

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B

1 Samuel 3:3B-10, 19

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

1 Corinthians 6:13C-15A, 17-20

John 1:35-42

Rev. Charles B. Gordon, C.S.C.

The Garaventa Center

The University of Portland

Many years ago, when I was still a seminarian, I took a walk through a neighborhood of Denver, Colorado, with a priest of my order. As we walked along, the priest pointed out a parish church, and said that a sermon he heard there had been important to his own vocation. He had, as a young man, struggled for years with the question of whether God was calling him to the priesthood. He'd been waiting for some kind of sign from God to tell him what he should do.

During this time, he regularly attended mass at this Denver parish. In his sermon, one Sunday, the parish priest there spoke about vocations. He said to the congregation, "Some of you may be wondering whether God is calling you to the priesthood or religious life. Well, if you are waiting for a choir of angels to descend from heaven with a personally addressed engraved invitation, you may be waiting a very long time. If you think you might have a vocation, *try it*. Take the first step. Get some good advice about whether the life is for you." These words put an end to my friend's tortured indecision. He stopped pondering, and acted. And he's just celebrated the forty-fifth anniversary of his ordination.

Now this is not *Vocation* Sunday. But I tell this story because of something my friend learned from the experience. He learned that he didn't have to figure everything out for himself. His faith was not simply a private matter between himself and God. Our faith life -- our

relationship with God -- is not something we have to work out alone. The Christian community -- the Church-- has an essential role to play. We all need to lean on the wisdom of our community of faith.

This is not a new development. It has always been the case. Consider our reading from the Old Testament. Samuel receives something *very close* to an engraved divine invitation. The very voice of God calls to him in his dreams. But even so, Samuel needs wise old Eli, to identify the voice, and tell him how to respond.

We find much the same situation in our Gospel today. Andrew, and the other man who become disciples, don't discover Jesus on their own. He is pointed out to them by John the Baptist, who embodies the entire ancient tradition of the prophets. It is John who says, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" Only then do they decide to follow Jesus.

We are not spiritual Lone Rangers -- riding some lonesome trail to heaven. Rather, we are a great band of pilgrims journeying *together* toward the Kingdom of God. We can lean on each other, and on the wider Church for guidance, support, wisdom, and inspiration, and pray that the divisions which still mar the Body of Christ will be healed.