

## Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B

1Samuel 3:3b-10, 19; 1Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20; and John 1:35-42

January has been a month of epiphanies, hasn't it? Don't scold me for trying to hold onto the Christmas season too long; it really has. So many people I spoke to about entering 2021 were hopeful: whether they were in the deep hole of weariness or perched in the crow's nest of optimism, they could see the first rays of dawn appearing. Many seemed committed to the possibility of renewal and to claiming its reality for their lives. We have also been called to commit ourselves to renewal on the national scene, as our fellow citizens attempted to overthrow the government. God rattled us awake to realign our priorities and our actions. In the other epiphany of January 6, a Jewish man and a black preacher were elected to represent Georgia in the U.S. Senate – spotlighting how good eventually overcomes.

These epiphanies open our hearts to hear this Sunday's readings about encountering God. In 1Samuel, we find a society at a low point in its relation to God: "In those days, the word of the Lord was rare; visions were not widespread" (1Sm 3:1). Eli, the priest who tended the ark of the covenant, raised sons whose behavior led God to be disgusted with Eli. We hear "Samuel was not familiar with the Lord." However, his mother had pledged him to care for the ark since he was a toddler so that God could reach him. Sometimes unwittingly, sometime quite consciously, we similarly find ourselves in liminal spaces, i.e. any time or place that leaves us open to connection with God. These are times when we commit to love someone unconditionally, e.g. in parenting, marriage or care-giving; places of great beauty or suffering; times of sickness or aging; places that challenge us to build community or welcome people who are different. Our vulnerability in our current time makes us susceptible to epiphanies. We can ignore them or we can answer, as Samuel did, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Our gospel from John shows two people actively seeking God, perhaps for a long time. Deciding who is worth listening to is hard. So many podcasts, twitter feeds and influencers! Jesus asks them, "What are you looking for?" In first century Jewish life, it was common to attach oneself to a teacher and stay at his house; the disciples' language implies that is all they want. But Jesus invites them into a deeper encounter, not just with a teacher, but with God: "Come and you will see." We all need to actively and sincerely come to God. This means quality time of listening and reflecting, of getting to know God. It is why Sabbath practices, where we turn from our busy lives for a spell, are so important. It is why we need to keep returning to the gospels: encountering Jesus is essential to our beginning and nurturing a relationship with him. Andrew gained such clarity from his day with Jesus that he immediately told his brother he had found the Messiah. Spending time with Jesus will give us similar clarity.

Once we enter into a relationship with Jesus, once we are his disciples, this relationship has implications. This seems obvious, but 1Cor 6 is an example of how we can disconnect our faith commitment from our lifestyle. The Corinthians had been engaging in *porneia*, here translated as *immorality*, but Paul means most sexual activity outside of a committed marriage. Greco-Roman culture held that the body and the soul had little to do with one another, so the Corinthians concluded that as long as their souls were saved by baptism, they could do what they wanted with their bodies. Paul points out that because Jesus was resurrected as a whole person, the whole persons of his followers are made holy. His glory transforms us now and our lifestyle choices now ought to reflect that sanctification. For Jesus' disciples, the question, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" becomes the basis for care of our bodies, chaste use of our sexuality and righteous behavior in our work dealings, as well as for the need to attend to the dignity of others, especially those whose bodies are hungry, sick, harmed or imprisoned.

This week, may we renew our awareness of placing ourselves where we can encounter God, of giving God quality time and of how we must live lives that show that God has redeemed us.

- ❖ Where do you find it easy to encounter God? Where do you find it hard?
- ❖ What do you do with your body that reflects its resurrection-infused holiness?

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