

Homily for the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Peace Sunday

“What do you want?” is a question we will have asked or been asked many times. It is the question Jesus asks of Andrew and his companion. They had been told by John the Baptist that the Lamb of God was passing by so they left John and followed Jesus. He must have sensed, as we have sensed, someone following him so he turns and asks, “What do you want?” They asked, “Where do you live?” Is that really what they wanted to know, or was it the first thing that came into their minds? We don’t know, but what we do know is that Jesus then said, “Come and see”, which they did. We know nothing about what was said, but what we do know is that Andrew was so convinced that he had been in the presence of the Messiah, that he brought his brother, Simon, to meet Jesus, who changed his name to Cephas, only a name change but a life change for Simon.

What did the young Samuel, dedicated to the service of God by his Mother, Hannah, from an early age, want? Initially he wanted to know why the old priest Eli was calling him in the middle of the night, not once but three times. It was Eli who realised that the call was from God, so he told the boy that the next time he heard his name being called he was to say, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” It was to change his life as he became one of the great prophets, chosen by God to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel, and then David, as the greatest. Both Simon and Samuel needed others to help them to recognise the presence of God in their lives, as often do we.

What does Paul want when writing to the Christians in Corinth noted for their lax moral behaviour. Was it simply to refrain from sexual relations outside of marriage? This is certainly stated, but isn’t Paul expecting more? Refusal to use or abuse others for personal gratification, sexual, physical, emotional, psychological, or manipulation and bullying? Being concerned for those who have nowhere to live, those without sufficient clothing, food or drink, those whose lives are blighted by greed, injustice, prejudice and violence? Doesn’t it include a desire to recognise that every person is made in the image and likeness of God and is deserving of reverence and dignity?

What do you want? On this Peace Sunday Pope Francis wants us to reflect on practising, and I quote, ‘A culture of care as a path to Peace.’ Care is the opposite of carelessness, indifference, isolation, neglect. Care makes the acceptance of exploitation or abuse unacceptable. Care makes resorting to violence as a way to resolve disputes, unimaginable. Care will happen when with Samuel we say, ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening,’ and ‘Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will.’ We thank God for all those whose care has been so evident during the current pandemic; for all those who risk their own lives in the service of the truth. These are not only signs of doing God’s will but of love in action. As tomorrow is Martin Luther King Day let’s leave the last words to him on this Peace Sunday: ‘We must evolve a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. Love is the only force capable of turning an enemy into a friend’ Therein lies a culture of care as a path to Peace! Finally what do YOU want? Only you can answer that!

Bidding Prayers for the 2nd Sunday of the Year

Celebrant:

As sisters and brothers, members of Christ's Body, the Church, let us pray for the healing of our world and the needs of the Church.

Reader:

For the Church – that like Elli in the first reading the Church will nurture in all people, but especially the young, the recognition of their calling, a heart of faith and a prophetic spirit that desires to promote a culture of care for peace in our world.

Lord in your mercy

For leaders and Governments – that they will promote peace between nations, building bridges not walls, relationships of trust rather than rivalries, healing where there is hurt and peace where there is conflict.

Lord in your mercy

For all who work to promote a culture of care, those who nurse the sick, who support the marginalised, who oppose oppression and reject the way of violence, and those like the members of Pax Christi who work for peace – that their efforts will be blessed.

Lord in your mercy

For ourselves – that like the young Samuel we will make part of our daily prayer his words – Speak Lord your servant is listening, I have come to do your will.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic, for Archbishop of Glasgow, Philip Tartaglia, who died last Wednesday, and Bill Edge whose anniversary occurs this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Speak Lord your servants are listening. Give us hearts that hear the cry of the poor, the pain of our planet, and our own calling to build a culture of care. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen