

**1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19**

**Psalm 40**

**1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20**

**John 1:35-42**

**Homilist: Deacon Mike Mocek**

**January 14, 2018**

We do not have to dig too deeply into today's readings to uncover a common theme – discerning God's call to discipleship and vocation. What do we want to do, and what does God want us to do, with the life that God has given us? Answers to those questions do not come easily. We almost always struggle with them, and often make a few false starts, before finally seeing through to our answers, usually after a considerable amount of dialogue with God in prayer. Today's readings lay a firm foundation for that dialogue with God. In the first reading, we are shown the importance of listening. Samuel learns to recognize God's voice, and he responds generously. It took a few tries, but with help from his mentor, Eli, Samuel finally realized that the voice calling him was God. He listened, he responded, and he grew to become a trusted prophet of the Lord. The beautiful responsorial psalm that we sang echoes Samuel's reply and emphasizes our obligation to be present in the Lord, to listen, and to follow the Lord's call, "Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will." In the Gospel, we see Jesus calling his first disciples, as he began his public life and ministry. He turned to them and asked, "What are you looking for?" Their response was, "Rabbi (Teacher), where are you staying?" It was their way of telling Jesus that they wanted to know more. And finally, the call to discipleship is a little less obvious in the second reading, but Paul's reflections remind us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We belong to God, and we are called to holiness, to glorify God by our actions, and to see the dignity of each and every person that God has created.

A few of us may be able to remember back to a time when we viewed the call to vocation as a fairly straight-forward, singular event in our

lives that led some to the priesthood or religious life. Usually during high school, or maybe junior high, we were asked, "Is God calling you to a vocation?" Those who felt the call, and answered yes, would then prepare to continue their education in a seminary or abbey if they were male or in a convent if they were female. Everyone else continued with their secular education. At that time in my life, I felt no call to any form of religious vocation, and I considered that to be my final answer. Little did I know.

Today, our understanding of God's call to discipleship and vocation is quite different than it was in the pre-Vatican II era of the Church. By our baptisms, we are all called to follow Christ as his disciples, and we all have vocations. While some are called to vocations in the clergy or in religious life, others are called to vocations in single or married life. All vocations are important in the eyes of God, and all vocations are needed by the people of God. We also understand that God never stops calling us. I first sensed God's call to the permanent diaconate in the 1970s. But, I did not answer that call for more than 20 years, until I finally began deacon formation in the late 1990s. A lot happened during that twenty-plus-year-period. Good, bad, or indifferent, everything that happened to me during that period had a part in leading me eventually to answering God's call. God never gave up on me, and I finally said yes. God also never stopped calling Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose holiday we will celebrate tomorrow. Dr. King was called to be a Baptist minister, serving congregations across the southeastern United States. But God continued calling him to do more, and he became a prophet who awakened our society to God's will for justice and the elimination of prejudice. Dr. King gave his life for that cause and, as we know all too well, much remains to be done. I have no doubt that God is calling many, if not all, of us today to continue the work of Dr. King, doing our part to complete the job that his death left undone.

I wonder what would happen if we, like those early disciples, encountered Jesus today, and he turned to us and asked, "What are you looking for?" How would we respond? Would we ask where he was staying so that we might be able to spend time with him and learn more? Or, would we dismiss him with our busy-ness and go on with our routine?