

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B January 18, 2009

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

### Fully Human, Not Just Only Human

Here I am. We heard these words from the young man Samuel this morning. On New Year's Eve, in his homily, father told the story of a boy who went to church every day and prayed. The priest became curious and finally asked the young man what it was that he wanted; what was he asking God for in his prayers. But the boy responded that he wasn't asking for anything; that he was coming to church every day in case God needed him for something. In effect, the boy was saying: "Here I am."

Today's readings cause us to reflect on our call to discipleship. We ask ourselves if we would be willing to answer God's call like Samuel in our first reading, or like the apostles in our gospel story. We reflect on our own vocations and are reminded to pray for vocations to the priesthood, the diaconate, and to religious orders. We reflect on the sacrifices that we are willing make, and not willing to make, to follow Christ. And we think of a lot of examples of different vocations or callings that we receive. I received a call from God 14 years ago to become a deacon. It wasn't my idea; something I decided or chose to do. I simply decided and chose to follow God's call, and it was pretty scary. But, equally important to my vocation to the diaconate, was my call to married life, my call to be a parent, and my call to a career as an engineer. We all have different vocations; the key is listening to what God wants you to do and then saying: "Here I am."

We all have different callings, but at the same time we have one vocation that we all share. And that call is to be perfectly human. God made man different than all the other creatures and, as humans, we are supposed to act in certain ways as God intends. There is a purpose for our creation, and natural law dictates how we should live out God's intention. Mosquitoes have a purpose in God's creation. And it's different than that of a cow or mouse or a tree. A cow shouldn't act like a chicken. It should follow the plan that God put in place for how a cow should act. That is how it serves God's creation; how it fulfills its mission and reaches its perfection. An apple tree that does not produce apples, does not fulfill its mission; it cannot be considered perfect. It should be cast into the fire.

And our purpose in life is to be the best human being we can be; to know what God wants us to do to become perfect human beings. We are not to act like the animals act. Last week we talked about baptism and how we become temples of the Holy Spirit through the sacrament. St. Paul picks up on that theme in our second reading this morning. He is writing to the Corinthians and reminds them of the sins that lead them away from righteousness, from holiness. He is concerned that they have confused man-made laws with God's laws. He says: ***"Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor sodomites nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God."*** He reminds them that just because something is legal, doesn't mean that it is the right thing to do. He says: ***"Everything is lawful for me,' but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is lawful for me,' but I will not let myself be dominated by anything."***

And so he asks in our second reading: ***"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?"* We are not our own; we belong to God. And God calls us to be holy, to be righteous, to use His gifts the way He intended, not the way we want. We need to search in life for what we ought to do, not just what we want to do.

God gives us the gift of food to sustain our mortal lives. And God is good and gave us taste buds and made eating enjoyable. But the pleasure of eating is not its purpose; it is a pleasant side effect. When we get confused and want to make pleasure the purpose of eating, we can get into trouble. It can lead to gluttony. It can lead to eating disorders where we purge so that we can enjoy the pleasure of eating without the consequence of gaining weight.

God gives us the gift of our sexuality so that we can participate in His creative efforts and bring more souls into this world that can be with Him forever in heaven. And like eating, God made sexual relations pleasurable; He is truly a good God. But again we can get confused; we can look at the pleasure of our sexuality as its purpose, rather than as a pleasant side effect. And when we do, it leads us into sexual immorality; to use our sexuality in many ways that God does not intend. Some use contraception so that they can have the pleasure of sex while completely divorcing themselves from its procreative purpose. It is a form of purging in a way. And when contraception does not work, there are some that want to resort to abortion, the ultimate expression of purging. Sometimes because of our sexual drives we act more like animals than we do like humans.

We all sin. We all give in to temptations; the devil is very strong. But when we do, there is the tendency to use the excuse that we are *only human*. But the truth is that we are not acting fully like humans are supposed to act; that we are *incompletely human*; there is something lacking in us. If we excuse our sinful behavior because we are *only human*, we rationalize our behavior and will not be truly repentant.

We all sin, but for some that knowledge of sin is cloudy because our laws have deviated so far from God's laws. My children and grandchildren are growing up in a society which is much different than the one that existed in my youth. When I was young there was consistency in the message I heard in church, the one I heard from society, and the one expressed by our laws. Living together without being married was wrong. Abortion was wrong. Homosexuality was wrong. But now, while our Church continues to preach that all these things are still wrong (as she has preached for the last 2000 years), our society, and its laws, now says that they are acceptable. There is no longer agreement between what is morally acceptable, what is socially acceptable, and what is legal. Children now receive conflicting information and are then told to follow their own conscience.

And so parents and grandparents and teachers, I make a special appeal to you to help our young people know what kind of life God call them to as human beings; what it means to be holy and live by the rules of the Supreme judge not the rules of our society. We need to help form their consciences. Teach them that to achieve true happiness, eternal life in heaven, that they need to pursue the things they ought to do, and not just they want to do. Teach them to be fully human, not just only human.

**Deacon Joe Hulway**