

**Catholic Church of the Beatitudes
Santa Barbara, CA**

Homily for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B) – Jan. 17-18, 2015
Vocations and Incarnations

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Reflections on 1 Sm 3:3B-10, 19; 1 Cor 6:13C-15A, 17-20; Jn 1:35-42

It's pretty obvious that the thread that ties today's readings—at least the first and last ones—together is the idea of “vocation” – of being called to serve in some way, whether by YHWH in the Old Testament or Jesus in the New.

The charming little tale of Samuel's repeated call by a mysterious voice in the dead of night, and the way he naively went to his mentor, Eli, not once but *three* times to ask if he called, is a classic! A real gem of a story! The world's legendarium is full of three “*this*'s” and three “*that*'s,” whether they be three graces, or little pigs, or bears, or Billy goats gruff—even our idea of Godhead involves three-in-one . . . but don't ask me to explain that one right now.

The *Gospel* presents us with three callings, too: First Jesus beckons Andrew, and then his companion, and finally Peter, who gets renamed the “rock” for reasons that we still puzzle over. Could it have been a commentary on his steadfast character? Or his stubbornness? Or was it a gentle way of chiding someone who was a bit dense at times? Might Jesus have already known that Peter, his other qualities of character aside, wasn't the brightest candle in the menorah? So what? it didn't matter. He was still intensely loved.

What both stories really tell us is that God's call is always unmerited, and often a surprise—a mystery to us and to those around us. We need not feel too foolish if we don't quite understand what's going on when we receive some kind of call, either.

Anyone who thinks God is calling him or her would do well to ask, and ask again, “Why this?” “Why me?” “Why now?” And we mustn't expect immediate or clear answers.

With all due respect to the *vocation* thread in today's readings, there is another turn of phrase in the Epistle that resonates deeply with me. It has to do with *incarnation* rather than vocation.

It's in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where he reminds us in a surprisingly holistic way how we are actual members of Christ's body. Paul tries to integrate both body and spirit when he writes, “Do you not see that your bodies are members of Christ? Whoever is joined to Christ becomes one spirit with Christ.”

How incarnational is that! And Paul isn't just referring to Jesus. He's talking to whomever—to everybody! Ordinary people leading *ordinary lives*.

Samir Selmanovic, in his book *It's really all about God*, says this about *ordinary life*:

“The obviously well kept secret of the “ordinary” is that it is made to be a receptacle of the divine, a place where the life of God flows.” I like that word “flows.” As an aside, we find the same word in our hymnals, where we sing:

“Love is flowing like a river
flowing out of you and me.
Flowing out into the desert.
Setting all the captives free.”

Samir continues: “Here is how Jesus lived:

“Jesus woke up. Jesus went to the bathroom. He ate breakfast; walked to the shop; opened the shop; took and fulfilled work orders; cleaned and closed the shop; walked home; cleaned and fed the animals; washed; ate dinner; talked to the neighbors; went to bed.

“The next morning Jesus woke up. Jesus went to the bathroom.

“He ate breakfast. He walked to the shop; opened the shop; and so on . . .

“For nearly thirty years. Thirty. Years.

“... Why didn’t Jesus use thirty years of his life to do spiritual things?

“He did. These *were* spiritual things: sleeping, eating, working, talking, washing.

“It is *we* who have shrunk the sacred, *we* who have segregated life.

Parker Palmer asks about contemporary Christian faith, overloaded with abstractions: “How did so many disembodied concepts emerge from a tradition whose central commitment is to ‘the Word become flesh’?”

Or to put it another way, “How did so many disembodied concepts emerge from a tradition whose central commitment is to incarnation?”

So let’s remember at *our* “kiss of peace” that *our* “ordinary selves” are receptacles of the divine. God’s love can and does flow into and out of us, as the song says. Let it flow!

And let us rejoice in our tangible selves. We are so lucky to be able to host God’s loving presence, as Paul says, *both* as members of Christ’s body, *and* as people who are “one in spirit with Christ.”

Our cup overfloweth! A-men!