Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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"Come and you will see" (John 1:37).

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Educator

1 Jn 3:7-10; Jn 1:35-42

The New Year gives us a chance to examine our priorities and the direction of our lives. While so many New Year's resolutions focus on self-improvement, the scriptures offered us in the liturgy remind us that discipleship is the key to finding ourselves and our real purpose. We will find ourselves by submitting to instruction. The first step is to find the true Master.

How appropriate on this memorial of American Saint Elizabeth Seton that we see education as the key to self-knowledge and ultimately to holiness.

Today's Gospel tells us the first disciples, who began with John the Baptist, but at his urging, seek out Jesus. They literally follow Jesus home. When he turns and asks them what they are seeking, they answer, "Teacher, where do you live?" In modern parlance, this is similar to asking "where are you at?" or "where are you coming from," referring to a person's home base or basic values. The fact that they call Jesus "Teacher" reveals that they see him as a source of knowledge and direction they are seeking. They want to be his students, his disciples.

Jesus invites them to join him where he lives, in his innermost dwelling, which is his Father. Just as he is listening to and obeying his *Abba*, so he shares this same source and center with them. If they "remain" with him, another key word in this passage, they will gradually "come and see" what Jesus knows intimately-- the inner life of God, the face of the *Abba*, which is mercy.

The first two disciples are Andrew and another companion of John the Baptist. Andrew is the brother of Simon the fisherman, who will become Peter. Jesus meets Simon, a name that means reed, or someone vacillating in the wind, and changes his name to Peter, a name that means rock. This name change indicates the path of transformation that lies ahead for Simon Peter. Jesus knows him better than he knows himself. Peter's new name begins the process of discipleship that will make him the leader of the Apostles.

The story puts strong emphasis on the fact that Jesus "looks" at each of his disciples in a deep and knowing way. His look of understanding and love is the essence of the call to intimate discipleship with him. Jesus is calling them to be with him, where he lives, and to remain with him until their identities and missions are fulfilled. They become themselves by being with Jesus, for he is the Christ, the authentic human being, sent by God to restore humanity to the image and likeness of God.

Jesus sees each of us as God sees us. To be a disciple is to abandon every mask and false self, cultivated to gain approval or to be culturally "with it." To be a disciple is to surrender the greatest illusion of all, that we are sufficient unto ourselves, little gods who can create themselves. To be a disciple is to "get real" and ground our lives in the plan and purpose God created us for, for each of us is a unique reflection of the divine Face.

We begin to be that real self when we follow Jesus, find where he lives, stay with him, and enter into intimate union with the mystery of his humanity and, ultimately, his divinity.