

LISTENING FOR GOD TOGETHER



SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE B

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

GATHERING

(An unlit candle and an open bible rest on a table covered with a green cloth. As members arrive, the sounds of television and radio talk shows simultaneously fill the room.)

We listen with Samuel this week for the sound of God's call. Together we seek the Lord and embrace his invitation to stay with him. Last week, we reflected on Christ's all-encompassing love and our call to be inclusive. What effort have you made to be more inclusive this past week and what have you noticed about yourself and the world as a result? *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(When the community is assembled, the facilitator calls the community to silent attention to the presence of God – while the television and radio continue to play. After a minute, the candle is lit. After another minute, the sound of, first the television, then the radio, is gradually turned down to silence. The community then dwells together in yet another minute of quiet, after which members pray as follows.)

Leader: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

All: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Leader: I have waited, waited for the LORD,
and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.
And he put a new song into my mouth,
a hymn to our God.

All: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Leader: Sacrifice or offering you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold I come."

All: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Leader: "In the written scroll it is prescribed for me
to do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!"

All: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Leader: I announced your justice in the vast assembly;
I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

All: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Psalm 40: 2-10

(Members join in singing, "Speak Now, O Lord." The song may be found on the Internet.

Focus Question

Recall a time when there was so much going on around you that you could hardly hear yourself think.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel reading, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

Commentary

How often does it happen that we have to hear something three or four or more times before we *get it*? That is the situation in which Samuel finds himself. The issue for Samuel is not really one of hearing; it is one of understanding; it is a matter of discernment. The life of the young Samuel is already oriented to God, but he has yet to experience God deeply, directly. And when he does hear God's call, he needs the guidance of another.

For us in this day and age, we face the double challenge, that of hearing as well as discerning God's call. Living in the information age, we are bombarded by messages constantly. How do we decide what is meaningful or what is true? Exasperated by the constant noisiness of daily life, a friend recently blurted, "My grandchildren don't have a single toy that doesn't talk." Surrounded by chatter and noise the whole day long, it is a wonder that we are able to hear the world within at all.

Striving, in the spirit of Samuel, to live a life oriented to God, we come together in small church community to slow down, to notice our lives, to listen to our lives, to hear the voice of God speak to us in the midst of our daily lives. Like Samuel, we need the word from others, to help us discern the movement of God in our lives.

Hearing and responding to God's call is what connects the readings from Samuel and John this week. Samuel was ready to hear, even if, at first, he did not fully understand. Andrew and the other of John's disciples are ready to hear as well. They are seekers. "What are you looking for?" asks Jesus. "[W]here are you *staying*?" "Come and you will see. So they went and saw where Jesus was *staying*, and they *stayed* with him..."¹

¹ God's call is above all a call to *relationship*. John captures this especially with his use of the word *menein* (stay, abide, remain, dwell). As the gospel unfolds, the meaning of *menein* becomes richer and richer. It describes the communion to which Jesus calls his disciples (6:58f); the way to faithful discipleship (8:31); the relationship between Jesus and the Father (14:10); the relationship of us all with the Spirit (14:17; the relationship between Jesus and the church (15:5).

Samuel needs the guidance of Eli. Andrew and the other disciple need the help of John the Baptizer. Peter comes to Jesus because of Andrew. We discover God in the mystery of relationship. Paul captures this theme of relationship himself when he reminds us this week that we are “members of Christ.” As such, we abide in him and with one another as we strive to build a world worthy of the communion to which God calls us all. We gather in small church community to notice our lives, to hear God’s call in the midst of it all – the call to an ever richer relationship with our God and one another.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How does the word, phrase or image that struck you from this week’s scriptures speak to your life or the life of the community, your family or your world these days?
- ◆ How do you discern God’s call in the midst of all the pulls and tugs of daily life?
- ◆ How much silence do you allow for in your typical day?
- ◆ How strong a sense do you have of hearing God’s voice in your life these days?
- ◆ How has your experience of small church community helped you to understand what God may be asking you to do?
- ◆ Describe your vocation as you understand it today.

RESPONSE IN ACTION

(The leader poses the question, “What does God ask of you/us in light of our sharing of life and faith this week?” After a few minutes of reflection, the leader invites conversation in response to the question.)

- ◆ Seek out an opportunity for a directed retreat. In contrast to a preached retreat, a directed retreat brings one together (for a day, a weekend, perhaps a week) with a spiritual director who helps you to recognize and respond to God’s initiatives in scripture and in your life.
- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week to be silently attentive to your life. Repeat for yourself the steps of this week’s closing meditation.

- ◆ Invite family members to spend 30–45 minutes together some day this week in silence, doing whatever else it is they need to be doing, but with only some reflective music playing in the background. Enter into some conversation sometime afterwards about the experience.

CLOSING PRAYER AND SENDING FORTH

(The leader invites members to set aside their booklets and sit comfortably with their hands in their laps. He/she then invites people to close their eyes. As people settle into quiet, the leader guides the community through the meditative steps that follow.)

Leader: I invite you, first of all, to feel the ground beneath you. It is a good earth. It holds you up. *(Pause.)* You feel the earth beneath you, but now you forget it. *(Pause.)*

I invite you now to listen to the sounds of the world outside the room. You hear the sounds of the world outside the room, but now you forget them. *(Pause.)*

You come now inside the room and listen for the sounds of the room. You hear the sounds of the room, but now you forget them. *(Pause)*

You come now inside yourself and you listen for the sound of yourself. Perhaps something is on your mind, something that might be worrying you. You acknowledge it for a moment *(Pause.)*, but now you forget it. *(Pause.)*

You are at home now, at home with yourself. It is good to be at home with yourself. *(Pause.)*

At home with yourself now, you discover that you are not alone. You gradually realize that Jesus sits with you. You rest now in his presence. *(Extended pause.)*

(After an extended time of quiet, the leader says to the community, “Our time of meditation is now complete.” He/she invites people to open their eyes as they are ready; then to move their arms and their legs. As the community seems ready, he/she then invites the community to conclude the session with the sign of the cross.)