbishop tells you where to go and when. But, as I've mentioned briefly in the past, I wasn't on fire to go to any of the parishes I've been assigned to since becoming a priest – not even Holy Family. Tacoma? I didn't want to live in Tacoma – and loved it. Port Angeles? I'd never been to the peninsula in 26 years living in Washington. It's the middle of nowhere, right? In fact, I loved it – great place. Kirkland? I grew up in Bellevue, been there, done that. But it's been a wonderful 13 years. But if I had had the choice in all three assignments, I would have asked to go somewhere else.

And, in case you haven't heard, my term is up. I'm up for reassignment this July. It's really tempting to try to nudge the process according to my own desires. But that would be a mistake. I – we -- must remember that Jesus doesn't negotiate, answer all our questions, or agree to our terms, when He walks by with His invitation. It's just, "Will you come with me, or not?"

What about you? As a Pastor I've observed that one of the biggest blocks to people growing in personal holiness and discipleship is our resisting change and new experiences of ministry. Nobody grows in Christ without going into new territory and doing new things in both their personal spiritual lives and their service to others – as Peter, Andrew and the other Apostles would learn soon enough.

Remember our parish prayer? What next step, big or small, is Jesus asking you to take for Him – without giving you all the information about the cost or what that will be like? What is the Holy Spirit nudging you to try? The mystery and uncertainty is often part of the call of faith. What are your nets – resources, what are your relationships, that might be tempting you to stay on the beach?

If Jesus gave you the same invitation that He gave Peter and Andrew, what would you do? I ask because He already has! We've been baptized. We've already been called to follow Jesus wherever He wants to take us. The only question is whether we will drop our nets and go.