

My Brothers and Sisters,

Each of today's readings offer us an insight into the multiple ways we can experience God in our lives.

In today's first reading, God calls Samuel three times. Samuel, however, does not recognize the voice of God because "*at that time Samuel was not familiar with the Lord.*" Each time God spoke, Samuel thought Eli was calling him until Eli, the priest, realized that it was God calling Samuel and told Samuel to respond, "*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*"

Even though Samuel was living in the temple with Eli and his two priest sons, Samuel was not familiar with the Lord because the Lord had not yet revealed anything to him. This seems so strange to me. Surely Eli and his sons taught Samuel about God. What it may be suggesting is that God had not yet revealed anything to Samuel because Samuel did not yet have a personal relationship with God.

The story has some big implications for us. First, parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, and the parish community need to share their faith with their children, i.e. teach their children about Christ. In the former wording of the blessing of parents at the end of an infant baptism, we were reminded that parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith and prayed that they would be the best of teachers. However, they also need to introduce their children to Christ. Parents need to help their children develop a living relationship with Christ through prayer, Mass, sacraments, and service.

As the product of a miraculous birth, God chose Samuel to become a great prophet. Knowing what we know today, I believe that the birth of every child is a miracle. Therefore, I also believe that every person has a unique vocation from God. When children are little, it is the responsibility of parents to help their children discover their vocation. When we become adults, we must constantly strive to discern what God is calling us to do at every point of our lives.

In the second reading, although St. Paul is talking about avoiding sin, he tells us that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit living within us. In other words, we experience God not only through the mediation of others. We also experience God within us. The Second Vatican Council taught that our conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of us as persons where we are alone with God, whose voice echoes in our depths [GS 16]. This reading also suggests that sin distorts our experience of God, our experience of Christ, and our experience of the Holy Spirit living within us and weakens our relationship with God.

Finally, in the Gospel, two of John's disciples followed Jesus when John pointed him out to them. One interesting part of this reading is what Jesus first said to the two disciples and their response to him. He asked them what they were looking for, and they responded, "*Where are you staying?*" Jesus invited them to come and see, and they stayed with him that day.

My brothers and sisters, Peter's brother Andrew was one the disciples of John. After his day with Jesus, he immediately went and found Peter and brought him to Jesus who changed his name from Simon to Peter. When we meet someone special or have a profound experience, what do we want to do? We want to tell someone. We want to share it with others. We can only imagine Andrew's excitement after spending a day with Jesus. He wanted to share that experience with his brother. After telling Simon that Jesus was the messiah, he took Simon to meet Jesus because he wanted to share Christ with Simon. If we are going to be missionary disciples, we not only have to bring Christ to others. We have to bring others to Christ.