

**Second
Sunday
in Ordinary
Time**

Year B



FIRST READING
1 Samuel 3:3–10, 19

PSALM
Psalm 40:2, 4, 7–10

SECOND READING
1 Corinthians 6:13–15, 17–20

GOSPEL
John 1:35–42

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PRAYER

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7–10

I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.
Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,
but you have given me an open ear.
Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.
Then I said, "Here I am;
in the scroll of the book
it is written of me.
I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."
I have told the glad news of deliverance
in the great congregation;
see, I have not restrained my lips,
as you know, O LORD.

**READING
THE WORD**

First Reading

1 Samuel 3:3–10, 19

The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call;

lie down again." So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 6:13–15, 17–20

"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

Gospel

John 1:35–42

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

HEARING THE WORD

"Discernment"

Today's liturgy invites us to discern God's call, which people discover in their ordinary lives. An authentic discernment not only changes the direction of one's life, but also empowers to live a Christ-centred life.

The first reading describes the dramatic story of the call of Samuel and the dynamics of divine initiative and human response. "Samuel" literally means God has heard. God's hearing is pivotal in the books of Samuel as, first, God hears the cry of a barren woman Hannah and she finds favour with God; and, second, God hears the cry of the people of Israel for a king and, through Samuel, gives them a king. After the narratives of the miraculous birth of Samuel and his subsequent weaning, Samuel is turned over to Eli for the service of God at the shrine of Shiloh. It is at this shrine, that God calls Samuel to be his prophet. In the above text, we notice that God's call is direct and personal. However, Samuel needed help in discerning God's call. The old and nearly blind Eli, the priest at Shiloh, with his wisdom

and fatherly tenderness enables the young boy, to hear the Lord's voice and respond to his call. Though Eli devoted his life to rendering his priestly service in the presence of the Lord, he is not chosen to be the recipient of God's revelation. Nor were Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were priests at the shrine of Shiloh. They were unfaithful to God through their wicked deeds. They failed to discern the holiness of priestly life and Eli failed in his duty as a father to correct his reckless sons. But God took notice of their wickedness. He wanted to begin a new era with Samuel, thus bringing to an end the unfaithfulness of his priests.

Samuel's threefold coming to consult Eli, his mentor, is characteristic of the process of discernment of God's revelation. When Samuel recognizes the voice of the Lord with his humble prayer and a simple cry of the heart, "Speak O Lord, your servant is listening", the young boy is bestowed with an enormous responsibility of the prophetic call, to announce the total failure and subsequent downfall of Eli. As a result of Samuel's call, God's word is once again heard in Israel and God continues to appear at Shiloh (1 Sam 3:1-4:1a). Thereafter, Samuel would enable the people of Israel to discern God's will concerning their covenant obligations, as well as the religious and political matters that affected the destiny of the nation as a whole.

In the second reading, Paul

ruers the failure on the part of Christians in Corinth to discern between what is holy and what is sinful. Corinth was a cosmopolitan port city and was known for wealth, luxury, and affluence. It was a polytheistic city famed for its immorality. The sinful practices prevalent in the city, especially visiting prostitutes, apparently affected the Christian believers who were recent converts from the pagan religions. They struggled to keep their faith alive in the pagan environment and wrestled with many questions raised by their new faith in Christ. Therefore, in today's reading, Paul admonishes the believers to shun fornication by pointing out that such sexual misconduct is totally inconsistent with a believer, who is baptized in Christ. He upholds the sanctity of the human person (both body and spirit), whom he considers as the "temple of the Holy Spirit". For Paul, being a follower of Christ involves no compromise, when it comes to sexual integrity. As a result, there is no room for any iniquitous and immoral lifestyle which he sees as incongruous with the Christian virtue of holiness. Paul indicates that an authentic discernment on the part of the believer will facilitate abandoning evil ways and embracing a Christ centred life.

In the Gospel reading, we have another biblical call narrative. The text records the second instance where John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as the "Lamb of God" to two of his disciples. As

a result of this proclamation, they decide to leave John the Baptist and begin a journey of discipleship to discern their call in following Jesus. In the Synoptics, Jesus calls his first disciples from the midst of the people, while in the Fourth Gospel, they come from the circle of John's close disciples who recognized him as the true Messiah.

We notice that it is Jesus who takes the initiative by asking the intriguing question: "What are you looking for?" (1:38). These words are not to be understood literally but at a deeper, symbolic and theological level, as they lead the disciples to discern the true reason for seeking the Lord.

In response, they ask him, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" (1:38). The Greek verb *menō* which appears here, means "live," "remain," "stay", "dwell", "abide", "lodge", and occurs more than 40 times in John's Gospel. It expresses the theology of the abiding presence of God in Jesus, the Incarnate Word. Thus, the disciples asked not merely where Jesus is staying, but in whom he is abiding.

Jesus' response to the disciples – "Come and see" – is an invitation to experience the master and to discern the path of discipleship, to establish whether they belong to the master or not. At a literal level, we may be inclined to think that the disciples are being invited to come and see where Jesus lives—his physical dwelling (perhaps, along the banks of the Jordan). However, at

a deeper level, the disciples are invited to embark upon a journey of discipleship. As a result, they respond to his invitation by following him and they stay on and experience what his life and mission are like. Unlike the Synoptic call narratives, where the disciples follow Jesus in a dramatic manner, in the Fourth Gospel, the disciples follow Jesus only after a profound discerning experience.

As a result of their life-changing encounter, one of them Andrew brings his brother Simon Peter to Jesus and he too becomes a disciple. This pattern is characteristic of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel, whereby the disciples recruit others to share the experience of being with Jesus—Philip brings Nathanael to Jesus (Jn 1:43-51) and the Samaritan woman testifies about Jesus to the Samaritan villagers (Jn 4:28-30.39-42). What Andrew did is what is expected of all those who encounter Jesus and experience him earnestly. A disciple who is transformed by the abiding experience that he has with Jesus goes out all the way, tells others about Jesus and invites them to become the follower of Jesus.

God calls people to accomplish his mission at a particular time and place. The response to this call, however, requires that one discern carefully what such a call implies. We see this in Samuel, Andrew and Peter, who, after a profound discerning experience offer their lives freely in the service of God. Such a discernment is what Paul expects of the Corinthians in order that they

may live out their Christian life in holiness. All Christians are called to a similar careful discernment so that, with the Psalmist, they can say, "Here I am... I delight to do your will, O my God."

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

With the invention of mobile phones, we can now communicate with people who are thousands of miles away from us. With a small phone in one's palm, a person can sit in a small corner somewhere in Nairobi – Kenya and listen to the voice of another person far away in Sydney – Australia without necessarily seeing the dialogue partner face to face. That little gadget helps to facilitate and make communication possible. Similarly, without seeing God face to face, we can still communicate with him via a certain spiritual ability that he has put in each one of us – the gift of discernment. However, just as having a mobile phone in itself does not guarantee communication, the God-given ability of discernment does not guarantee effective dialogue with God unless one exercises it appropriately.

Inherent in each one of us is a divinely given ability to listen to the voice of God. Many are not aware of this available grace; hence some move about in this world like a ship without any bearing at high sea. Without guidance, we are bound to get lost or crushed in life. This is where discernment is key. To aid us in the process of discernment, God often brings people into our lives

- the 'Eli's and the 'John the Baptists' - who help us discover the direction of God's Spirit in our lives. Indeed "Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it" (Ewe proverb).

The piece of advice that Eli gave to Samuel, "If he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening'" - is the key to activating the grace of discernment. In sum, a fundamental readiness to listen to what God is saying puts us in a state where we can easily discern the will of God. Unfortunately, there are quite a number of people who carry the tag of Christian and yet have put themselves in situations that make discernment almost impossible. These are people who, to use the phone analogy, have simply put themselves out of coverage area. Paul addresses one such issue in the Christian community at Corinth, where sexual immorality had become a challenge for some and a hindrance to perfect union with Christ. It was a wake-up call and an efficacious reminder that a true Christian is not just about being baptised but a choice to live wholly and solely for Christ.

In this regard, the ultimate goal of Christian discernment is to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Thus in the Gospel text, when the two disciples had heard the words, "Look, here is the Lamb of God", they made a decision to follow Jesus.

There is an information explosion in our world today.

On the radios, televisions and social media, many voices are screaming for our attention. The noisy world seeks to drown the gentle and yet powerful voice of God. In discernment we go deep into that sacred space within us and discover the eloquent voice of God calling us to take particular actions and directions in life. The voice that called Samuel and said to the two disciples of John the Baptist, "Come and see" is that same voice that is calling each one of us. May we respond to that voice, and like Samuel say: "Speak, for your servant is listening."

PROVERB

*"Wisdom is like
a baobab tree;
no one individual
can embrace it."*

ACTION

Self-examination:

Do I spend quality time in deep prayerful silence from time to time?

Do I place a premium on discovering the will of God for my life or do I take major decisions without recourse to the plan of God for my life?

Response to God:

We may choose, individually or collectively, to embark on periodic recollections and retreats with the aim of seeking to know the 'mind'

of God and what He asks of us in any given situation. We may also choose individually or collectively to spend more time doing spiritual reading - reading the Bible or other inspired Christian writings in the hope that we may hear the voice of God. For some of us too, choosing a spiritual director may be the way forward in the process of discernment.

Response to your World:

There are many people out there in the world, young and old, who need an 'Eli' in their lives - someone to guide them to say, 'Yes Lord, your servant is listening'. As a group, or myself as an individual, how can I/we serve as a guide for someone to hear the voice of the Lord?

PRAYER

*Eternal Father,
from the dawn of creation until now,
you have never deprived us
of your Word.*

*In your Son Jesus Christ,
the Word made flesh,
you have pitched your tent
right in our midst.*

*As we yield
to the grace of your Son,
may we come to discover you
more and more.*

*In his name, Jesus Christ,
we pray with thanksgiving.
Amen*