

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, JANUARY 17, 2021

THE CALL OF GOD

Dear brothers and sisters, the Baptism of the Lord celebrated last Sunday, presented Jesus as the Son of God in whom the Father and the Holy Spirit were well pleased. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus showed that he was the anointed One - the Messiah. Through Jesus, the anointing comes to us and makes us sons and daughters of God. Jesus is the perfect model of what God wants us to be. The example Jesus gives is first and foremost doing the will of God. By submitting himself to baptism, he taught us that "it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Fulfilling all righteousness means surrendering to the will of God and wholeheartedly accepting God's plan of salvation for us.

In the readings today, we have stories of the calls to Samuel, Andrew, Peter and an unnamed disciple. Traditionally this unnamed disciple is John. However, the gospel message for us by the use of the term unnamed disciple is that each of our names can fit there. This is the key question today. Some holy people like John, Andrew, Peter and

Samuel might be called, but am I also called? How can this be? I, a sinner, being called by God? The Lord's answer to this is simple. "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:17). God calls each one of us by name. Following the example of Christ, the beloved Son of God, our response to God's call should be: "Here I am Lord, I came to do your will."

What could the Lord be calling me to do right now. The Lord calls us first to be and secondly to do. To be what? To be with him and to be holy. The first three disciples, called in today's gospel, first went and stayed with Jesus (John 1:38-39). They asked, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" (John 1:38), the Lord said to come and see. The same is true of Samuel. First, he had to be with the Lord and listen to him. Saying to him, 'speak Lord for your servant is listening. Spending time with the Lord gives us the golden opportunity to know what he wants of us. To be with the Lord helps us learn from him and become familiar with his ways. Ways we can be with the Lord include daily Mass, regular confession, deepening our familiarity with his Word through daily reading of the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, caring for the poor and advocating for the rights of the oppressed.

Being with the Lord helps root out anything that may not be his planting. What could I root out? The second reading gives us the answer! “Brothers and sisters: The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord” (1 Corinthians 6:13). Immorality refers to sins against the 6th and 9th Commandment. These include anything that defile our body, the temple of the holy Spirit. May be you are not indulging in fornication and adultery but you have handed your hearts over to the tyranny of pornography and looking at lewd images.

There is a story of a man in Italy who was fired because of negligence and low productivity in his night bakery job. This man went and asked a priest, called Don Simone, to pray for him to be hired back to his night job in the bakery. The priest asked him what was so special about this job. He said, indescribable pleasure and peace because it gave him an opportunity to see people who were dancing in their birthday suits. The man did not realize that he had been fired in the first place because of the countless number of times the loaves in the oven had overcooked and were burned. Instead of being attentive to his work, he was engrossed in looking at naked ladies. The bakery worker needed to root out his addiction to illicit pleasure.

Answering the call of God, as Samuel, Andrew, John and Peter did, requires a mentor or a guide. In Samuel's case it was two people; his mother, who brought him to the temple in Shiloh and the priest Eli who taught him to say, "Speak Lord for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9). In Andrew's case and the unnamed disciple (John), their mentor was John the Baptist, who led them to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:36). With Peter it was his brother Andrew who told him, "We have found the Messiah. In our walk with God and in answering his call, we need a fellow human being. is because man is inherently social.

As we see in the events surrounding the birth of Samuel, the road of life is not always smooth. Samuel's mother was barren like Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. But the Lord opened their wombs. What this says is that the Lord can turn our sorrows into joy, our weaknesses into strengths, and our losses into gains! Where we stumble is often where our treasures are. It is important to keep in mind that the Lord who made us and called us to his work is trustworthy. With Anthony Brown, the composer of the song called "Worth," each one of us can say to God "You thought I was worth saving, so you came and changed my life. You thought I was worth keeping so you cleaned me up inside. You

sacrificed your life, so I could be free, so I could be whole, so I could tell everyone I know" (Brown, 2015).

Is the Lord calling you? Yes. "If today you hear his voice harden not your hearts" (Psalm 95:8).

What, I ask, is more wonderful than the beauty of God? What thought is more pleasing and wonderful than God's majesty? What desire is as urgent and overpowering as the desire implanted by God in a soul? The radiance of divine beauty is altogether beyond the power of words to describe (St Basil the Great, The Ability to Love is within each of Us, in the Office of the Reading, Jan 12, 2021)