

WHAT'S GOT OUR ATTENTION?



While at work last week, I received my daily email summary of probable spam emails. The summary contained 345 emails! Sure enough, each was junk. Thank heavens for the filters, which saved me an extraordinary amount of time sorting through the dross.

When I was a child, lying in bed early in the morning I could hear the train whistling off in the distance as it pulled into the Bartlett station three miles away. As an adult I still find pleasure in hearing the sound of a train whistle as I wake to another day. It's as if this calming sound would be the most important noise of a busy day.

The world constantly bombards us with news and enticements, gossip and advertisements. If you're like me, distractions are frequent and engaging; I forget what's important. Or I'm waiting for something better. Or I'm too distracted to hear, too busy to pay attention, too unfamiliar to listen to the spirit and not the siren.

"Samuel was not familiar with the Lord," and he missed the Lord's call not once but a second time. Luckily, Eli gave him instruction, fortunately the Lord called Samuel a third time, and wisely, Samuel answered the call. Scripture tells us that "Samuel grew up, and the Lord was with him."

St. Paul exhorts us to avoid immorality, which is a sin against one's own body, a desecration of the "temple of the Holy Spirit." Better that we embrace the gifts of the Holy Spirit than be lured by the siren of enticement.

As I was running along side of the road, I approached a cross street. A car pulled up to the stop sign to turn into my direction. Busy on his cell phone, the driver didn't quite stop, took a sweeping glance to the left and, without looking, turned right. I swerved to avoid getting clipped. I wonder what was more important than paying attention to the hazardous chore of driving.

Years ago I was waiting for a response to my question about a change in my work responsibilities. After a few days had passed, I commented on how aggravating the wait was, to which my friend replied that to me this question was highly important and to the manager it was another item on his to-do list.

In the Gospel of John, Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist until Jesus walked by and John praised him. Andrew knew immediately what (who) was most important and turned and followed Jesus, bringing his brother Simon with him.

We allow our hearts and heads a brief respite from worldly communication for the sound of God's voice if we can spend five minutes a day in prayer.

We give ourselves a chance to hear the cry of the poor and vulnerable, each which has Christ within them, if we can momentarily navigate away from the flotsam and jetsam of unceasing texts and postings and emails.

We give ourselves a chance to reflect on what (and who) is important when we can temporarily avoid the immorality of lust, envy, excessive consumerism and addiction to work and selfishness.

As a child, I found pleasure in hearing the sound of a train whistle off in the distance of the morning. As an adult, I find pleasure when I can hear God's voice, especially when I pay attention and listen.

(Readings for Second Sunday of Ordinary Time)



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