

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – B

Starting at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus we hear in the gospel according to John how three of John the Baptist's disciples become disciples of Jesus, two being Andrew and his brother Simon Peter. This is part of John's witness which covers several days and concludes with Jesus manifesting his glory at the wedding in Cana, the Epiphany in John's gospel, and his disciples believe in him. Just as the first disciples are called so in the first reading we listen to the call of the prophet Samuel. In the second reading Paul teaches that the call to be members of Christ's body will not permit us to indulge in sexual immorality.

The **First Reading** is from the first book of Samuel one of the historical books. Israel is now settling in the Promised Land with each tribe running its own affairs. When the Philistines invade the land, through the present day Gaza strip, the tribes of Israel of necessity come together under monarchical government with Saul as their first king. He is not successful (see 1Sam. ch.13-15) which leads the way to David's anointing as king (ch.16). Saul continues as king with David fighting many battles for him until his death recorded at the end of the first book of Samuel. In the second book of Samuel there are two accounts of David being anointed, the first as king of Judah (2Sam. 2.4), the second as king of Israel, the northern kingdom (2Sam. 5.3).

The reading, 3.3-10,19, tells of the call of the prophet Samuel, the child Hannah prayed for and dedicated to God (see chs.1-2). Eli the priest and Samuel are sleeping in the sanctuary near the Ark of the Covenant and Samuel is called three times by God before Eli realises it is God who is calling Samuel. Samuel accepts God's call and is recognised throughout Israel as a prophet of God.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 39.2,4,7-10, is a song of praise and prayer for help as the first verse makes clear. An open ear and obedience to what the ear hears is better than any holocaust or sacrifice. The psalm concludes by proclaiming love of God's Law and his righteousness. A reflection on the mission of Samuel.

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul evangelised the church at Corinth between A.D. 50 and 52. His policy was to establish the Christian faith in a centre of population, and here he chose the great and populous port of Corinth, so that the faith could spread to the whole of the province of Achaia. The Christian community grew strong composed mainly of poor people, but Corinth was a centre of Greek life, philosophy and religions. It was also a notorious centre of immorality which was to cause problems for the newly converted. In 1 Corinthians Paul addresses urgent problems that faced the church there and the decisions that had to be made to address these problems such as moral conduct, marriage and virginity, liturgical and Eucharistic meetings, charisms, matters concerning the Church and the world, appeals to civil courts, eating foods sacrificed to idols. Paul's religious genius enabled him to turn all these problems into a vehicle for the profound doctrine of Christian liberty, the sanctification of the body, the supremacy of love, union with Christ. Paul teaches the Corinthians that there is only one master, Christ, and only one message, the cross which is the one true wisdom.

The reading, 6.13-15,17-20, comes from the early part of the letter where Paul is dealing with some of the problems facing the Church at Corinth, here he is dealing with the problem of fornication i.e. unacceptable sexual behaviour. The libertines maintained that sexual intercourse was as necessary to the body as food and drink. Paul taught that food and drink are linked to the present world and will disappear with it so v.13, 'foods are for the stomach and the stomach is for foods; and God will destroy them both,' whereas sexual conduct touches our belonging to Christ and must be such as to befit a member of Christ which Paul deals with in the main part of today's reading.