

Today in the Gospel Jesus says to St. Peter that he is the rock on which he will build his Church: *"I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church."* We see in the Gospels' that Jesus only uses the word, "Church" twice. In today's passage, and further on in Matthew's Gospel, where there is a passage about fraternal correction and if a brother or sister refuses to change, to repent: tell it to the Church.

St. Paul on the other hand, in his letters, uses the word all the time. The Christian communities that he addresses he calls churches: to the Church of Rome, of Corinth, of Phillippi.

But when we look at the word, "Church" what does it mean? In the New Testament it is the translation of the Greek word, "Ekklesia" - a word that referred to a *"political assembly of citizens."*, An assembly, within the Greek city, that was called together to make some decision. Of course, the language of Israel was not Greek, and so in the Old Testament we have the Hebrew word, 'Qahal' which means an assembly, but an assembly that has been convoked, or called by God.

Both words refer to a gathering; an assembly but with the emphasis that those who have come together have been summoned, have been called to do so. When we read the Gospels we see Jesus calling people to follow him. He summons them: *"come follow me"*.

Within the Church we often talk about vocations: to the priesthood, religious life, marriage, single life. The word vocation means *to call*. When we reflect on our vocation in life do we see it as a call from God?

Father Timothy Radcliffe, is a Dominican Priest and was a former master of the Dominican Order. In his book *Sing a New Song* he reflects on religious life and he talks about the idea of vocation in today's context.

He writes: *"It became less and less clear that one could choose what to do with one's life. One had to satisfy the demands of supply and demand. It*

*was not just we religious who lost a sense of vocation, the whole idea of vocation has become problematic. There are no vocations for anyone anymore; society is not composed of people who have lives to which they commit in this or that particular way, but of functions to be performed only as long as there is a desire to be satisfied. All these professions and crafts and skills, were like little ecosystems that offered different ways of being human. They have weakened and crumbled. All one is left with is the individual and the state, or even the consumer and the market."*

There are no vocations anymore, we do not live lives of commitment, but perform functions as long as there is a desire to be satisfied, some niche in the market that needs to be fulfilled.

If we were to read further along in today's Gospel, Jesus will make his first prediction of his Passion. St. Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. But when Jesus speaks of his impending death on the cross Peter protests and Jesus calls him Satan: "*Get behind me Satan*". Jesus reply to him is, "*Peter you don't understand the mission, you don't understand my vocation*".

As we live through these days of the pandemic, we have to admit that there are many desires that cannot be satisfied at the moment; some elements of the market, such as travel, have almost completely disappeared. There are so many things we cannot do. Summer is almost over and what was it like. Blah. No fulfilled desires, no functions to perform, there is an emptiness hanging over us.

But Jesus calls us to more, our vocations remain, we are still part of His Church. Do we desire to share in the mission of Jesus? To follow him as he carries his cross? To be faithful to our commitments and our vocations? To make sacrifices in the name of love? The faithfulness to our vocations binds us to Jesus, and fulfills our mission within the Church.