

Homily for the 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

January 16-17, 2021

Readings: 1 Samuel 3: 3B-10, 19; 1 Corinthians 6: 13C-15A, 17-20; John 1: 35-42

Preacher: Gloria Ulterino

I took a look at the readings for this weekend. Oh, I love the story of the call of Samuel! Surely I would focus on that! But then, I looked again. And, what do you know? Paul's words to the Corinthians, and to us today, stirred my heart. We—our *bodies*—are holy. We—our *bodies*—are *the* place where God's Holy Spirit lives and moves and has its being! Not singly, but in *all* our bodies—female and male, of every color and persuasion under the sun: the *prime location*, in fact, of God's Holy Spirit alive in our world. At least, that's what God intends.

Wow! Where, then, to begin? How about with the season just ended, the Christmas season? The Gospel reminder that our God takes on human flesh. Our God takes on *our* flesh! We're the Baptized, together—making a home after home after home for God's Holy Spirit in this world. Our very sick, virus-infested world, so in need of healing. Still impacted so profoundly by Covid 19, don't we all simply long to get together again, in person, in our bodies? We are bodies, baptized into Christ, meant to become today's disciples, committed to living as Jesus lived, for the sake of our world.

I can honestly say that when the inspiration struck to speak about our bodies, I had no idea where this would lead me. But then we all saw that unprecedented, shocking Epiphany day, January 6th, as events unfolded in our nation's capital. This was truly an epiphany, an unveiling of the profound illness of our body politic. Values we hold dear—not just as people of faith but as Americans—were being trampled under-foot: human dignity, honor, the equality of all, regardless of color, gender, or anything else that might separate us.

Hasn't that day served as a wake-up call? To us all, the body politic, the voters, the ultimate seat of power in our nation? Where and how have we allowed this sacred power to be so sullied? Where and how have we refused to see indignities and not spoken up? Where and how have we remained silent in the face of injustice of whatever stripe? And, most important of all, what will we do about this now?

Here's where Paul can help us. Remember the people to whom he was writing, the Corinthians. They were a troublesome group. Gifted but quarrelsome. Divisive and divided. Still young in faith, still struggling to comprehend a God whose wisdom emerged from weakness. To comprehend a God willing to be broken open for the sake of our good. To comprehend and really believe in Christ crucified. Does any of this sound familiar?

For on that Epiphany day, we came to recognize this: we must begin by examining our own hearts. Anger . . . profound sadness . . . are not enough. But they are the place to begin. To pinpoint where the Christ, in whom we are baptized, is speaking to each of us and all of us. We *must*, in our own way, determine what really matters. We *must*, in our own way, speak honestly, clearly and without rancor, even when it means taking a risk. We *must* come to know, appreciate and develop our God-given gifts. We *must*, depending on those gifts and our situation, make good use of those gifts to work for the dignity, honor, and equality of each and every one of us.

I know a woman who has lived over half a century with cerebral palsy. An inspiration to many, she has held a responsible job for some thirty years and is a beautiful writer. I know a man who is the beloved coach of teenage young men. I know a woman who has followed her dream to educate youngsters in Africa, with the hope of offering them a future filled with hope. And her husband serves with her. In Paul's words, these are living, breathing examples of "glorifying God in their bodies." Where do we fit in this picture?

It's a new year. With new possibilities always before us. Can we imagine—in detail—the kind of world for which we yearn? Can we overcome any sense of being overwhelmed by trusting that God has supplied the gifts at hand to create this new world? Yes, even and especially in this discouraging pandemic. Even and especially in this stunning challenge to our body politic. Even and especially in the face of anything that would attempt a stranglehold on our corporate lives as the Body of Christ.

So, then, where and how do we begin? Pray. Daily. Each day, every day. Imagine our new world. Trust God's lead. Stay connected with others—for now—by email, text, Zoom, and whatever other way we can. Listen for one another's gifts. Encourage one another, even over the phone, to develop and use

those gifts planted in our hearts. Work with others on projects that fit our gifts, our time, and our energy. Be grateful that a vaccine has been developed, through the hard work of so many scientists. And know that now it's our turn to become part of the healing that is so desperately needed. Take action, just for today. Then it can honestly be said that we, too, are "glorifying God" in our bodies.