

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19

The two books under Samuel's name in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, correspond to one book in the Hebrew Bible where it is located among the "later prophets." The Vulgate, following the Greek, puts 1st and 2nd Samuel and 1st and 2nd Kings under the same heading: 1st through 4th Kings. The New Vulgate separates them into 1st and 2nd Samuel and 1st and 2nd Kings.

Hebrew tradition has it that the inspired writer of 1st Samuel was the prophet Samuel himself, at least up to Chapter 25 where his death is described.

The main purpose of 1st and 2nd Samuel is to provide a history of the foundation of the kingdom of Israel and the settlement of the throne on David and his line. At the end of the book of Judges, the people saw a monarchy as the only way out of a situation of internal strife and anarchy. Outside enemies had been reduced to one – the Philistines, who were established along the Mediterranean coast; but the Philistines were so formidable and expansionist that the very survival of Israel seemed to be at stake and the tribes really needed to combine forces.

Samuel, who is regarded as the last of the judges, was the man chosen to bring about this unification. God used him to make Saul the first king of Israel.

It is of Samuel's call that we hear today.

^{3b} Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was. ⁴ The LORD called to Samuel,

Samuel is "called" as other men of God were "called" before him – Moses, Gideon, Samson for example – each was specifically "called" by God. Samuel was sleeping in the Temple because he was dedicated to the service of God in the Temple, but this alone doesn't qualify him for the special task for which God has issued a special call. It is possible that he slept in the Temple to enable him to tend the lamp that burned there. The first part of verse 3 (before our reading takes over) mentions that the lamp had not yet gone out, indicating that it was night. According to Exodus 27:20-21 and Leviticus 24:3, a lamp was to burn in the sanctuary throughout the night.

who answered, "Here I am." ⁵ He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me."

Eli is the high priest.

“I did not call you,” Eli said. “Go back to sleep.” So he went back to sleep. ⁶ Again the LORD called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. “Here I am,” he said. “You called me.” But he answered, “I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep.” ⁷ At that time Samuel was not familiar with the LORD, because the LORD had not revealed anything to him as yet. ⁸ The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, “Here I am. You called me.” Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth. ⁹ So he said to Samuel, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” When Samuel went to sleep in his place, ¹⁰ the LORD came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, “Samuel, Samuel!” Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” ¹⁹ Samuel grew up, and the LORD was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect.

God doesn't allow Samuel's spoken words to be without effect – this strengthens Samuel's status as a man of God. His image as a prophet gains in the eyes of the people from Dan to Beer-Sheba (northern and southern lands in the kingdom united by David).

2nd Reading - 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20

Today we will continue our study of 1st Corinthians; a study that began in the weeks of ordinary time between Christmas and Lent last year (Cycle A) and will be concluded during the same period in Cycle C.

The busy port of Corinth had a lively and turbulent Christian community. This first surviving letter from Saint Paul to them treats difficulties in the community reported to Paul, who was probably in Ephesus in A.D. 57, by their envoys, then answers various questions they brought to him. Finally, Paul teaches about the resurrection (we will hear this teaching during Cycle C). In dealing with these moral and practical issues, Saint Paul imparts invaluable teaching about Christ as the Wisdom of God, the Church as His Body, and the gifts of the Spirit in the Christian community. He stresses the primacy of conscience and the independent value of every Christian, for each has a particular part to play as a unique member of the body of Christ. The gifts of the Spirit, no matter how spectacular, are to be assessed only by their contribution toward building up the body of Christ.

Last year we began looking at the divisions and scandals within the Corinthian church: we looked at the factions which had formed (those who followed Apollos, Cephas, and Paul for example), incest in Corinth (chapter 5), then recourse to the Gentile courts (“If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment?”).

Today we deal with the last of the scandals addressed by Saint Paul – sexual immorality.

13c The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; 14 God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

The argument had been made that sexual gratification was simply the satisfaction of a natural appetite, as permissible as eating or drinking. Saint Paul will refute this fallacy, appealing to the dignity and role of the Christian's body in God's plan of salvation. Eating and drinking belong to mortal life in this world and will have no place in the life of glory. Eating and drinking will pass but the body is destined to be glorified.

15a Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?

In baptism the Christian was incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church, and was washed clean. Fornication stains that once clean body with sin.

"Paul is not attacking the nature of the body but the unbridled license of the mind, which abuses the body. The body was not made for the purpose of fornication, nor was it created for gluttony. It was meant to have Christ as its head, so that it might follow Him. We should be overcome with shame and horror-struck if we defile ourselves with such great evils, once we have been accounted worthy of the great honor of being members of Him who sits on high." [Saint John Chrysostom (ca. A.D. 392), *Homilies on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* 17,1]

17 But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 18 Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body.

Although the body serves as an instrument of sin in other vices (drunkenness and gluttony for example), it is not intimately united to another person, handed over to the power of another, as it is in fornication. The fornicator sins against his own body, his own person, because he tears it away from the Lord and deprives it of its glorious destiny.

19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

The Christian's body is a temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and therefore it belongs to God. The Christian has no right to give it to another outside the holy covenant of matrimony. Fornication desecrates the temple of the Holy Spirit and is sacrilege.

20 For you have been purchased at a price.

Jesus gave His life on Calvary so that heaven would be opened and our glorified bodies could enter.

"Someone who has been bought does not have the power to make decisions, but the person who bought him does. And because we were bought for a very high price, we ought to serve

our master all the more, so that the offense from which he has bought our release may not turn us back over to death." [The Ambrosiaster (between A.D. 366-384), *Commentaries on Thirteen Pauline Epistles*]

Therefore, glorify God in your body.

Each of us is the priest in the temple of their own body. As priest of the temple, we are responsible for keeping out whatever might profane it. As Saint Paul says in Romans 12:1 "Present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God." This is our spiritual service.

Gospel - John 1:35-42

In our first reading, we heard of Samuel's call to serve God. Today, in our gospel reading, we hear of the calling of the first of Jesus' disciples. It is only from John's gospel that we learn that Jesus' first disciples had originally been disciples of John the Baptist.

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." ³⁷ The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus.

These disciples serve as witnesses to John's prophetic pronouncement of Jesus' mission – to redeem mankind by becoming a sacrificial meal.

³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher),

It is John's practice to translate Hebrew or Aramaic words. The title Rabbi was commonly applied to a recognized teacher, whether or not he had been professionally trained.

"where are you staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.

Literally, it was the tenth hour from sunrise in the Roman calculation of time. Some suggest that the next day, beginning at sunset, was the Sabbath; they would have stayed with Jesus to avoid travel on it.

⁴⁰ Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus.

The synoptic gospel (Mark 1:16) mentions Andrew and Simon together. This has led to speculation among some commentators that the "other" disciple in this account might be John the Baptist himself. This is purely speculation; a more likely candidate would be John, son of Zebedee.

41 He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Christ) 42 Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Kephas” (which is translated Peter).

The meaning is “rock.” Some translations render this “Cephas” rather than “Kephas.” Aramaic is *kepha*, which transliterated into Greek, becomes *kephas*, the Greek for rock is *petros* (masculine form, *petra* is the feminine form). The Hebrew and Aramaic *kepha* is not gender specific. Notice that what we have here is the promise of a later name change, a change which is recounted in Matthew 16:18.

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