

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 14, 2018
Fr. Rick Lorenz

Reflection

I used to work for a high-tech company quite near here, on Michael Cowpland Drive. I was there for seven years until I got laid off. I went to the unemployment office to apply for employment insurance. They wanted me to fill out a form each week specifying the number of hours than I spent looking for a job. If I went away, I had to fill that in; maybe they wouldn't have paid me for my absences. This rankled my pride and sense of independence. "You can keep your lousy money, I don't want it!" I was in the lucky position of having a simple life with no dependents, with a good resume and a booming labour market. Not getting their money simply meant that I would sink into debt a little more quickly. I was confident that I would get another job soon enough, and I wanted to enjoy my time off. Driving home, I felt happy, free and victorious. Then they called me and said, "Take the money, don't worry about the forms."

Today's readings tell us that God calls on people to follow him, but we have to listen for his voice. In the first reading, God is calling Samuel. He thinks it's Eli speaking his name, and runs toward him three times. But then Eli realizes that Samuel is hearing the voice of God. He tells him what to do. "Go lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" The psalm tells us what we need to hear God's voice.

1 Sam 3:3b-10, 19
Ps 40
1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20
Jn 1:35-42

"I waited patiently for the Lord, he inclined to me and heard my cry." We have to listen with patience, since God speaks to us at a time of his own choosing. We exercise this patience with perseverance in prayer and a determination to do his will. And we are equipped to hear him. He made us able to hear his voice. "Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear." God also created us with a restless heart. It has a bottomless hole in it, that gives us an infinite desire, an unquenchable thirst. It's a God-shaped hole that only he can fill. He knows what we want and what we need better than we do. The disciples found this out. When they first saw Jesus, he asked them "What are you looking for?" They weren't able to respond with an answer. The deepest longings of their heart were beyond words, outside their experience, more distant than their dreams. So they answered with a question, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" They wanted to be where Jesus was, to stay where he was at rest, to abide in the peace they heard in his voice; to dwell in his being that let them say "We have found the Messiah."

God calls us, but the world has its own voice that can pull us astray. For example, the government sponsors summer jobs. Organizations that are applying for funding have to indicate that their core mandate is not to oppose abortion. This places churches in an unfortunate position.

Their core mandate is not to oppose abortion, but to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. In a way, they could proceed with the application. But at what cost? One could imagine the government counting up the completed applications, and concluding that the pro-life movement is on the wane. And it runs deeper. Someone from a faith-based group who completed the application would always know that when the pressure was on, they compromised; they took the bribe; they swallowed the bait. They might justify it by the good they did with the money...but it was Caesar's face that they chose. They were bought and sold.

But we have already been bought. Jesus paid the price for our sins through his sacrifice. He redeemed us on the cross. Paul makes this point to the Corinthians: "you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body." Paul tells us that "The body...is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." We are created in the image of God, and are called to use our bodies for his glory; to respect the bodies of the poor, and the lowly and the defenseless. Our bishops are opposing the government's move. This is what they said two days ago: "Faith communities consider abortion, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression as major questions with ethical, moral, social and personal bearing which determine our understanding of human dignity and thus appreciation for the meaning and significance of each and every human life.

This new policy conflicts directly with the right to freedom of religion and conscience which too are enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as in associated case law."

For this Eucharist, we pray for the continuing conversion of our leaders, and that the nation will uphold the dignity of human life.