

Homily For 2nd Sunday B

Today's theme is divine vocation. Everyone is called by God to be something, to do something for others with his life and with his unique gifts. In the first reading we have God calling young Samuel as he was sleeping in the Temple. Once Samuel recognizes God's call he responds to him saying: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Once he is ready to listen, God gives him the message and the mission. Three times Samuel heard the call of God and it was only after the third call, with the help of Eli that he responded to the call of God. It is something similar in the gospel today. In the gospel passage John pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God but none of his disciples followed Jesus. Now having pointed him out again, this time two go after Jesus. And when Jesus turns around and asks them what they wanted, they replied: 'Teacher, where do you live?' His reply was: 'Come and see.'

The Indian sage Ramakrishna Paramahansa, in his wisdom teaching narrates a beautiful story of vocation in a person's life. The story is about a young man who wanted to leave the world to become a mendicant. His sister was getting worried about him and she told her husband that she was worried about her brother who had been planning to leave the world for the past three months. He had been sacrificing daily some food items, some of his comforts at home and giving up his rich and delicate clothes and so on. The husband looked at her and smiled and told her, "My dear, you need not be worried about your brother. The people who plan to leave the world in this way by sacrificing little by little will not leave at all. You can rest assured that he will be with you for a long time to come." The wife was surprised at her husband's words and asked him, how one leaves the world to devote himself or herself to God. The husband looked at her and said to her: "My dear if you truly want to know how a person leaves the world and becomes a mendicant, I will tell you." He then got up; tore his flowing garments and wore a loin cloth; took a begging bowl in his hand and a walking stick. After this he bowed to his wife and said, from now on you and every woman to me is like a mother. He left the house never to return.

Some of us may feel a strong, but quite false, sense of our own identity. Our self-understanding derives too exclusively from our own achievements, failures, efforts and ambitions; God's plan for us hardly enters the picture at all or we dismiss it as too uncertain, too "spiritual" and remote from daily life. There is a true story about a professor who was invited to give a lecture at a major conference on religion. The subject of his lecture was the nature of God. His many hours of research were rewarded by the enthusiastic response he received upon completion of the lecture. On the flight back to his university, however, his euphoric satisfaction about his work was shattered when it dawned on him, as he later reported: "I talked to everyone about God, but God." We can easily have an experience similar to that of the professor as he was preparing his lecture about God. With a little research we can discover many interesting, even beautiful things about Jesus and his disciples. We must know that there is a difference between hearing and listening. We hear what we want to hear; we hear only that which adjusts with our preconceived notions, prejudices.

Three friends decided to go deer hunting together. One was a lawyer, one a doctor, and the other a priest. As they were walking, along came a big buck. The three of them shot simultaneously. Immediately the buck dropped to the ground and all three rushed up to see how big it actually was. Upon reaching it they found out that it was dead but had only one bullet hole. Thus a debate followed concerning whose buck it was. A few minutes later a game officer came by and asked what the problem was. The doctor told him their reason for the debate. The officer told them he would take a look and tell them who shot it. Within a few seconds the game officer said with much confidence, "The priest shot the buck!" They all wondered how he knew that so quickly. The officer said, "Easy. The bullet went in one ear and out the other."

If something falls in tune with our mind, that means with our past, we hear it. But if it goes against it, we certainly hear the sound but we miss the meaning. Hearing can make a person knowledgeable. To listen is a great art. People only hear; very few people are able to listen. Just hearing is not enough. Hear, you can; listening will need great discipline. It is the greatest discipline there is. If you listen, you are already delivered; because in that listening, suddenly you find yourself. So we see Jesus telling come and see. Only listening can make a person innocent, silent—a peace that passes understanding. Only a person who listens can respond. When you listen, you come to realize that body is the temple. Lord, open our eyes that we may see, open our ears that we may hear and open our hearts that we may listen.