

We see in today's gospel that God's call does not always come out of the heavens but from another human being. The call to Andrew and an unnamed apostle came from John the Baptist. Peter's call started with Andrew. It took a while after meeting Jesus before they gave up their lucrative business in order to be Jesus' disciple.

When God calls we seldom know what we are getting ourselves into if we follow that call. Samuel didn't know that he would become a leader for God's people, that he would be a prophet and priest, that he would lead the Israelites into battle, and that he would raise up and depose kings. Mary, the mother of Jesus, didn't know what she was in for when she said "yes" to God. Nor did the apostles know that they would have to give up more than their fishing business, and that following Jesus would cost them their lives. Mother Teresa felt called to be a nun and started her vocation in the classroom. After almost 20 years of teaching she received what she described as a "call within the call" when she felt called to serve the poorest of the poor and start a new religious order. If I had known when I entered the seminary some of the difficulties I would have to deal with as a priest, I would have said, "God, I can't do that. Find someone else." I'm glad I didn't know, I'm glad God was with me during hard times, and I'm glad I followed his call.

God's call sometimes disrupts our comfortable lives. But if God wants us he'll keep calling, like he did Samuel, as long as there's a chance we might respond. Sometimes we need help in knowing what God's saying, sometimes we need to be pointed in the right direction, sometimes we need confirmation from others. For example, when I went to the seminary, the rector and staff didn't assume that I really had a calling. We had to go through thirteen years of schooling and a lot of scrutiny before ordination.

I think it is extremely important to notice that Samuel was already in God's presence at the place where the Arc of the Covenant was being kept, and it was in the quiet of the night he heard the Lord. Almost every time I have heard the Lord speaking to me, it was when I was praying, reading the Scriptures or meditating.

Our environment calls to us from so many directions: TV, radio, e-mail, cell phone, billboards, etc., etc. A lot of times God gets put on hold so we can listen to a call from somewhere else. If we want to hear the Lord, we have to put all other voices on hold so God can get through. The only way we can do that is to set time aside. I have a phrase I use for myself all the time regarding prayer: "if you don't schedule it in, you schedule it out." We have to make time for the Lord if we're really going to hear him, and if we don't, we won't.

In our Gospel, John the Baptist's introduction was a simple declaration: "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples immediately responded. Jesus sensed their willing hearts and invited them to follow him. Do we sometimes wish that recognizing the Lord would be so straightforward in our own lives? Would it not be wonderful if a friend of ours could point to Jesus Christ with certainty? While we do not always have such a clear sense of God's presence with and within us, we do have a regular opportunity to encounter Christ, in the celebration of Mass for example. Like the disciples, we too hear, "Behold the Lamb of God."

After the consecration, just before we receive Holy Communion, the priest raises the host, the Body of Christ, and says, "Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the Supper of the Lamb." It is like having a friend point the way of the Redeemer for us. Here is Christ, ready for us to receive his Body and Blood, to enter into deep communion with him and to live our lives as his disciples. Nourished in word and sacrament, we are called to point the way to our Savior as witnesses of Christ's love. Like our Responsorial Psalm, we can say, "Here am I, Lord, I come to do your will."