

2nd (SJ&QA) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

Last Monday we started what is called "*Ordinary Time*" in the Church calendar. Ordinary does not mean plain or simple. It means '*numbered*' as in first, second, third, etc, the ordinal numbers. This was the original sense of the word. Since we are not celebrating major feasts like Christmas or Easter, this title has come to represent a less spectacular, but just as important, period in Church celebrations focusing on Christ's teaching and His life among His disciples. *The numbers are meant to remind us that we are working toward a goal.* Our life has a purpose. We are moving toward an ultimate Sunday that will be observed in heaven when we are joined with the whole company of the Saints and Angels.

Samuel's story about God calling him three times by his name while soundly sleeping was fascinating. In no way does Samuel suspect that the mysterious voice was God's calling him. It was Eli, his master, who made it clear that it was God's voice he heard and directed him to reply. With the straightforward simplicity of a child, Samuel springs to his feet in unquestioning obedience and total willingness to serve: "*Speak Lord, your servant is listening.*" *Why didn't God just come to Samuel and say: "Samuel! Samuel! It is I the Lord, your God. Now listen up"?* God normally works through the ordinary channels that He has established like the church or the clergy. God can also go beyond these channels but we are not to presume or take Him for granted. We need an open mind

to see His ways and open our hearts to His calling. A mystic said, *“Yesterday I thought I was clever so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wiser, so I am changing myself.”* ‘To change our mind’ does not mean that we are fickle-minded. Rather, we are open-minded to circumstances or situations that may come our way.

In today’s gospel something similar also happened. An event that leads to a life-changing decision to would-be apostles. It speaks to us about the call of Andrew with his friends and how the disciples stood and stared as Jesus passed by. The two disciples act immediately on John’s word, *“Behold the Lamb of God.”* Yet when they finally encounter the Messiah they could not recognize him until John pointed him out to them. Jesus asked them, *“what are you looking for?”*. Jesus isn't simply asking them why they are following him. He is asking whether they are seeking something more in life. They have jobs already, they are fishermen. Jesus tests them to see if they will commit themselves to new lifestyles and careers. They answered with a question, *“Where do you stay?”* They aren't looking for directions to his house. They desire to know His life decision. They not only followed Jesus but remained with him. These are the characteristics of obedience; *attentive listening in prayer and active seeking that ends in presence.*

The story of Samuel, of Andrew and the other apostles is our story too. They stand for us all. We may not be important in the eyes of society but God will never ignore us. We are always in His mind and

forever under His care. God is constantly calling us into a relationship with him—to be partners of his creation. As St. Ignatius said, “*Everything we do is for the greater glory of God.*” When we were baptized our ears were symbolically opened to hear God’s call. God’s voice could be drowned out or not heard because of the noisy world. That’s why it is important to have a quiet and peaceful corner to develop pockets of silence, where we can be alone to listen to the voice of God, calling and directing us. His call is an on-going affair, it takes courage to open our heart and answer that call. Some of us are fast listeners - we are usually done hearing before someone is even done speaking. Every good conversation starts with good listening.

Are you willing to take the time to listen to God? He calls to us in many ways and forms. We can listen through prayer. Prayer can be spoken, meditative, centering on reading, or *contemplative, through silence*. It may be in the need of a less fortunate neighbor. It may be in the relative who needs our help. It may be in the face of a child who looks lost or neglected. God can only speak to a person who is listening. We tend to talk too much and listen too little. We only have to listen, be willing to do His will and we’ll find our blessings. Too often we are afraid of what might be asked because our lives are so busy and burdened. If we are to be the people of God that He wants us to be and to do the job He intends us to do, we must give ourselves willingly to Jesus who has already given Himself to us. Sacrifices will have to be

made and a comfortable lifestyle disturbed. Openness to others combined with real sensitivity to their needs and a willingness to share our time, talents, and treasure are essential qualities for us to develop if we are to share fully in Christ's vocation.

Let us then pray that we listen to God's call and have the willingness to respond and be guided as did Samuel, Andrew, and John long ago, as well as so many others in our time – from Martin Luther King Jr. to St. Teresa of Calcutta to the neighbor next door who cares for the elderly and feeds the hungry. To Jesus, for Jesus and with Jesus we say, "*Here I am Lord; I come to do your will.*" Amen!