

**SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle-B; Jan. 14<sup>th</sup> 2024**  
**1Samuel 3:3-10; 1Corinthians 6:13-15; John 1:35-42**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

If we take the entire salvation history, we meet many men and women who were specially chosen by God for particular missions. The Bible constantly narrates the instances of God calling people and demanding a quick response from them. We have the examples of the call of Abraham, through whom the people of Israel came into existence; then Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and several other prophets and many others who responded to God positively. In the first reading we heard how God called young Samuel as he was sleeping in the Temple. Samuel was helped by Eli, the priest to recognize God's voice. Once he recognized God's call he responded to Him saying: **“Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”** Only when he was ready to listen, God gave him the message and the mission. His positive response to God made him a great Prophet in Israel. It is interesting to notice that God never went to the elite men and women of the time; rather he approached the most ordinary people. Initially, none of them had the confidence to take up the mission, God entrusted to them. But once they obeyed and responded to God's command, they became the most powerful instruments in God's hands.

The mysterious way of God in calling people continued through Jesus too. When Jesus started his public ministry, like the rabbis of the Jews he too could have waited for the qualified young men to seek for his discipleship. Instead Jesus broke that custom and chose the most unwanted and outcast in the society as his disciples. Neither have they had any social status nor any formal education. But once Jesus chose them, they were no more the same fragile people.

When we examine the nature of the call of God in the Old Testament and that of Jesus in the New Testament, we get the impression that God and Jesus didn't respect the individuals' freedom of choice. Rather the demand was imposed on them. Indeed they all responded positively; but some of them raised objections too. It is true that the urgency of the call was very high and as a result they had to respond quickly. But they responded with convictions. For instance, we see the quick response of Peter and companions; we notice Matthew the Tax Collector leaving his office in the middle of the busy hours even without closing his accounts and business of the day. Being struck by the unknown light and having listened to the voice of Jesus, Paul didn't waste any time to be converted to Christianity and take up the preaching of the gospel. At the same time, the young rich man whom Jesus called went away sadly responding to the call negatively. But Jesus didn't force him at all.

God's call is a gift and this call is given to each and every person, demanding a response and readiness to work for Him. Many don't even recognize the voice of God; many refuse to respond positively. But only a small percentage accepted and acted upon the voice of God. Like Samuel, if we can open our minds and say to the Lord, "**Speak Lord, your servant is listening**" – no doubt we will be able to hear what God expects from us. When the ordinary people like Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln and Rosa Parks, responded to the call of God and came out of their comfort zone, they worked miracles in the world. *Our main problem is that you and I don't want to leave our comfort zone. No one had contributed anything to mankind remaining in their comfort zone; rather by sacrificing many dear things in their lives.*

In the words of Jesus, "**Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit**" (John 12:24). If the world honors many great men and women today, remember, they were ready to fall to the ground and die and thus they could produce much fruit. Very often, people like to remain as a single grain of wheat, enjoying their comfort shell. Sometimes people make excuses that they are not that capable of doing things; so let others do. ***But God never chooses anyone seeing his/her quality, talents and qualification. God calls you and me for different missions, not because we are great, but because He is great.*** What God demands from us is just our co-operation or yes to His call. What was the big qualification of Virgin Mary? Coming to our own time, what qualification did Abraham Lincoln or Mother Theresa have? They all had only the goodwill to sacrifice their comforts and security for mankind. When Jesus took them in his hands, miracles happened through them. So let us have the goodwill to listen to the voice of God, which comes in different ways and through unexpected people.