

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
JANUARY 14, 2024**

SCRIPTURES:

1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19

1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20

John 1:35-42

Speak, Lord; your servant is listening.

Our bodies are members of Christ's body.

They saw where Jesus lived.

READ THE SCRIPTURES:

Read the three Scripture passages given in the Lectionary for this weekend. Begin with the Gospel, since the other readings are always chosen in terms of the Gospel reading. (The second reading does not always have the same theme as the Gospel and the first reading. The first reading will be directly related to the Gospel in its content.) Repeat the Gospel reading. Remember that the word of God in the Bible is primarily addressed to the faith community and does not necessarily answer any questions that an individual may have. We simply ask, "What message does the Church (or this faith-sharing group or this family) need to hear?" We listen to the word with that question in mind.

John:

John's Gospel is used today, even in the Year of Mark (Cycle B), to give an account of the selection of the first disciples by Jesus. We need to remember that the Gospels, particularly John's, are not interested in merely giving an account of *what happened*. They always intend to convey *what is the meaning of what happened*. The meaning of *discipleship* is the issue here.

This passage is not inconsistent with the theme of Mark's Gospel, which we will read during the remainder of the year. *Discipleship* holds center stage in Mark. We will have an opportunity this whole year to consider how we have responded to Jesus' call.

John the Baptist's role and mission is to point to the Messiah. But even after his death, apparently, some of his disciples did not automatically become followers of Jesus.

Even as this Gospel is being written at the beginning of the second century, there exists a sect of the followers of John the Baptist who have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. John the Evangelist wants to reach out to them, too. He uses this occasion to point the surviving group of the Baptist's disciples toward Jesus and toward the community that continues his work and mission.

When the followers of John the Baptist ask Jesus where he lives, they are not asking for his address. In Jewish forms of thinking they are asking, "What are you really all about?" Jesus replies that one has to *come and live with him that is come and become like him* before one can see. Knowledge of the person of Jesus is not something in the head or in the intellect. It is in the whole being.

Andrew fills the role of a true disciple here. He brings his brother to Jesus! As disciples of Jesus, we too need to bring others to a deeper understanding or insight concerning Jesus. We too must *stay with him*, become identified with him, and merge our hearts into his. Then, we can share our experience with others.

Samuel:

The prophet and judge Samuel had served the nation of ancient Israel between the time when they were settling in the Promised Land and the beginning of the monarchy under King Saul. He represents a transition in the form of leadership. The confederacy of tribes is brought closer together in anticipation of the rule of kings that will be inaugurated by Samuel in the anointing of Saul and then of David. Samuel himself was a Nazarite; one dedicated to God by special vow. A prophet, a priest, and a political leader, Shiloh was the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant since there was as yet no Temple. Samuel is called by God to a special role of service. The call came to him in the temporary sanctuary of the Lord, in the night, perhaps just before dawn. Luke's Gospel will find parallels between Jesus and Samuel – the child of twelve in the Temple. Thus, Samuel becomes a pre-figure of Christ.

Corinthians:

What are the ethical and moral imperatives of the Christian faith? Since we have been baptized and now our bodies have become part of the body of Christ, it is no longer possible to separate and isolate the things of the body from the things of the soul. What we do in the flesh has an impact on the quality of our spiritual living. Corinth was known even among the pagans for its rather low moral standards. Prostitution was rampant. Temple worship in Corinth at times involved "sacred prostitution." Some Christians went so far as to say that they could still "worship" with the temple prostitutes, since this "only involves the body." Paul sets them straight on the inseparability of body and soul. The body is sacred by reason of baptism. Do not make profane what God has made holy!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does the Church need to be pointed in the right direction periodically? In what ways does the Church community need to go and see what Jesus is all about? What are some of the values that the community needs to absorb again at this period in its history? What about the Catholic parish to which you belong? Does it need to be renewed by staying with Jesus?

2. Who played the role of Andrew in your life? Who brought you to Jesus Christ? By what means? Was it by the shining quality of his or her life? Was it by preaching? Was it by formal teaching? Was it by praying? Was it because they loved you? How gentle was the invitation? Some who brought us to faith later faltered in their own faithfulness. Have you had that happen on your journey? What effect did it have on you?

3. Have you ever brought anyone to Jesus like Andrew did? Was it a member of your family? Is it harder to do for one's own family? Do you have a strategy for inviting others to consider Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? What is your technique as an evangelizer? Do you realize that it is really God who does the calling and that you are just a mouthpiece for God? (Do you understand that one who speaks for God is a prophet?)

SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

The work of evangelization is the primary task facing every Christian community. Your group ought to have a ministry of evangelization; in some way, the group needs to be engaged in a work for making Jesus better known. Some explicit task needs to be chosen and carried out for the evangelization of your environment. Group discernment has to be practiced in order to know what God is asking of your group.

PRAYER

**I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.**

Psalms 40:1

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

The Christian theology of the human body as temple of the Holy Spirit is one of the best kept secrets in the Church. In the predominating culture of the West in which we live, the human body is valued primarily in its sexual dimension, in its youthfulness, in its perceived power to persuade and to coerce, in its usefulness for advertising. *Temple of the Holy Spirit* is not widely discussed as the chief attribute of the human body, male and female.

In its early history, the Christian community needed to integrate and balance some insights that were in conflict with one another at times. Judaism in its late history had come to a certain negativity about the human body. Greek classical ideals promoted athletic competitions where nudity was very much the norm. Jews covered the “shame” of the human form, at least; that is, the sexual parts. Jewish Christians, and even Gentile Christians under the influence of Jewish values, often found the Greek adulation of the body to be repugnant. Always fearful of the fertility rites practiced in Canaanite, Egyptian, Greek and Roman religions, Judaism sought to protect its sacrosanct monotheism by distancing itself from too close an identification with valuing the physical dimension of what is human.

Although the positive insights enshrined in its Genesis accounts of creation had originally led Judaism away from a radical rejection of the human form, and Jesus’ own respect for women had further moved the tradition in the direction of openness and acceptance of gender differences, and Paul’s own theology of the body of Christ had made a significant contribution, a true balance between opposites was hard to achieve. It fell to the development of an explicit doctrine concerning the human nature of Christ to bring order to the debate about whether physical nature was good or evil. Our salvation comes from the redeeming value of the suffering and death of Christ deeply rooted in his human nature, with its truly physical dimension realistically depicted on the cross of suffering. Human nature, human sexuality and all, cannot be all bad since it is in the very human and physical body of Jesus that our salvation was achieved.

Despite the vast influence of the philosophy of Plato with its preference for spirit over matter, despite the overarching impact of the theology of St. Augustine with its almost total rejection of human sexuality, despite the Calvinistic belief that all nature is irremediably contaminated by sin, despite the Catholic counterpart of Jansenism with its fear of sin in everything human, despite all this, we believe that human flesh was renewed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and restored to holiness in his dying and rising again.

See The Catechism: # 470, 669, 2332, 2337

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