Feast of Faith

The Greeting

At several points during the liturgy, the presider greets us with the words, "The Lord be with you." These simple words are not like the greetings that we exchange all day long—our "good mornings," our "hellos" and "how are yous." This liturgical greeting has roots deep in the Old Testament. In the book of Ruth, the words "the Lord be with you" are spoken by Boaz to the harvesters who are laboring in his fields (2:4); in the book of Judges, an angel speaks similar words to Gideon (6:12), where they are words of promise: for soon Gideon will lead his oppressed people to victory and freedom. For us, the words become a greeting of peace, a prayer that the Lord will indeed be with us, and a reminder of his promise to be with us always, to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). Our response—"And also with you," soon to be "And with your spirit"—returns to the presider this prayer for the Lord's presence. As we know from the scriptures, a prayer for the Lord's presence is no small thing, for when God comes in our midst, God brings healing, grace, and challenge. God's presence transforms us.

—Corinna Laughlin, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Speak, Lord, We Are Listening

In today's first reading God keeps calling out in the night to a sleeping boy. Neither the boy, Samuel, nor his teacher, Eli, understands who is calling. But God's persistence convinces them. Samuel is then ready—not ready yet to do anything, but ready to listen. "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10).

In the Gospel Jesus is out teaching. Various people notice him and begin to gather around. They soon become disciples and, like the young Samuel, are ready—not ready yet to do anything, but ready to listen. "Speak," they say, "we are listening."

God's voice is always with us, awake or asleep. It swirls around us like fog on a waterfront, enveloping us, gently urging us to wake up, to listen. Awareness of the voice comes first; then willingness to listen; then, in time, the decision to act, to live according to God's word. Let's ask today for the ability to keep our ears open so we don't miss God's voice.

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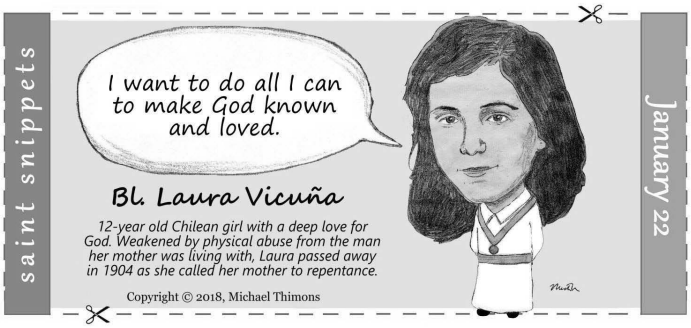
Readings for the Week

Monday:	Heb 5:1-10; Ps 110:1-4; Mk 2:18-22
Tuesday:	Heb 6:10-20; Ps 111:1-2, 4-5, 9, 10c; Mk 2:23-28
Wednesday:	Heb 7:1-3, 15-17; Ps 110:1-4; Mk 3:1-6
Thursday:	Heb 7:25 — 8:6; Ps 40:7-10, 17; Mk 3:7-12
Friday:	Heb 8:6-13; Ps 85:8, 10-14; Mk 3:13-19, or any of a number of readings for the Day of Prayer
Saturday:	Heb 9:2-3, 11-14; Ps 47:2-3, 6-9; Mk 3:20-21
Sunday:	Jon 3:1-5, 10; Ps 25:4-9; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Mk 1:14-20

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Monday:	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins
Tuesday:	Julian Calendar Theophany (Epiphany)
Wednesday:	St. Fabian; St. Sebastian
Thursday:	St. Agnes
Friday:	Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
Saturday:	St. Vincent; St. Marianne Cope



Today's Readings

First Reading — Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening (1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19).

Psalm — Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will (Psalm 40).

Second Reading — Your bodies are members of Christ; glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20).

Gospel — The first disciples saw where Jesus was staying and they stayed with him (John 1:35-42).

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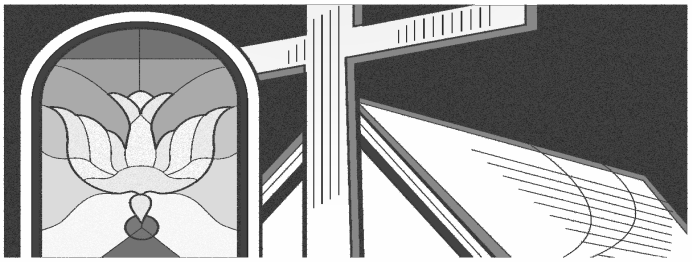

Second Sunday
in Ordinary Time
January 17, 2021

Your body is a temple of the
Holy Spirit within you.
—1 Corinthians 6:19a

Hello, God

Just before our first reading it says that "the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions." (1Sam 3:1) I imagine most people today would think that was true. Haven't you ever wished you lived in biblical times, to see some of the miracles you read about? Wouldn't it be cool to hear the LORD speaking in a vision? Do you think God has stopped talking? People apparently felt that way in Samuel's time. Let's look at the reading to see what Samuel's experience can teach us.

At first Samuel thinks it is Eli calling him. It is not unusual for people to miss a sign from God. If you have a talent that you are proud of, perhaps it is a sign that God wants you to use that talent to help others. Or if a friend tells you she is concerned about your health, it could be God's way of telling you to get help. Try to see God speaking in whatever happens to you and you may hear a lot more than you think.

Samuel also gets help from Eli. Eli began to recognize that the LORD was speaking to Samuel. Sometimes we need help discerning what the Lord is telling us. A good spiritual director can lead you to understand what God is saying to you. Your pastor may be able to do that, or at least able to refer you to someone.

Warning: A spiritual director will probably ask how often you pray. In our reading Samuel finally speaks directly to God, instead of going back to Eli. Then God tells him what God's plan was. So if you wonder what God plans for your life, try spending more time in prayer with him. Don't be like the man who complains he never know what his wife wants from him. When asked what she tells him, he says, "I don't know; we never talk." I bet we have all had times where we didn't know if we are doing God's will because we didn't take time to pray. But don't do all the talking. Give God some quiet time to hear his response. For God hasn't stopped talking; we just stopped listening.

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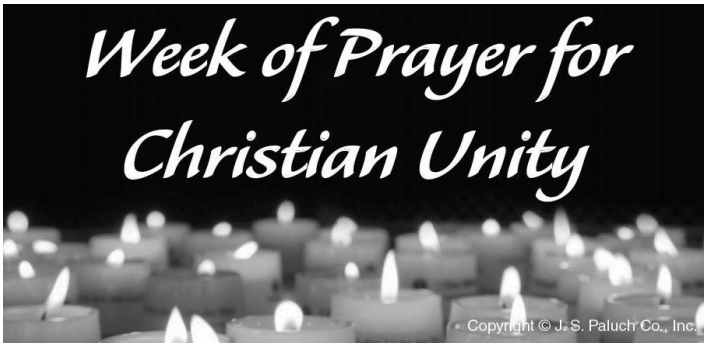
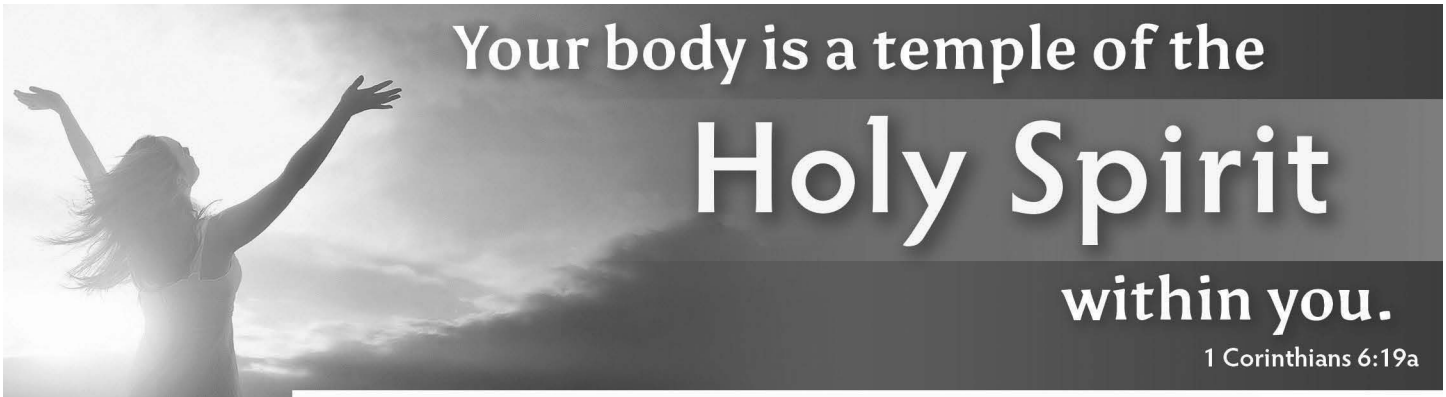


Treasures From Our Tradition

Every year, close to the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul on January 25, and before the feast of the Chair of St. Peter on February 22, the cause of Church unity is commended to Christians everywhere. Sadly, Protestants, Orthodox, and Catholics have settled to a status quo of separation. When baptized people become Catholic, we speak of them as being received into “full communion.” That means we already share a communion in faith in many ways, including the Word of God. Many Protestant denominations have received and revised the three-year cycle of readings first arranged by Catholics in the early 1970s. Therefore, many of your neighbors who are not Catholic are celebrating and reflecting on the same readings we are savoring on most Sundays of the year. This makes for a new spirit of cooperation among preachers of the gospel, and gives hope that the cause of reunion, desired by Christ, has great vitality at the table of God’s Word, and will one day lead to unity at the table of the Lord’s Body and Blood.

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you.

1 Corinthians 6:19a

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JANUARY 17, 2021

GOD'S CALL

The stories of the call of Samuel and of the first disciples in John's Gospel help us begin to understand the nature of God's call. It is not a work order from a distant God to carry out a specific task, but an invitation to participate in what God is already doing. The journey begins with God's intentions and activity. After the initial moment of call, God is shown to be actively leading these ordinary people to partner in God's work. For ourselves, we might not experience a single or dramatic moment of call. God's call can take many forms. But like Samuel, and like Jesus' disciples, we are invited into a relationship of trust and friendship with God. We too are invited to employ the gifts God has given us, always in dialogue with our God, in our daily lives.

OUR DEEPEST DESIRES

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus' first spoken words in the Gospel of John: "What are you looking for?" This penetrating question reverberates throughout John's Gospel. The disciples who form Jesus' first community, and many others who meet Jesus during his life, are drawn to him, seeking something they can't quite name. As Jesus called and formed his community of disciples, he probed their hearts and allowed them to probe his heart. They shared their deepest needs, hopes, and commitments.

Jesus' words might be directed to us, here and now. Sometimes we struggle to name what we really want. In our faith journey, in prayer and in lived experience, we learn to share our dreams and also to open our hearts to know God's dreams. In time, with lots of practice, with many successes and failures, we learn to trust God to shape and to fulfill our deepest desires.

YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING

We hear of young Samuel today, dedicated to a life of service to God, under the guidance of Eli, a Temple priest. Twice, Samuel hears the call of God and says "Here I am" to Eli. At last Eli recognizes that it is God who is calling Samuel. When Samuel hears God a third time, Samuel does not say "Here I am," but "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." We can see a subtle shift as Samuel moves away from announcing his intention to serve and more clearly opens himself to God's voice. Samuel allows God to take the initiative, and attends first to God's intentions rather than his own.

Samuel's story helps us to remember that accepting God's call is not only about a new chapter in our personal story. Our acceptance is, more profoundly, a new moment in God's story. Even in our smallest "yes," God celebrates our partnership in God's great work. Through our openness and acceptance, God has new opportunities to bring all of us into loving unity with God.

TODAY'S READINGS

1 Samuel 3:3b–10, 19
Psalm 40:2, 4, 7–8a, 8b–9, 10
1 Corinthians 6:13c–15a, 17–20
John 1:35–42

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Prayer of the Faithful

Our loving God calls out to us day and night.
Let us respond with prayers for all who are in need
in this world that God loves.

For Pope Francis, for the leaders of our Church,
and for all who respond to God's call to minister
to God's people,
let us pray to the Lord.

For President-elect Biden as he assumes the
weighty responsibility of the presidency of our country,
and for healing, unity, and cooperation among
all Americans,
let us pray to the Lord.

For all Christians to recognize our common baptism
and work together for the good of the world,
especially during this week of prayer for Christian unity,
let us pray to the Lord.

For the people of our nation and our local community
who are inspired by the life and vision of Doctor Martin Luther King
to dream of a better world and to realize that dream,
let us pray to the Lord.

For a growing reverence for all human life from
conception to natural death, for all unborn children,
for refugees and migrants and their children, and
for those who suffer from all forms of racism,
let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who are sick, for all who suffer
from COVID-19, and for all who have died,
especially N., N., and N.,
let us pray to the Lord.

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence
of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken,
let us pray to the Lord.

Holy God,
you first called us in baptism;
give us ears now to hear your call
throughout our lives.
Graciously grant this and all our prayers
through your Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.

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