Epiphany 3, 22/1/2017 Holy Trinity

“Spiritual” and “mindfulness” are two buzz words these days.

They are both words that are “all about me”.

I guarantee that most of us have some members of the family who do not ‘go to church’ very often but when pressed would say “I am spiritual but not religious”

Where, then, do we start with this.

I suggest that we start with God, however we understand God.

To be spiritual seems to be a seeking for the presence of God and mindfulness is seeking for the God within us.

This is where we make our first mistake because the presence of God is there already ‘whether we like it or not’.

I do not bring God to the university campus at Ourimbah, nor does anyone else.

Occasionally I take delight in saying to staff and students that God is with you ‘whether you like it or not’.

What, then, we are really trying to do is to SEE the presence of God in our midst and to live our life in the presence of God.

Now, let us look at part of this morning’s Gospel especially the part about the call to those who became the first disciples of Jesus.

The general call of Jesus was “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.”

Or, “Think again, God’s kingdom is almost here”.

This was not directed only to the individuals who heard the words as a call for them to repent or to think again about their behaviour and lives.

It was directed also to the Roman Empire with its emperor and other officials for them to change their ways and to think of the overall good of the people whom they controlled.

There was a greater kingdom than the Roman Empire close at hand.

It was the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God that was available to the world.

This leads to a present-day question for which I do not expect to give an answer.

What is Jesus saying to the kingdoms in the world to-day? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.”

Following this in the narrative there is the call by a charismatic, itinerant teacher named Jesus to those who would become his first disciples.

They responded to that call bringing with them their own reasons for answering the call in a most dramatic way, like leaving everything, their livelihood, family, household and friends to follow this itinerant religious teacher.

They brought with them their own understanding of God and the presence of God in their lives.

During that next three years they became aware that there was more to this Jesus than met the initial eye.

They were on a roller coaster ride where their understanding of God and expectations from Jesus would be turned upside down.

No longer could they keep God in the little boxes of the Old Testament.

And even with constant contact with Jesus for three years they could not get their understanding of Jesus right.

It was only after their death to their understanding of God and Jesus and come to resurrection and new life with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that they fully embarked upon the mission Jesus had given them.

Now, where do you, where do I, where do we come into this?

First, we respond to Jesus’ call by cultivating a beginners’ mind.

I am not suggesting for one moment that all that we have learned previously is wrong.

In the Gospels the opponents of Jesus were “good” people who had definite religious beliefs and practices according to their understanding.

Jesus made it clear that even though they thought that they ‘see’, they were really ‘blind’.

This is what I mean that we should cultivate a beginner’s mind.

On our spiritual journey we should see that we are in and live in the presence of God in Christ and that we cultivate our seeing.

I acknowledge that I was blind and now I see.

So I finish with some words from Psalm 40, verses 21, 22:

“As for me, I am poor and needy; but the Lord will care for me.

You are my helper and deliverer make no long delay, O Lord my God.”