

[65] Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Readings: *1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19 / Psalm 40 / 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20 / John 1:35-42*

The first reading can be divided into three segments: (1) the triple call of Samuel; (2) God reveals his presence in response to Samuel's readiness; and (3) Samuel would proclaim what he had heard, "...not permitting any word of his to be without effect." (The liturgical selection skips where he informs Eli of God's message.) We find this same pattern in our vocation as believers. Three times Samuel is called and he fails to recognize that the source is not Eli but almighty God. Eli has to assist him and tells him to respond, on the fourth time, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." Every Christian believer is summoned to be a prophet and that requires that we too might discern the voice of God. Against the loud noise of the world, that divine voice might come across as a whisper. As such we must be attentive and listen closely. Also, like Samuel we might get confused between the call of God and that of men. We need to know the difference lest we find ourselves seduced by the world and listening to the wrong voices. These voices appeal to selfishness and sin. What do they tell us? "If it feels good then do it. You owe nothing to anyone. No one can tell you what to do. Life is short so always make yourself number one. Get what you can no matter who it hurts." The voice of God by contrast is barely audible. What does God say? "Love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends. If you desire perfection than sell all you have, give to the poor and then follow me. Forgive all wrongs. Love those who hate you." I suspect that many of us sometimes listen to the wrong voices. But ours is a jealous God and he does not want to share us.

Note also that Samuel kept going back to sleep. Our Lord speaks about such sleep as the weakness of a fallen nature. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." As prophets we are beckoned as sentinels or watchmen for the Lord. We are called to be awake so as to hear the Lord and to be attentive when he comes. God reveals his presence to Samuel. As prophets who await the second coming, we also discern the presence of God. We draw others to the presence and saving activity of Christ in the proclaimed Word and in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. What we receive from the Lord, we must share with others. As Christians, formed within the body of Christ by the saving truths of Scripture and Tradition, we must proclaim our faith and values to others both inside and outside the Church. As the second reading reminds us, we "are not [our] own, [we] have been purchased at a price," and while in the flesh or the body mimic the angels in glorifying God.

The psalm reiterates our divine calling. God takes the initiative and sows the seed of faith within us. God places the "new song" upon our lips, giving us his mind and the words to say. God is the one who opens our ears so that we might hear and obey him. God has planted his "law within [our] hearts." All this must be appreciated in the context of gift. It is not enough to

encounter God. Rather, we must have a relationship with him. We cannot speak his Good News if we do not know him. Of course, faith is about more than knowing the catechism. God wants our hearts. Any who would be counted a disciple must love the Lord. This is what transforms fidelity from an arduous and reluctant duty to an eager and joyous service. We should not grumble in our fidelity, rather it should be an expression of adamant praise.

Just as Eli alerted Samuel to the calling and presence of God. John the Baptizer points Jesus out to his disciples as “the Lamb of God.” They immediately follow him. Andrew brings his brother Simon to Jesus, telling him, “We have found the Messiah.” When Jesus asks as to what they are seeking, they merely ask where he is staying. Jesus responds, “Come, and you will see.” Our Lord gives the same summons to you and me. We are invited into the story of Jesus, the very story of salvation. He wants us to walk with him and to listen to him. He reveals himself in the Scriptures, the teachings of the Church and in the quiet whisper we hear at prayer. A whisper is a quiet or breathy way of talking. Breathing is intimately connected to life. Stop breathing and you die. The breath of God brings forth creation itself in the book of Genesis. The breath of Christ makes possible forgiveness, healing and eternal life. Note that in the liturgy the priest breathes into the chalice as the wine will be transformed into the saving blood or presence of Christ. The whisper of God is literally God breathing his life into us.

Notice in the Gospel reading that Jesus immediately gives Simon a new name, Cephas or Peter or Rock. While it says something singular about this apostle, we can also infer something about ourselves. Any who would respond to the calling of God are not left unchanged. This is a truth we see again and again in Scripture. One of the most striking examples is Moses when he comes down the mountain after conversing with the Almighty: “As Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant in his hands, he did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while he spoke with the LORD. When Aaron, then, and the other Israelites saw Moses and noticed how radiant the skin of his face had become, they were afraid to come near him” (Exodus 34:29-30). Particularly in our faith and baptism we are born again—no longer just creatures of God but adopted sons and daughters to the Father, temples of the Holy Spirit, filled with sanctifying grace and transformed into the likeness of Christ.

- Do we take time each day to pray and quietly listen for the Lord?
- Have we made our lives too busy for God to reach us?
- Are we truly prophets of the Lord or do we belong to the world?
- Do we take guidance from our pastors and other faithful believers?
- When was the last time that we witnessed for Christ and his Church?
- Do we see our obedience to the commandments as a joy or as a burden?