

2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, B
CALLED TO BE LISTENERS AND WITNESSES OF THE WORD
“We have found the Messiah’, and he took Simon to Jesus” (Jn. 1: 41,42)

Today is the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time. The Baptism of the Lord, which we celebrated last Sunday, liturgically marked the First Sunday in Ordinary Time. After His Baptism, Jesus “went about preaching in the synagogues and curing all kinds of diseases.” The Ordinary Time or Cycle offers us a significant opportunity to journey with Jesus on the path of His life and ministry; it is a time to “sit at His feet” and listen to His teaching, respond to it, act on it and share same with others. These “four pillars” of this season resonate in the Readings of today.

The First Reading (1 Sam. 3: 3-10, 19) presents the inspiring story of the Call of Samuel. The story begins thus: “Samuel was lying in the sanctuary of the Lord where the Ark of God was ...” (3: 3). This introduces the idea of closeness to God, the idea of “sitting at the feet” of the Master and listening. In the dark of the night, Samuel heard a voice he did not recognise and responded to his master: “Here I am, since you called me” (3: 6) Samuel’s response points his availability and readiness to serve. This response is taken up by the Psalmist to express total surrender to the Will of God (Ps. 39: 8, 9). Isaiah uses a similar expression to respond to his prophetic call. (Is. 6: 8). In some sense, all these prefigured the Messiah, Who became man in obedience to the Father. Samuel’s spiritual mentor, Eli, on the third count, understood what could have been and instructed the young Samuel rightly: “Go and lie down, and if someone calls say, ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening’” (3: 9). And that marked a turning point in the life of Samuel for he “grew up and the Lord was with him and let no word of his fall to the ground” (3: 19). The story of Samuel challenges us in this Ordinary Time to stay close to God, to listen even in the dark of the night, which is a figure of what we are currently passing through in these plagued times. The prompt response of Samuel and his patience are lessons for us all during this time of uncertainty. The wise counsel of Eli is of great importance that we when in doubt we should seek guidance from those who know; that if and when we counsel, we should be patient listeners and pray to guide rightly. Beware, the world today is full of blind guides.

In the Second Reading (1 Cor. 6: 13-15, 17-20), St. Paul points the way to how we need to wait and the kind of life we should live at this time. Paul’s exhortation challenges us to keep our bodies holy; free from fornication, which is a direct sin against the body. Our bodies, as God’s temple, should provide avenues for a divine encounter, as the temple was for Samuel, and not for the satisfaction of sinful

desires. This lonely time of isolation and restrictions could be very tempting and luring one to too many adverse behaviours. Therefore, St. Paul's caution is apt, timely, challenging and deserves our serious personal adherence.

The Gospel (Jn. 1: 35-42) continues with the theme of call/invitation, desire to be with the Lord, response and sharing the "joy of the gospel" with others. John introduces Jesus, "Look, there is the Lamb of God" (1: 36) to his disciples. This introduction activated the inquisitive instincts of these two disciples and they desired to know the Lamb more and followed Him. How do we respond when we encounter "The Lamb of God" in the Eucharist, where the priest repeats these very words of John the Baptist? To establish that connection or draw them closer, He asked to know what they wanted. They answered: "Rabbi, where do you live?" (1: 38). Not that He did not know what they wanted, but they had to express this themselves. Do you realise that this is how Jesus continues to relate with us today? He knows our needs, but wants us to say it – communication strengthens every relationship, including ours with the Lord.

"Come and See": With these words, Jesus opened the doors for the two disciples. They went in and stayed with Him. What an experience of intimacy it must have been. This is our door as well. This is our invitation to savour the sweetness of the Lord's presence. Imagine yourself in His Presence! As God called Samuel, so Jesus calls us today on this journey. "Come and see", He beckons on us.

And then came Andrew: Andrew was one of the two disciples of John who went with Jesus. He was eager to share his experience with his brother, Peter; and more than that, he wanted him to have a similar experience as well. "We have found the Messiah", he said, "and he took him to Jesus." At this early stage, Andrew demonstrated an ardent apostolic zeal that should challenge each of us to share our faith-experience with others. It is not enough that we receive the Good News, the Good News must be shared "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1: 8).

Dear friends, we have the outstanding examples of Eli, John the Baptist and Andrew as models of witnessing. Eli led Samuel to decipher God's voice; John pointed out the Lamb of God, and Andrew led his brother to Jesus. This is what we are called to do during this time. We must always remember that God still speaks, even in the dark of the night; even in our seeming dark and inconvenient times. In the growing noises of scepticism and doubts, we need to listen to that "still gentle voice" of hope. A time like this demands patience as expressed by the Psalmist: "I waited, I waited for the Lord." Let us not grow weary because heaven seems silent to our pleas. Let us know that just as the "wait" was worth the time for the Psalmist so it shall be for us. The Lord will stoop down to help us. Today let us good listeners,

authentic living witnesses and eager sharers of the Word. And it shall be well with us all.