



Module 1 – Week 1 - The God Who Calls – 24th May 2022

The Evangelium Project is a spiritual journey that will start with an evening of prayer and worship to draw closer to God and be attentive to His presence. As the weeks progress, it is hoped that there will be a movement to discover the wonderful ways in which God has been present and active in our lives.

The first topic in this series is - God calls us to Himself. To illustrate this, Archbishop Porteous started by sharing his story of how he was called to become a priest. With a normal Catholic upbringing in the 1950's and attending a Catholic school, he was encouraged to say a prayer at his school's chapel each morning. One of those many mornings, as he knelt to do his usual 30 second prayer he heard the words in his mind that said 'one day you will be a priest'. It was completely unexpected as he had not been thinking about the priesthood and the idea stayed with him throughout his schooling years and in the seven years of the seminary. It was only when he was ordained did he realise that it was God who wanted him to become a priest. His calling to be a priest was not his idea, this was something he was very clear about. The call to be a priest was not an imposition but enhanced the sense of purpose and value of his life. This is a simple but profound reality that God calls and calls each one of us.

This constant calling of God is seen throughout the scriptures from the Old to the New Testament.

In Genesis 12: 1 - the call of Abram. Abram was about seventy years old and content with his life, but God called him to move to another land. Abram had no idea where he was going, what he would encounter but this was the call he received. God told him his plan – a call to bless Abram. In Genesis 12:4 it says that "*Abram went*".

Another example of the call of God is in the story Moses and the burning bush in the book of Exodus. From that moment on, Moses devoted his life to this task and faced many challenges in the process. Through it all he was faithful and had a clear sense of what God asked him to do. Moses took it on and stayed faithfully in tune with God even though at times it was challenging. Moses was called and entrusted with a mission.

In chapter six of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah who lived eight centuries before Christ, Isaiah has a mystical experience and sees the angels in adoration singing around the throne of God. An extraordinary experience and Isaiah felt completely overcome by it. How can one not sense their own sinfulness as one comes into the contact of God's holiness? Due to his experience of God, this led Isaiah to want to give himself totally to God.

The Book of Isaiah is one of the most extraordinary books in the Bible. Firstly, it talks about the plans and purposes of God (glory of God) but it also shows us the story of the suffering servant (prefiguration of Jesus who will suffer and die for us on the cross). Isaiah makes himself available to carry out the mission that God entrusts to him as a prophet.

As a final example, in the Book of Jeremiah chapter 1 verse 5, we see some intriguing words – “before I formed you in the womb, I knew you...” God marked Jeremiah right from the beginning, just like He did with John the Baptist. Jeremiah struggles with his calling, feeling inadequate but God tells him that He will be his strength. On one level Jeremiah finds it too hard, but when he stops, he also feels this fire burning in him to keep going. Once the call of God is in your heart, you cannot walk away from it as though it doesn't matter because deep down inside you know that God has called you. So, God is a God who calls and he calls each one of us.

Cardinal Ratzinger – one of the great theologians of our time wrote his first encyclical entitled – *Deus caritas est - God is love. “Being Christian is not a result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea but an encounter with an event, a person which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”* It is a moment - just like with Moses and Isaiah – these moments are events that take place, they change us and transform us extraordinarily. Ultimately Christianity is about discovering the person of God. We see life differently after this moment. They were drawn to new ways of living that they didn't think was possible. Christianity according to Pope Benedict is about an encounter. Every one of us have had an encounter and this will be explored further in the coming weeks.

Christianity is not about our search for God, it's about God's search for us.
“You didn't choose me, but I chose you...” (John 15:16)