

Second Sunday – January 18, 2015

The first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John are these from today's gospel: "What are you looking for?" It's the most important question in anyone's life. "What are you looking for?" Whether or not we can give a clear answer to this question, everything we do reveals our answer to it. There are many ways of being called by God. And all of us, I believe, are in fact called by God.

In our first reading, young Samuel hears an insistent voice, leans on his mentor, Eli, and finds the right response: "Speak, your servant is listening." In the gospel, two disciples of John the Baptist are invited to "Come and see" and abide with Jesus himself.

The fisherman in Jesus' Galilee would have gone on fishing in the lake if Jesus had not been there to say, "Come and see." Samuel would have put it all off to a bad dream, had not Eli finally put it all together for him. Such is the truth we must all learn through faith: to wait on God. And this is not easy. This "waiting," this "not making plans," this "searching," this "being silent," is one of the most important things we have to learn. The moment will then follow, in God's good time, when we are called.

Many people think that being called means hearing voices. Or they feel that since they have never had a knocked-me-off-my feet spiritual experience that they have not been called. But oftentimes, being called can be more subtle, showing itself as a strong desire, a fierce attraction, or even an impulse to leave something behind.

Calls from God aren't only for priests or members of religious orders. All sorts of people feel powerfully drawn to vocations of all kinds: education, medicine, art, business, service. Calls from God can come in many forms and shapes and sizes: from a conversation, a book, a movie, an ordinary experience. In general, God's call is an invitation to greater and greater freedom, asking us to drop the nets that entangle us in our old ways of doing things, ways that are no longer healthy for us, ways that keep us from being more loving.

We need to listen carefully for these calls and not grow so entangled in our daily lives that we miss them. We've heard about the calls of Samuel and the disciples of Jesus. But it's also important to be open to the ways Jesus calls us today. It's not enough simply to know what Jesus said by the Sea of Galilee. We must also be ready to hear his voice in our own lives. So what are we looking for and hoping with all our hearts to find?