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14 January 2024

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Introduction

After the conclusion of the Christmas Season, today, we begin our journey into Ordinary Time in earnest. Today's readings are all about God's call and our response. How do we hear God's call? And more importantly, how do we respond?

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came so that we could respond to your call. Lord have mercy.

You came that we might be joined to you through Baptism. Christ have mercy.

You came so that we could know the Father. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The oration

Almighty ever-living God,

who govern all things,

both in heaven and on earth,

mercifully hear the pleading of your people

and bestow your peace on our times.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

God, for ever and ever.

The community invokes God in light of its faith that everything in heaven and at the same time everything on earth falls under the divine. The sense of 'govern' includes the harmony that comes from God ruling all things within their own rhythm and measure. It also carries the understanding that God's rulership is grounded in the love and fidelity that the creator has towards creation itself. It resonates with the conviction that through Christ all things were made, named as good, restored and are continually guarded. This pairing of 'heaven' and 'earth' also connotes God's use of the celestial and the earthly for the sake of salvation. From all this emerges the community's confidence that God will hear and respond with that self-same mercy.

The second petition is for peace in the present. The invocation of divine mercy sets this peace within the context of the peace that Christ has wrought. More particularly, on earth the prayer tradition links this with inner peace, freedom from sin, righteous living, and the absence of civil strife. It is a foretaste of eternal life, which itself is marked by light, truth and fellowship with the saints. This is a great prayer with which to begin the new year.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19

Our first reading this Sunday tells the famous story of the call of Samuel. Following the advice of his mentor Eli, Samuel can respond immediately and whole-heartedly when the Lord calls.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 39:2, 4, 7-10. R. vv. 8, 9

Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

This psalm is a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving for the blessings which come from trust in the Lord and the good things which come from that trust.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 6:13-15. 17-20

This reading, from the teaching section of this Letter to the Corinthians, reminds the Christian community of Corinth that their life in Christ changes even their very bodies. Their bodies belong to the Body of Christ and are meant for the glory of God.

Gospel Reading

John 1:35-42

In our Gospel Reading this Sunday, John the Baptist points Jesus out to two of his own disciples. In response to their seemingly innocent question, 'Where do you live?', Jesus invites them to 'Come and see.' It is more than just a question about real estate – it is an invitation to come to know Jesus, to abide in him.

Reflection

Our first reading tells a beautiful, simple and moving story. Like many of the stories we have heard during the seasons of Advent and Christmas, Hannah was elderly and without a child. After a long time, she conceives and bears a son. Like many such longed-for children in the pages of Sacred Scripture, this young child is dedicated to the service of the sanctuary.

One night, he is awakened three times by a call. Naturally, he thinks that Eli, the priest in charge of the sanctuary, is calling him. Immediately, the child rises and goes to Eli, 'Here I am, since you called me.' 'No, I did not call', the priest answers twice. It seems that the child Samuel has had a dream in which he heard a voice – this happens all the time. The third time, Eli understands: this was no ordinary dream, but one in which God speaks, 'Go and lie down, and if someone calls say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.' Samuel does as he is told. The Lord – for indeed it was the Lord calling him, 'then came and stood by, calling as he had done before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel answers, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening'. Samuel grows up to become one of the most important persons in the History of Salvation.

This simple story contains profound religious meaning for us and teaches us much. 'Samuel as yet had no knowledge of the Lord...' Of course, Samuel knew in whose service he had been enlisted; he knew, too, the name of the God who was worshipped in the sanctuary. Eli the priest had taught him that much. But 'the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.' And that night, God calls Samuel by name. This simple story is an exemplar of what it is to be called.

At the outset, we find that it is God who calls. The initiative always belongs to God. God is revealed and calls the one who has been selected, set apart, with complete freedom. In the pages of Sacred Scripture, we see this in the stories of Moses, in the prophets Amos and Jeremiah, in Mary the Mother of Jesus, in Paul the teacher of the Gentiles, in Mary Magdalene called to be the apostle to the apostles, and indeed countless others through the ages – known or unknown. This revelation of God is always felt as a mysterious call perceived in the depths of the heart. And in response to this call from the Lord, Eli counsels openness to what the Lord is asking, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening'.

We also learn once again of the Lord's preference for the little ones and the poor. Samuel is only a child, one of the little ones. And yet the Lord reaches out to him and entrusts him with a task which seems out of all proportion to his strength and ability. All of those called by God seem well aware of their inabilities and deficiencies and their unworthiness for the task. And they place these inabilities before God as an objection. But it seems as if the Lord takes no notice of their protest. Because, of course, the Lord knows differently.

Samuel hears God's call in the sanctuary and in the silence of the night. God's word can resound anywhere and at any time. God's presence, action, or invitation to sacred places, is never limited. But it is in silence that we can be more attentive to God's presence. For in silence, there are no distractions to hinder us from hearing God's word. To those who sense something of God's mystery and want to remain open to God's call, nothing is more important than to be still and to listen and to be

attentive to God's word. The place for this encounter with God is the sanctuary where one goes to bow and pray before God. It might be the sanctuary of the temple. It might also be a desert or the sanctuary of the human heart.

'It was about the tenth hour...' About four o'clock in the afternoon for us. It might have been an afternoon like our summer, January afternoons...quiet and relaxed, pretty unremarkable. John the Baptist is standing with two of his disciples. And as the author of the Fourth Gospel puts it: Jesus passed. John stares at him and acclaims him as 'the Lamb of God'. At once, and I suspect, not knowing fully what was going on, two of John's disciples begin to follow Jesus. And then Jesus turns and asks them a question: 'What do you want?' But here, Jesus is not seeking information. He is calling them; he is arousing their desire...What is it that you truly seek? What is it that your hearts' desire? The two disciples reply with their own question: 'Where do you live?' The disciples are not asking Jesus for his address. These disciples want to know more than just where Jesus lives, they want to know the place where he abides, the place of his heart.

Almost enigmatically, Jesus replies: 'Come and see'. And the lives of Andrew and the other, unnamed disciple are forever changed. They do indeed see where Jesus lives and they stay with him not only the rest of the day, but for the next three years and indeed for the rest of their lives as they respond to the call: Come and see.

God calls each one of us to follow. Each one of us is challenged to come and see. All of us are like Samuel: we are young, we know not how to speak. All of us are like Andrew: someone else has pointed the way. And yet, all of us are called, all the same.

God does not wait until we are perfect before he calls us to follow. God knows that we are all fallible human creatures, full of faults and failings. God knows that we do not have all the answers yet, that we do not have all the pieces of the puzzle worked out. God knows that we will get it wrong along the way.

And yet, God still calls us.

In the quiet of the sanctuary, at the desk at work, at the kitchen sink, in the classroom, in the garden, along the way. God calls us. To come and see.



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As we return to Ordinary Time, we know that we can find God in the ordinary things of life, and in the ordered way in which we hear the gospel. Let us give to God our needs and the needs of our world.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church as they continue to learn how to be a synodal Church. May they, under the leadership of Pope Francis, be open to the way in which they have each been called by Christ.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations. May they understand their calling as leaders not just as power over people and economics, but as power to do good things for all their people.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have not heard the call of Christ and have lost their way. May they find a true path and true calling through the help of those who care about them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all educators as they prepare to return to their teaching roles. May they understand their calling to the vocation of educator as a gift from God.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those in our community who have been on holiday or who are still travelling. May they find refreshing ways of being and hopefulness in the new year ahead.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are adversely affected by climate change. May they find willing people to help them in their need and hope in the call of God the Creator.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God, our Creator, we present these needs with faith in our hearts, knowing that you will answer us. We make our prayer through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
All the earth proclaim the Lord	184		611	447	534
All you nations, sing out your joy			616	347	353
Be not afraid	114			653	420
Blessed Jesus, at your word			626	457	531
Forth in the peace of Christ we go			681	489	495
Here I am, Lord	90			518	496
I have loved you	126			511	402
I heard the voice of Jesus say	54			512	468
Jesus calls us here to meet him				524	529
Lord to whom shall we go?	6			549	189
One bread, one body	129			579	193
O Christ, the great foundation				565	483
O God, we hear your story				571	
The summons				645	502
This is my will			842	626	465
We live and love your word		118			

Title	S&S1
Here I am, Lord	152
The summons	137

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 39: *Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.*

	CWB	JOBB	LPB	PM2
Psalm 39	352	pg. 50	pg. 89	pg. 44

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Sing out with joy (FWS) *based on Ps 65(66)* [Gathering]

Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) *based on Ps 97 (98)* [Gathering, Recessional]

Holy Spirit, come (TCS) [Gifts, Reflection]

Come, O come, Holy Spirit (TWB)

Hearts on fire (SHOF/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]