

Homily: 2nd Sunday: Cycle B: 2024: 1 Sm 3: 3-10, 19; Ps. 40; 1 Corth 6: 13-15, 17-20; Jn 1:35-42

“Our Call from God to Grow in Holiness”

1. ***“Here I am Lord, I come to do Your will,”*** as the Psalmist says today. Are we striving to be radically open to God’s will in our life each day – even when it doesn’t fit our preconceived notions of how it should be? Never forget **the important spiritual truth:** *that each day we must strive to live in holiness in deeper communion with our loving Lord, so that we will be ready when He calls us from this earthly life.*
2. **Reading the lives and writings of saints can help us to maintain a proper focus on the things of God amid living in this passing world.** See our nice collection in the lending library downstairs. I’ve been reading some of the writings of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity and St. Therese of Lisieux, two saints of the Carmelite order of the 19th and 20th centuries in France. Both were contemplative sisters and both in different ways pointed out the reality that we need to bring God into every aspect of our daily life and in both the little and big events. **St. Therese** is best known for what is called her **“little way”** which means to love God in all the little things we do in our lives, realizing that they all are important to our Loving God, and not trust in our merits or our own efforts at perfection (as she famously said: *“I come before Him empty handed”*), but instead entrusting all to God’s mercy and His providential care for us, as His adopted children in Christ, and most of all trusting in His grace and goodness to help us become holy over time as He is holy. **St. Elizabeth of the Trinity** reminds us that *“we are never alone.”* in our life - even when we feel we are. Why? *Because God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit dwell in our souls by grace - which is why it is so important to remain in the state of grace and avoid mortal sin at all costs, esp. in the area of purity (the 2nd reading); but if we fall into mortal sin, to go to the Sacrament of Confession as soon as possible.* She reminds us that we need to daily ask God for the grace to be more recollected in our thoughts, to never forget our loving God dwelling in **“the inner cell”** of our being. May we always call to mind His holy presence throughout our days in this earthly life.

3. **We need to view our call to serve God in light of these important truths:** *the present world is passing away and He is always with us on our journey.* What a difference it makes when we concretely realize this truth in daily life regardless of our vocation, be it to the ordained priesthood, the religious or married life, or the single life. It is in light of that we see the call of God to Samuel to be a prophet in the 1st reading and of Jesus to the first Apostles to come and follow Him in the Gospel. **We are all called in a personal way by God to a vocation of holiness.** We will see this on Friday of this coming week when hundreds of thousands of good people will March on D.C., in the cold, to show their concern about human life, particularly the life of the pre-born children who in our culture are not everywhere protected from destruction, esp. here in PA. May we all daily pray and offer acts of penance, in reparation and sacrificial love to God to counter the evil of abortion - with the witness of God's goodness who brings every human life into existence at conception, and also remind people of God's healing forgiveness if they were in any way involved in abortion in the past, esp. in Confession. Finally, the Gospel reminds us we also need to daily pray for and encourage vocations to the ordained priesthood. As we all know we are getting very short-handed when it comes to priests in many places including our own Diocese; **right now, we have no seminarians!!** A call to the ordained priesthood is a special calling from God, but He wants us human beings to help in this process. As I mentioned before, **years ago** young men from devout Catholic families were often pressured into going into the seminary since the priesthood was held in such high esteem among many of the faithful. In retrospect, it wasn't the best way to go about things, and led to some major problems both for the individual priests and for the Parishes they served in. **Now** it is almost the opposite: very few Catholic families encourage their sons to consider the priesthood, and then support them generously if they are interested. **The ordained priesthood is a beautiful and noble life - if you are truly called to it.** Let's encourage and daily pray that the Lord of the Harvest invites many young men to serve him as priests, to guide us spiritually and give us His life in the Sacraments. And pray for all of us who are already priests that we will live out our vocations faithfully, with great generosity and self-giving love, in imitation of Jesus the Great High Priest and Victim for our sins. God bless you.✠