

One of the themes in today's readings is pretty obvious. It's about being **CALLED**. There was Samuel's call in the first reading and Andrew and another disciple, probably John, in the Gospel. These were life-changing events for these men.

Most of us have probably received calls that changed our lives. There are the kind we hope we never receive—something tragic happening to someone we love. There are also the ones that change our lives in a *good* way. Some of you may have met someone at a friend's house or a party and you thought "I would really like to get to know that person better." After exchanging phone numbers, the person gives you a call, and as one thing leads to another, you become the best of friends. Maybe you even marry each other. Your life is changed and you are grateful for it.

Samuel got a call in the middle of the night. His life was changed and so were the lives of all God's people for hundreds of years afterward—Samuel was the one who established the monarchy in Israel and anointed their first two kings: Saul and David.

Martin Luther King, whom we remember and honor tomorrow, received a call to ministry, and that led to other calls to struggle in a non-violent way for justice for all the people in our nation.

Andrew and another disciple heard John the Baptist point out Jesus and they responded to Jesus' call to "come and see." The next day Peter received his brother Andrew's call to meet Jesus. Their call was not as dramatic as Samuel's was. It is not often that God literally calls out our name in the middle of the night as he did to Samuel. Usually he speaks to us through others, through a religious person like John the Baptist, or perhaps through a relative

or friend. Sometime he may even speak through someone we don't even like. If we answer when God speaks, our lives will never be the same. Maybe that's why many people avoid quiet prayer. They're fine praying here aloud in church with hundreds of other people. They're fine praying the rosary or some other memorized or written prayer. But to be alone with God, just listening, is dicey—they might hear God say something they don't want to hear. They're comfortable with their life the way it is.

Young people often ask me, “When and how did you know that you were going to be a priest?” as if I knew that when I was four years old, or God spoke out to me like he did to Samuel. Nothing at all so dramatic, but there were people in my life who did speak, saying things like “Have you ever thought of becoming a priest?” Or “I think you have some of the qualities that would make a good priest.” Looking back, I could not dispute that for sure God was speaking to me through those people.

Samuel, Andrew, John, Peter... *none of them did it alone.* Samuel got guidance from Eli in recognizing God's voice. The disciples first received guidance from John the Baptist in recognizing Jesus. Sometimes we think God may be saying something to us, but we're not sure. It doesn't have to be something big like becoming a priest or going into religious life. It can be something as simple as volunteering for some kind of service to others, or making a retreat, or becoming a little more serious about reading the bible, or getting more involved in Respect Life activities. We think, “Is this really what God wants?”

It's helpful then to get some guidance from a person whom we feel we can trust, who is wise, and whom we consider as living a good Christian life. *God does reach out to us through other people.* We see that all the time in the Scriptures. So my obvious point today is **LISTEN**. Listen to the good people in your life. God may very likely be speaking to you through them.

But there is another point, perhaps not so obvious. Yes, we must first of all be good listeners, open to hearing the voice of God in our lives. But perhaps God may sometimes be trying to *use us* to get to someone else, but we are too timid or frightened to say anything.

If you see someone who might be a good potential priest or religious, for example, say something. Perhaps yours is the voice they need to hear first before they can hear God's. If you see an opportunity for growth in someone, can you say something gently that would open them up to hear God's voice? What about inviting someone who has been away from the Church and Sacraments for a long time? Are you the voice they need to hear to come back and experience God and his goodness all over again? We are all called, like Samuel, to listen and respond to God. But sometimes we may be called also to be the Eli in someone else's life.

“Speak Lord. Your servant is listening.”