



## Second Sunday in Ordinary Time January 15, 2012 B

### **Not just one call but many— Not just once but often**

Reflecting on today's readings, Patricia Sanchez writes:

*For the next few moments, allow your memory's muse to carry you back through the years to the time when you were just "starting out in life." Recall those entries under your picture in your high school yearbook; included among your achievements and the activities in which you participated was a mention of your future aspirations. Some of us were intent on being teachers, others doctors or nurses, some were headed for the military, business or law school and a variety of other fields and professions. Now, ask yourself, has your life evolved as you had thought it would? Have you fulfilled those youthful aspirations or do you find that you have been called by God in directions other than what you had planned? Whenever I pose these questions to the adults in the classes I teach, their responses are invariably similar. Their lives have been filled with people and places, challenges and opportunities quite different than what they had initially expected.*

*Today's liturgy invites us to look at the often surprising twists and turns our lives have taken and to perceive therein the presence of God, whose call has directed every juncture of our journey and has brought us to this moment. If we look at our lives, not simply as a conglomeration of happenstances or of unrelated events but as a series of continuing calls from God, then we will also be drawn to live our lives as an ever-growing litany of responses to God. Our lives have been shaped not just by one but by many calls from God and God speaks not just with one voice but with many.*

*As we examine this call-response dynamic and the direction that it lends to our days, we might also reflect upon how others have responded to God's calls. Samuel (first reading) had first answered God's call to be in the service of the temple but with the help of Eli, he was able to discern that God was calling him in a new direction, viz., from then on, he was to minister as God's prophet for his contemporaries. In today's gospel, the disciples who had answered God's call, as voiced through John the Baptizer, were then called to enter into the company of Jesus where they, in turn, began to call others to salvation.*

*Closer to our times, Mother Teresa of Calcutta first perceived God's call to serve as a Sister of Loretto. She entered the order in 1928 at the age of 18 and was soon teaching at a high school in Calcutta. However in 1946, she received what she called "the call within the call." "The message was quite clear," she wrote. "I was to give up all and follow Jesus into the slums—to serve him in the poorest of the poor." Her "call within the call" caused Mother Teresa to found a new order of sisters who continue to answer God's call as they hear it in the cries of the dying, the sick and the deprived.*

*Henri Nouwen's responses to God's calls led him first to the ordained ministry in his native Netherlands, then to university classrooms in Europe and the U.S.A. as well as on several lecture circuits. In 1985 and until he died in 1996, Nouwen was a member of one of Jean Vanier's L'Arche Communities; there he answered God's call as spoken through the needs of the intellectually and physically handicapped with whom he shared his love and care. "At L'Arche," said Nouwen, "I was invited to do something I wasn't prepared for. I didn't know anything about mentally handicapped people. I'm totally impractical in the first place but God called me there and in this case, God's will was not totally in line with my specific talents" (Seeds of Faith, interview for BBC Radio, July 4, 1993). Nevertheless, Nouwen found at L'Arche the home and familial harmony for which he had longed so many years of his life.*

*Like Mother Teresa and Henri Nouwen, the Berrigan brothers, Philip and Daniel, also answered God's initial call to the ministry; so attuned were they to God's continuing calls that they were willing to become prophets in the political arena where they decried the injustices of war, nuclear armaments, conscripted military service, etc. Similarly, an American monk, Thomas Merton, and a Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, joined forces in answering God's call; together they raised their voices to speak to the world from different cultures and beyond their cloisters and challenged it to forge an authentic and lasting peace. Martin Luther King's sensitivity to God's call led him from the pulpit of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta to the streets of Selma, Montgomery, and Washington, D.C., in support of civil rights and racial equality.*

*As we consider how God's call has offered meaning and direction to our lives to date, the experiences of these and other believers can inspire, encourage and edify. When we feel ill-prepared or unequal to the challenge of God's call, we are to remember that no call ever comes without the accompanying guarantee of grace. When calls from God seem to conflict with our personal aspirations, or appear to be a detour from the course we have set for ourselves, we are challenged to renewed trust and surrender. Most of all, we are to remember that our God is a God of many surprises and multiple voices; therefore we must be open and willing to hear and to heed the call of God from wherever, in whomever and whenever it may come.*

### **Reflection questions**

**What do you think God is calling you to be and to do at this time in your life? How important is it for you to seek to discern God's call versus using your time, talent and treasure as you want?**

### **Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit**

In today's second reading, Paul tells us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit—hence, we must care for our body with the utmost respect. Commenting on our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Flor McCarthy writes:

*No religion takes the body as seriously as does the Christian religion. The body is not seen as the enemy of the spirit, or as a prison of the spirit. Through Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection, the human body has become part of the life of God. There is no place in Christianity for contempt of the body. But neither is there a place for worship of the body.*

*We are God's creatures. Our body is the work of God. That is reason enough for respecting it and caring for it. But St. Paul gives us a further and deeper reason for respecting the body. He says, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."*

*Today there is a cult of the body, especially in modeling and advertising—a cult of the body apart from the person. It is the body that counts, not the person. And it is always a young and beautiful body. Needless to say, this is not what St. Paul is talking about. This is not respect. This is more like exploitation.*

*Today there is also huge interest in physical fitness and physical health. While this is to be welcomed, it should be kept in perspective. Care of the body shouldn't result in neglect of the soul. Bodily health shouldn't be sought at the expense of health of soul.*

*The church respects the body from the beginning of life right to the end, from that of a tiny infant to that of an elderly person. At Baptism it pours water over the*

*body of the child. It anoints it not once but twice. It adorns it with a white robe. At the end of life it again anoints and blesses the body of the Christian. Even when life has gone out of it, it still considers it sacred. The Church buries it in consecrated ground. And when cremation occurs it urges that the ashes be treated with respect.*

*This is because the Church regards the body as a temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Moreover, in the incarnation Jesus took on a body like ours. He lived, suffered, and died in our flesh. And he rose from the dead and was glorified in our flesh. This is another reason for respecting the body: it is destined for eternal glory. "God will raise up these mortal bodies and make them like his own in glory" (St. Paul).*

*We don't show respect for our bodies by sins of the flesh, or by over-indulgence in food or drink. Having more respect for our bodies would go a long way towards reducing social problems such as addiction, the spread of AIDS, and teen-age pregnancies.*

*Once in a small town in Poland a young boy stood watching a gypsy as he drank from a well in the town square. After drinking, the man stood there, gazing down into the well, as though looking at someone. He was a giant of a man but had a friendly face. So the boy approached him and asked, "Who lives down there?" "God does," answered the gypsy.*

*"Can I see him?"*

*"Sure you can," said the gypsy.*

*Then he took the boy into his arms, lifting him up so that he could see down into the well. All the boy could see, however, was his own reflection in the water. "But that's only me," he cried in disappointment. "All I see is me."*

*"Ah," replied the gypsy, "now you know where God lives. He lives in you."*

### **Reflection questions**

**What are ways you show respect and lack of respect for your body?**

**In today's Gospel, Jesus asks the disciples: "What are you looking for?" Assume Jesus is asking you today: "What are you seeking at this time in your life?"—how would you answer that question?**

Have a blessed week,

*Fr. Sean*