

Vocation is clearly the focus of today's readings. I'd like to pull one thought related to the idea of vocation from each of the three.

The first reading is the winsome story of the call of young Samuel; he was probably about 10 or 12 years old when the call came. What I'd like to draw our attention to is his response: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." Notice that he didn't say: "Listen, Lord, your servant is speaking." He said: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." Samuel was tuned in to what God had planned for him – even though at that point, he didn't know what it was. Samuel accepted his call and, if you read the rest of the story, he went on to anoint Saul as Israel's first king, and then David, as Israel's greatest king. This story invites us to think about our response to God's call. How often, in our prayer, do we invite God to speak to us? How often do we say: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening?" How open are we to God's plan for us? How diligent are we in discerning what God is calling us to do?

In the second reading, Paul is calling the Corinthians to a deeper commitment to their faith. Paul had evangelized the Corinthians, but some of them thought they could just go on living the life of license they had always lived before they became Christian. He had to remind them that, because of their baptism, their body was not their own; they were called to something much higher; "Your bodies are members of Christ," he writes. The body was now the temple of the Holy Spirit; it belonged to God. They had therefore to avoid immorality. This reading calls and challenges us to think about how we view our bodies. Do we see our body as a member of Christ? . . . as the temple of the Holy

Spirit? Do we treat it as such? Do we give it the reverence and respect that such a temple deserves?

The gospel reading is John's version of the call of the first disciples. What's interesting is how different it is from the call stories in the other gospels. Here, Andrew is one of the first ones called – even before his brother Simon Peter. In fact, it's Andrew who goes and gets his brother, and brings him to Jesus. This seems to be Andrew's special role: to go and get people and bring them to Jesus. First, he brings Simon to Jesus. When Jesus is about to multiply the loaves and fish, it is Andrew who brings the young boy with the five loaves and two fish to Jesus. And later on, shortly before Jesus' passion, some Greeks had come to worship, and they wanted to see Jesus. They went to Philip, and Philip went to Andrew, and Andrew brought them to Jesus.

I would like to suggest this as a good model for us: bringing others to Jesus. It's clearly the role of parents in relation to their children: bringing them to Jesus. But it could be much broader than that: friends bringing friends to Jesus.

A week or so ago, I read an article about the number of Catholics coming to church. Nationally, it's about 25 to 30 %. The article said that of those who do not attend mass regularly, I believe the figure was 80% said they would, if someone were to invite them. There's a great opportunity to bring someone to Jesus. Many of you have seen the *Catholics Come Home* spots on TV. We don't have the program here in our Diocese, but in our cluster, we've been offering the *Awakening Faith* program. There will be another series starting up in Lent. Another opportunity to bring someone to Jesus.

In summary: the burden on us is two-fold. First, we must consistently and personally answer the call (like Samuel in the first reading) – the call to a moral, decent, and holy life (like Paul told the Corinthians in the second reading). Second, our Christ-like lives, by their very nature, ought to be a call to others – like Andrew in the gospel.