

SECOND SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B



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

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.

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

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

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.

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

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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 of the word calls for discernment of God's call, a call which comes in different forms, and in the midst of ordinary human lives. Such discernment not only changes the direction of a person's life, but also empowers him or her to live an authentic Christian life.

The first reading narrates a dramatic story of the call of Samuel through the dynamics of divine initiative, and human response. The name "Samuel" literally means "God has heard". The theme of God hearing the calls of his people is important in the book of Samuel. Thus, God hears the cry of a barren woman, Hannah, and responds to her pleas with the grace of motherhood. Later in the book, God will hear the cry of the people of Israel, asking for a king and, through Samuel, appointing Saul as their monarch. After the miraculous birth of Samuel, the young boy is turned over to Eli, a priest serving at the shrine at Shiloh.

This is where God calls young Samuel to be his prophet. God's call to the boy is direct and personal. Still, Samuel needed help in discerning God's call fully and correctly. The old and nearly blind Eli, with wisdom and fatherly tenderness, enabled the young boy to hear the Lord's voice and respond to his call. Though Eli devoted his life to the priestly service in the presence of the Lord, he was not chosen to be the recipient of God's revelation. Neither were Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were priests at the same shrine. Through negligence and abuse of their offices they failed to uphold the holiness of the priestly life, and Eli failed in his duty as a father to correct his careless sons. Thus, God turned to Samuel who will subsequently replace the unfaithful priests, and become the mediator of God's word to the nation.

Samuel's threefold return to consult Eli when hearing God's voice is characteristic of the process of gradual discernment of God's revelation. When Samuel, guided by Eli, finally recognized the voice of the Lord, his humble but powerful cry, "Speak O Lord, your servant is listening" marked the rise of a new prophet, through whom God's word will once again be heard in Israel. Thereafter, Samuel will enable the people of Israel to discern God's will concerning their covenant obligations, as well as guiding them in the religious and political matters that would shape their destiny. In the second reading, Paul reproaches the Christians in

Corinth for their failure to differentiate between what is holy and what is sinful. Corinth was a cosmopolitan port city, well known for its wealth, luxury, and affluence. It was also a city where pagan religions were mixed with sexual practices. Thus, the city was famed for its immorality associated with prostitutes often attached to pagan temples. This promiscuous environment apparently affected the Christian believers who were recent converts from pagan religions. They struggled to keep their faith in Christ alive in this pagan environment, and wrestled with many moral questions and demands that came with it. In today's reading, Paul tells the believers to shun fornication, pointing out to them that such sexual misconduct is totally incompatible with belief in Christ. The apostle insists on the sanctity of the entire human person – body and spirit – whom he considers as the "temple of the Holy Spirit". For Paul, being a follower of Christ involves no compromise, especially when it comes to sexual integrity. As a result, there is no room for an iniquitous and immoral lifestyle, which is incompatible with the Christian virtue of holiness. Paul's instructions to the Corinthians imply that an authentic discernment of what is right and wrong in their life circumstances is necessary, and will be instrumental in keeping the faltering Corinthians from returning to their former, pagan way of life.

The Gospel reading narrates yet another call story. This time, John the Baptist points

At a literal level, one may be inclined to think that the disciples were being invited to come and see where Jesus lives – his house or lodging. However, at a deeper level, the disciples are invited to embark upon a journey of discovery of Jesus and of their own discipleship. They embarked on the journey and “stayed” with Jesus, which led them to a profound discerning experience.

The result of their life-changing encounter with Jesus is seen in the second part of the reading. There, one of the two, Andrew, searches for his brother, Simon Peter, and declares that he has found “the Messiah”. Andrew no longer sees Jesus as a “rabbi -teacher”, but as a God-sent leader and saviour. Even more so, he brings Simon to Jesus, thus fulfilling the role of a disciple for the first time. This pattern of discernment leading to discipleship is characteristic of the Fourth Gospel. John the evangelist frequently presents the disciples who recruit others by sharing their experiences of being with Jesus and then bringing them to him. Thus, Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus (see Jn 1:43-51), and the Samaritan woman testified about Jesus to the Samaritan villagers who then run to meet him (see Jn 4:28-30,39-42).

Andrew’s actions represent what is expected of all those who come to encounter and understand Jesus. Those who come to have an abiding experience of Jesus become true disciples. They then bring others to the Lord to have the same life-altering experience.

out Jesus whom he calls, “the Lamb of God” to two of his own disciples. In response to this proclamation, the two men decide to leave John the Baptist and follow Jesus, thus embarking on a journey of discipleship in following Jesus.

In this story, Jesus takes the initiative by asking his new followers the question: “What are you looking for?”. These words pose a challenge, and a call for the disciples to state who they consider Jesus to be, and to clarify their reasons for seeking him.

Responding, the two ask Jesus, “Rabbi, where are you staying?”. The Greek verb translated here as “stay” means to “live”, “dwell”, and, most significantly “to abide”. This last sense is how the evangelist intends the word to be understood here. 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. They indirectly inquire about his relationship to God. Significantly, these two followers called Jesus “rabbi” which means “teacher”. At this stage, they are far from understanding who Jesus truly is.

Jesus’ response – “Come and see” – is an invitation to experience him and his presence, so that they might comprehend his nature and mission. However, this invitation also challenges these followers to discern their role as disciples, which will be defined by their discernment of Jesus’ true nature.

In his providence and foresight, God calls people to walk various paths of life and to accomplish diverse tasks. The response to this call requires that the one called discerns carefully what such a call implies. In the experiences of Samuel, Andrew, and Peter we see examples of such successful discernment which led them to offer their lives to the service of God. Paul expected such a discernment of the Corinthians, knowing that it is required for conducting their Christian life in holiness. All believers are called to a similar careful discernment so that, with the Psalmist, they could confidently 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 from far away Sydney – Australia, all without necessarily seeing the dialogue partner face to face. That little gadget helps to facilitate and make communication possible. Somewhat similarly, without seeing God face to face, we can still communicate with him. One of the ways to connect to God is via the spiritual ability that he has put in each one of us – the gift of discernment. However, just as having a mobile phone does not automatically 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 even 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 “Elis” and the “John the Baptists” – who help us hear God’s voice and discern delicate promptings of God’s Spirit in our lives. Indeed, we need them because, as a proverb goes, “wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it”.

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. 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 the coverage area. Paul addresses one such issue in the Christian community at Corinth, where sexual immorality had become a challenge and a hindrance to union with Christ. Paul issued

a wake-up call and an efficacious reminder that being 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 out the gentle and yet powerful voice of God. In discernment we go deep into that sacred space within us and discover the exquisite 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

How much time do I devote to deep prayerful silence and meditation?

Do I place a premium value on searching for God’s will for my life, or do I take major decisions without recourse to the plan of God for my life?

Response to God

I will spend more time doing spiritual reading – reading the Bible or other inspired Christian writings in the search to hear the voice of God.

Response to your World

I will choose someone qualified for my spiritual director and explore whether working with that person helps me to hear God’s voice more clearly and to respond to his will more closely.

Our group will organize periodic recollections and retreats during this year, with the aim of seeking to know the “mind” of God and what he asks of us in our life circumstances.

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