

Listen for the voice of the one you love

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

1 Sm 3:3b-10, 19 , Ps 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10, 1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20, Jn 1:35-42



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Eli, in our first reading, teaches Samuel to listen for God's voice. I want to talk about listening. Allow me to begin with a story.

In December of 1972, I asked Renata out on a first date. I had tickets to a Civic Theatre production and presumed dinner afterwards. After the play, I asked Renata if she was hungry. She replied, "No, I ate earlier." My game plan was toast. After an exchange of '*what would you like to do*', we settled on a walk in the park. It was snowing heavily, the kind of snow that silences the world and its vehicle traffic. I asked what Renata enjoyed reading and what she was reading now. As it turned out, she was reading a book by the naturalist Mel Ellis. The book was titled, "Wild Goose, Brother Goose." I asked her to tell me about it. We walked for a good two hours, through fresh snow, now knee deep. Ours were the only tracks that evening. I listened to the sound of Renata's voice and the sound of our footsteps on the snow. By evenings end, I knew that I was into something good and special.

I ran across an interesting statistic recently. According to a Pew Report, the Catholic Church represents about 16% of the world population and 50% of the Christian population. A diversity of cultures and religions make up the other 68%. I wondered how God communicated with the 68% that do not find their heritage and story in scripture. The obvious answer is that God invites all peoples to union. Moving between love and loneliness, we make choices accepting or rejecting the invitation to love. We navigate between these poles making our way in the world. We are indeed, social beings.

The interesting part of this is that our relationships teach us compassion and selflessness. They teach us how to love. One aspect of loving is listening.

That is the life lesson that Eli shared with Samuel; listen for the voice of the one that you love. Renata and I have been married for almost 50 years. We can hear each other more clearly today than ever before. We still enjoy walking in the snow and sometimes recall that first walk together. We share quiet conversations that become a prayer of their own. Somehow, my inner room becomes hers and hers mine. Perhaps that is the mystery of marriage where the two become one. It is certainly a place to find the Sacred. The wedding feasts of scripture were always a cause for celebration.

In our Gospel today we hear the disciples ask Jesus where he is staying. He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” Is that not Christ’s answer to us today? Where are you staying, Lord? Right in the midst of your relationships. I am here in the joy and sorrow that you experience. I reside in your love. I am present in the insight and messiness of your life. I am with you in the midst of Covid-19. I will be with you always.

Mel Ellis’s story centers on two Canadian geese that mate for life. Facing hunters and the trial and tribulation of being Canadian geese, they give their lives listening for each other’s call.

In the quiet moments together, a whisper lets us know that we are not alone. Somehow, our love for each other is an expression of His love for us. That is what we share. That is what we celebrate.

This Monday, we celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King. We celebrate his ability to listen to the hearts of the marginalized. We celebrate his inner quiet that allowed him to hear the Sacred in his fight for justice and equality.

All scripture quotations are taken from. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*.
USCCB.

I welcome your questions and comments. My email is fsila@sttomskazoo.org.

Note: Due to Covid-19 this homily was not delivered in person but posted on the St. Thomas
More Catholic Student Parish website.