

## A Reading from *The Cost of Discipleship*

By Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*The* call of Jesus goes forth, and is at once followed by the response of obedience. The response of the disciples is an act of obedience, not a confession of faith in Jesus. But how could the call immediately evoke obedience?

The story of the call of the first disciples is a stumbling-block for the natural reason, and it is no wonder that frantic attempts have been made to separate the two events. By hook or by crook a bridge must be found between them. Something must have happened in between, some psychological or historical event. Thus we get stupid question: Surely they must have known Jesus before, and that previous acquaintance explains their readiness to hear the Master's call. Unfortunately is ruthlessly silent on this point, and in fact it regards the immediate sequence of call and response as a matter of crucial importance. It displays not the slightest interest in the psychological reasons for a person's religious decisions. And why? For the simple reason that the cause behind the immediate following of call by response is Jesus Christ himself. It is Jesus who calls, and because it is Jesus, they follow at once.

This encounter is a testimony to the absolute, direct, and unaccountable authority of Jesus. There is no need of any preliminaries, and no other consequence but obedience to the call. Because Jesus is the Christ, he has the authority to call and to demand obedience to his world. Jesus summons us to follow him not as a teacher or a pattern of the good life, but as the Christ, the Son of God. In this short episode Jesus Christ and his claim are proclaimed to the world. Not a word of praise is given to the disciple for his decision for Christ. We are not expected to contemplate the disciple, but only him who calls, and his absolute authority. There is no road to faith or discipleship, no other road-only obedience to the call of Jesus.

And what does Scripture inform us about the content of discipleship? Follow me, run along behind me! That is all. To follow in his steps is something which is void of all content. It gives us no intelligible programme for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after. It is not a cause which human calculation might deem worthy of devotion, even the devotion of ourselves. At the call the disciples leave everything that they have-but not because they think that they might be doing something worthwhile, but simply for the sake of the call. Otherwise they cannot follow in the steps of Jesus. The disciples burn their boats and go ahead. They are dragged out of their relative security into a life of absolute insecurity.

When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to his person. The grace of his call bursts all the bonds of legalism. It is a gracious call, a gracious commandment. Christ calls; we are to follow.

*[Source: Celebrating the Seasons]*

## SAINTS:

**Joseph of Nazareth, 19 March.** In the gospel of Matthew, Joseph is depicted as a good man, a working carpenter, who trusted in God. He received God's messenger who shared with him God's will for him and for Mary, to whom he was engaged to be married. Luke's gospel describes how Joseph took the new-born child as if he were his own. He was with Mary when, on the fortieth day after the birth, Jesus was presented in the Temple, 'where every first-born male is designated as holy to the Lord'. The adoption of Jesus by Joseph also established Jesus in the descent of David, to accord with the prophecy that Israel's deliverer would be of the House and lineage of David.

**Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, 21 March.** Born in Aslockton in Nottinghamshire in 1489, Thomas Cranmer, from an unspectacular Cambridge academic career, was recruited for diplomatic service in 1527. Two years later he joined the team working to annul Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 and duly pronounced the Aragon marriage annulled. By now a convinced Church reformer, he married in 1532 while clerical marriage was still illegal in England. He worked closely with Thomas Cromwell to further reformation, but survived Henry's final, unpredictable years to become a chief architect of Edwardian religious change, constructing two editions of *The Book of Common Prayer*, in 1549 and 1552, the Ordinal in 1550 and the original version of the later Thirty-Nine Articles.

Cranmer acquiesced in the unsuccessful attempt to make Lady Jane Grey Queen of England. Queen Mary's regime convicted him of treason in 1553 and of heresy in 1554. Demoralised by imprisonment, he signed six recantations, but was still condemned to the stake at Oxford. Struggling with his conscience, he made a final, bold statement of Protestant faith. Perhaps too fair-minded and cautious to be a ready-made hero in Reformation disputes, he was an impressively learned scholar, and his genius for formal prose has left a lasting mark on Anglican liturgy. He was burnt at the stake on this day in the year 1556.

### TO PLAN:

- March 21, Thursday. Healing mass, 3:00p.m.
- March 24-Holy Week begins.
- March 24, Vestry meeting, after the 9:30a.m. service.
- April 6, Saturday. B&G workday, 8:00a.m. All are welcome!