

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:3c-15a, 17-20

Gospel: 1 John 1:35-42

Today we look at the many ways that God calls us, each and every one of us: this is not something that is just for the clergy or for the religious or even just for Catholics. And this is not exclusive to one community or another, our call is very inclusive so that each part of it serves and enlightens our deepest place within – what I call our soul or heart. The only requirement is that we need to listen – whether God whispers our name directly within our hearts or speaks and invites through another.

In the reading from Samuel we see how very clear God's call is. Samuel kept hearing his name spoken, but he thought the voice was coming from his Master Eli. Eli figures out what is going on and instructs Samuel. The 4th time that God called he responded as Eli had instructed: "Speak for your servant is listening" – he now belongs to God – not just to Eli. The reading then finishes with "As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground." There is real hope here for all of us who "don't get it" the first time around.

In the Gospel – the response to Jesus is much more immediate: John points Jesus out to his own disciples as being the Lamb of God and two move to literally follow Jesus calling him Rabbi. He simply invites them to "come and see". The last course that I took was advertised as an invitation "Come and learn who you are in the eyes of God". What an incredible invitation. Come and learn who you are in the eyes of God: who would ever want to ignore that?

It is worth remembering that we are called at our Baptism - but that is not necessarily the only time we are called. Like Samuel God might call a few times

and we don't hear him, or maybe we are fearful of what might be asked. But with time we do listen and respond.

A little story. After a long absence I returned to the Church. I met Jesus! I became active in the Church and in ministry work but still I had no idea of what God was calling me to. In the years that followed I felt as if I was being led deeper but had no clear idea of where I was going. I became active with the Oblates and felt drawn to them but with no clear idea of what that would look like. Along the way I went to a retreat up at Galilee Center. On the second last day of the retreat – I was walking around the grounds and I kept hearing a voice in my head say: “Come”. Over and over again. Just that one word – “Come”. I talked with a priest –he just listened but he did not offer any advice. After lunch – walking again and hearing that one word: “Come” and I could not ignore it. I found myself walking over to the cemetery and sitting at the foot of the cross which was on a cement altar. And the voice was silent. Had I “arrived” at where I was supposed be? In the days following that retreat I decided that I would retire from my job and that God would let me know where he wanted me to be. God did not disappoint me.

God does not force monologues on anyone who is unwilling. He simply invites: “Come” When Samuel was ready to tell God that he was willing to listen, that was the beginning of the real connection between God and Samuel.¹ When I sat at the foot of cross at a small altar in the cemetery I was ready to listen. The voice of God can be anywhere, in any guise... it is the willingness to listen, to trust and obey, that makes the Lord known to us.²

¹ Eleonore Stump: University of St. Louis – *Glancing Thoughts – Who's Calling?*

² *Ibid.*

I became even more involved with the Oblates, my passion was the life and way of St. Eugene de Mazenod – Founder of the Oblates. My journey with God has been in the light of St. Eugene de Mazenod and as some of you know I am a Lay Oblate Associate, called by God and invited by St. Eugene. I have never been the same since. I am where I belong! What a freedom that is to experience!

John Shea tells us that the one called simultaneously finds the caller. I was searching for more with God and God was saying “come” when I was ready.

What if that voice that Samuel heard calling his name and who I heard saying “come” seemed to rise up from within us? Quoting Thomas Merton John Shea asks the question: “What if the thin place, the gate of heaven, the house of God, the ascending and descending angels is “right inside” of each person?” Merton called this gate of heaven the “secret beauty” of the human heart, the personal “core of reality,” and “the person that each one is in God’s eyes”.³

I think of the prayers we have been saying for Christian Unity. God within each of us, be we Catholic, Orthodox, members of the United Church, Quakers, Anglican... We all come from the same place, looking at the same child born in a manger and who died for us on the cross.

What are we looking for in our world today? Are we looking for peace? If we are looking for peace, are we listening to what the Lord is telling us about the Spirit of peace dwelling within us?⁴ I believe that is what St. Paul was trying to focus on in his letter to the Corinthians. If our bodies are home to the Holy Spirit – then they must be treated with deep love and respect. Paul wants us to recognize how God sees us, as the humans he created us to be.

³ John Shea: *The spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers* – Year B p. 39-43

⁴ Gerald Darring: St. Louise University – *The Perspective of Justice*

Both the first Reading and the Gospel shows us “how Jesus looks at us. He does not only see what we are: he also sees what we can become. He sees not only the actualities in us; but also sees the possibilities.”⁵

Today we are reminded that “...only God can know our very deepest desires, and only God can satisfy the one that is the most precious in each of us: the reaching out for that person we want most and for whose sake we love others.”⁶

How will we listen?

What will we hear?

How will we respond?

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⁵ William Barclay – The new Daily Study Bible – *The Gospel of John, Volume One* p.106

⁶ Fr. John Foley, SJ – St. Louis University – *Spirituality of the Readings “Called by Name”*.