

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (January 17th, 2021)

Speak to me, O Lord, even when times are difficult, for I long to listen to You! I long to hear You! I long to follow You! Nothing else satisfies.

1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19.

Hannah, who had been barren, begged God for a son and promised to give him to the Lord. Her prayer was answered and after the child, Samuel, was weaned, she presented him in the temple and left him there in the care of Eli, the priest. The situation in Israel was bleak. The priests were corrupt and there had been no prophet to speak for the Lord since the time of Moses.

3Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was. Samuel was sleeping which was symbolic of the nation, which was sleeping and not recognizing God's call. The reason he was sleeping in the temple was probably to tend the lamp. The Ark of the Covenant was a small portable box about 3 ft. 9 in. by 2 ft. 3 in. that contained the stone tablets of the law, a specimen of manna and the flowering rod of Aaron. It symbolized the presence of God.

4The Lord called to Samuel, who answered, "Here I am."

5Samuel ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me." "I did not call you," Eli said. "Go back to sleep." So he went back to sleep.

6Again the Lord called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "You called me." But Eli answered, "I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep."

7At that time Samuel was not familiar with the Lord, because the Lord had not revealed anything to him as yet. Because "Samuel was not familiar with the Lord," he did not arrive at the right response easily. This is the drama of every vocation. The call is issued over and over, and the response each time becomes gradually more honest and sincere, more faithful, less confused.

8The Lord called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, "Here I am. You called me." Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling the youth. God's view of authority is not based on age or title. We would normally expect Eli to get the word.

9So he said to Samuel, "Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" When Samuel went to sleep in his place,

10the Lord came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening." The question for consideration is not "Has God ever spoken to you?" but, "HOW has God spoken to you?" Note that Samuel did not have a dream like St. Joseph nor did he have a vision like St. Paul but God "revealed his presence" and it was not witnessed by Eli. This reading is often used at masses for taking or renewing religious vows and has become a standard description of the call of God to us all. The theme of today's reading is found in this verse: we have the clear obligation to LISTEN which will enable us to truly hear the word of the Lord. Even though Samuel is not aware and Eli is slow to catch on, the divine call turns out to be very significant for Samuel's life and the life of Israel.

19Samuel grew up, and the Lord was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect. Another translation reads: "He let none of his words fall to the ground."

1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20

Brothers and sisters:

13The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; In this first letter to the Corinthians, Paul deals with three moral issues: incest, lawsuits among Christians and our selection, which is about sexual immorality. Paul is very clear in verse 9: “Do not deceive yourselves: no fornicators, idolaters, or adulterers, no sexual perverts, thieves, misers, or drunkards, no slanderers or robbers will inherit God’s kingdom.”

14God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. The Corinthians thought that sexuality was an area of no rights nor wrongs, just a pure bodily function, but Paul set them straight based on his respect for the body’s sacredness because **THE BODY WILL BE REUNITED WITH THE SOUL** to share in its eternal destiny. Sins like fornication are not evil because sexuality is evil but because our bodies are holy! What we do with our bodies matters in our relationship with Christ.

15Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? The dignity of our bodies is clear because of their heavenly destiny.

17But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with him.

18Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Spelled out, this means that we should avoid having any sexual relations with ANYONE outside of marriage and ONLY with our spouses when married. Paul is saying NO fornication, NO homosexual acts, No adultery and we should avoid anything that would lead us in that direction. CCC 2348 says that “All Christ’s faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life.”

19Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? Paul is saying that *the body matters*.

20For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body. St. John Mary Vianney preached that a Christian has all kinds of resources he can use to practice chastity: 1) be very vigilant about what we look at and what we think and say and do. 2) have recourse to prayer. 3) frequent the sacraments regularly. 4) fly from anything that might tempt us to sin. 5. Have great devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary. St. Thomas Aquinas commented: “One does not win by putting up resistance because the more one thinks about it, the more influenced one becomes; one wins by *fleeing*, by avoiding unclean thoughts completely and by avoiding all *occasions of sin*”. The Catechism (CCC 2354) also mentions pornography as a *grave offense* because it perverts the intimate giving of spouses to each other and it does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others.

John 1:35-42

35John was standing with two of his disciples, One of the disciples is identified as Andrew in verse 40 and according to the consensus of Church tradition, John the Evangelist was the other one for throughout his Gospel we have phrases such as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and “another disciple” which have since ancient times been understood to refer to St. John the author.

36and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” The title, “lamb of God” probably arises from a combination of the application to Jesus of the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 53:7 “Like a lamb led to the slaughter ... he was silent and opened not his mouth. Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away, and who would have thought any more of his destiny? When he

was cut off from the land of the living, and smitten for the sin of his people, a grave was assigned him among the wicked and a burial place with evildoers though he had done no wrong nor spoken any falsehood.” and of the Passover lamb whose sacrifice was offered as a ransom for the firstborn of the household and whose flesh had to be eaten. The title of lamb is applied to Jesus 28 times in Revelations where he is the sacrificial victim, which is the basis of his glorification, he is enthroned and glorified, victorious in war, and the judge who has the book of life. The role of John the Baptist is made clear: he is to point toward Jesus who now becomes the focus.

37The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus.

38Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” –which translated means Teacher –“where are you staying?” Jesus opens the conversation by asking the two men what they are looking for and he could be asking us the same thing: What is important to us? What are our goals and dreams? What do we want out of life? The two disciples of John the Baptist address Jesus as “Rabbi” (the common title given a recognized teacher) acknowledging that he has the answers and not they. Then they ask where he is “staying.” The root means “abide” or “dwell.” The author uses the word a number of times in the Gospel to suggest the fulfillment of the covenantal promise of God’s dwelling or abiding with his people. (An example is: “The word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”)

39He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they went and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. “Come and see” is Christ’s invitation to them to become witnesses. It really means: “Follow me.”

40Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus.

41He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah” –which is translated Christ. Andrew is mentioned 12 times in the Bible, but he is almost always identified as “Simon Peter’s brother.” When Andrew was martyred, he hung upside down for two days while he continued to preach and encourage those who watched. He is the patron saint of Scotland and his symbol is a cross shaped like an X. The bones of the saint are now enshrined in Amalfi, Italy, and since ancient times they have produced a mysterious oil on January 28 and sometimes on other feast days as well. Sometimes there is only a little and other times it flows down the aisle. Many miracles have been associated with this phenomenon which has been collected at various times of the year, is not fixed to a liturgical rite, and has occurred in three countries which have housed the bones: Greece, Turkey and Italy.

42Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas” –which is translated Peter. Cephas is the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic “Kepha” which means “rock.” Jesus spoke primarily Aramaic. Jesus tells Peter, “You are Rock, and on this rock I will build My Church.” In the scriptures, change of name signifies change of role or destiny in the history of salvation. The first Christians regarded this new name as so significant that they used it without translating it and later they used the translation “Peter” so much that they pushed aside the Apostle’s old name, Simon.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from the “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2005” by Aelred R. Rosser, “The Dictionary of the Bible” by John L. McKenzie, S.J., “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” “The Catechism of the Catholic Church,” “Catholic Bible Study: John” by Stephen K. Ray, “Relics” by Joan Carroll Cruz, and the commentary notes of Tim Grey.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller; who compiled these commentaries.