

When somebody calls us on the phone, caller display let's you know who is calling. Then we can decide whether or not to answer the call, or let it go to voicemail. I have a friend who never picks up the phone when I call them; it drives me mad. Maybe I go on a bit sometimes? I shan't take it personally; but I hope that God doesn't take it personally when I seem to send his call to voicemail. He is speaking to me, but do I listen? Not always.

Samuel in the first reading kept hearing a voice, a call, and really wanted to respond. But there was no caller display back then; he didn't know whose voice it was. Three times he thought his master Eli was calling out to him during the night. Only then did they realise that the Lord was speaking. Then Samuel answered God's call as Eli told him to; *Speak, Lord, your servant is listening*. We learned that Samuel lived his whole life that way, not letting even one word of the Lord be lost.

If we love the Lord as Samuel did, we will listen to him too. We'll reflect on his every word. In this Mass, Jesus speaks to us in different ways. In the readings. In the Eucharist. In our prayers. Someone asked me this week which prayers would be the best ones for them to say when they pray, should it be the rosary, or Lectio Divina, or morning and evening prayer? All these prayers are good, but perhaps the question should be not so much which prayers I will say, than what God wants to say to me in prayer. Think about the quiet listening aspect of prayer, that we respond to. The Lord will set the best agenda for us, as those who follow St Benedict's way of life will attest to. Listen to his voice.

The first word in the Rule of St Benedict is *Listen*. The saint tells us to use our ears to hear his instructions, and our hearts to reflect on them. Benedict explains why we do this; it's because the message comes from a Father who loves you. Listening is the first step towards doing battle for Christ the true king. Our calling is our battle, our work in the kingdom of God. God is calling each one of us to a vocation, to a particular calling only you and I have. Listening to what the Lord wants for you means taking time for quiet prayer. In prayer we listen not only with our ears, or with our eyes, but also with the ear of our hearts. When St Benedict mentions the odd combination of the ear of our hearts, I always think of laboratory mice who have human ears grafted on their backs. Unlike those mice, there's no physical ear of our hearts, but we know what it means to take something to heart. Today, and each time we listen to the Lord, we receive the word of God in a new and fresh way. What is the Lord telling us today? *Speak, Lord, your servant is listening*. Let us take his message to heart.

With open ears and heart, let's hear the Lord's message to us through St Paul. He writes to us in the second reading. He says, use your bodies for good, not for sin. The body is not meant for sin, it is meant for the Lord. Because anyone who is joined to the Lord forms one spirit with him. Rather colourfully, St Paul explains that a prostitute who has not repented could not be said to be part of the body of Christ. To those who sell their bodies in some way, St Paul says: it is not yours to sell. We might respond, this is my body! Such words seem to make sin a sacrament. They sound terribly like Jesus at the last supper; *this is my body, which will be given up for you*. But Jesus broke the bread, just as his body was broken. And we are part of Christ's body, to be broken and shared, to bring salt, light, communion to the wider world. That's why St Paul again says: that body you carry your soul in; it is not yours. Your body has been bought and paid for, you received it from God. Use it for the good.

Use your body for the glory of God. Devote your body to building up the body of Christ. Employ it to realise the seven parts of Catholic Social Teaching that Mr Walters explained to us at Hymn Practice, together with our minds. One of them is the dignity of the human person; remember your dignity both in body and in soul, God shines out of you and calls us to unite our bodies with the Body of Jesus. Our Benedictine Values also have *listening* as a foundation stone; Humble listening helps us to learn, to welcome others, to recognise what makes others special. Listening helps us to be good stewards of the gifts of others. Listening, like humility and reverence, helps us to realise that God is greater than us.

Of course, we need help to hear and understand what God is wanting for us, to set us on the right path; like in the gospel. The gospel characters helped one another to hear Christ the Word. Andrew the much less famous brother of Simon Peter had a key role. Andrew listened to John the Baptist, who pointed out Jesus, the Lamb of God when he arrived. Because Simon Peter *the rock* had listened to Andrew his brother, Peter became a follower of Jesus. Christians help each other to find Jesus. That's our only job. There are other people around us who have already done lots of listening in prayer, who will help us, with Samuel, to say: *Speak, Lord, your servant is listening*. May we respond with the psalmist: *Here I am Lord, I come to do your will*.