

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 17, 2021

Most of us are used to people and companies trying to get our attention by pop-up ads online, robocalls, and mailed catalogs and letters. Most of it is annoying. Yet sometimes, a message is about a product or deal that is actually helpful. Today's scriptures remind us that God has been sending helpful messages to humanity for a long time. God's first message was creation itself. The beauty, complexity, and precision of the natural world still give us pause to ponder and pray. God's word in scripture contains many helpful messages. Scripture also introduces to God's ultimate message, Jesus, the word of God made flesh.

Sometimes God asks certain people to do a particular thing or live in a certain way to communicate His word and message to others. It's what we mean by a vocation or calling. Today's first reading describes one such person. Samuel was called to serve a special role for the people of Israel. A key part of Samuel's vocation story is that he was young, probably 12 years old. He did not yet know how God worked and had to be taught. So, Eli, the priest, became Samuel's mentor. Like young Samuel, all of us have to be taught how God works and communicates His message to us so that we can respond in faith. Parents, grandparents, godparents, religious formation teachers, spiritual directors and priests, all do this mentoring as part of their vocation.

In today's Gospel, we hear of two more people who were called to serve a special role. It is now Christ who calls disciples to help proclaim the Good news of God's salvation. Just as Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ, our general calling is to bring each other to Christ by our words and actions. People like Samuel, Andrew, and Peter will always inspire us by their remarkable gifts given and used for God's purpose. But St. John Henry Newman wrote the following to help us see how God works and how each of us can respond to His call even if we seem unremarkable.

"God has created me to do some definite service. God has committed some work to me, which has not been committed to someone else. I have my mission. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. God has not created me for nothing. So, I shall do good. I shall do God's work. I shall be an angel of peace. A preacher of truth, even if I do nothing else but keep God's commandments. Therefore, I will trust God. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve God. If I am confused, my confusion may serve God. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve God. God does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about." (1864 Apologia Pro Vita Sua)

Like Cardinal Newman, we, too, have a mission. May God help us to know it and to do it.

Fr. Valentine

Scripture Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/011721.cfm>