

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (B) 01/18/2015

Our first reading from **I Samuel** and our gospel story from **John** are **similar**. **Samuel** lives in a **place of worship** and receives **religious instruction** from **Eli** – the priest of the place of worship. He is **familiar** with the **rites and rituals**, the **doctrines and dogmas**, but he isn't – surprisingly – *'familiar with the Lord, because the Lord had not revealed anything to him as yet.'*

The **two disciples** of **John the Baptist** are baptized. They are faithful followers of **John's** teachings. They recognize the **Baptist** as a prophet – one who speaks for **God**. They also are somewhat surprised that **John** is pointing to someone other than himself... someone that **they do not know**; with whom **they are not familiar**.

I suspect – if we notice these seeming discrepancies – we would be surprised. Isn't **Samuel** living in a **place of worship**; and the **two disciples** living with a prophet? Isn't it through the **rites and rituals**, the **doctrines and dogmas**, the **preaching and teaching** of a person of authority the way by which we become **familiar** with **God**? Isn't it through all of these things that **God** is revealed to us? *Yes and no.*

**Worship, teaching, preaching, rites and rituals, doctrines and dogmas** are all **important**. They can **help create an environment** in which we are **accessible** to become **familiar** with **God**. They are **not** however, **the means** – in and of themselves – in which **personal relationships** can form. If we

settle upon them as being **all there is**, they are more obstacles than helps.

Eli, we are told, tells Samuel, *'Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'* He is, in effect, saying to Samuel, *'Trust that God desires to speak with you; desires that you become familiar with God.'* We, for whatever reason, don't hear this enough.

Jesus - when the two disciples approach him and ask, *'where are you staying?'* - invites them to *'come, and you will see.'* It is an invitation of friendship and hospitality; of openness and acceptance that we must personally experience.

It is in this way that the relationship that God has with us - **an existing objective reality** - can become known by us.

A good example - I feel - is the difference between being familiar with the teachings of the **Second Vatican Council** - which is a good thing - and experiencing the teachings being lived by **Pope Francis**. He too invites us to *'come, and you will see.'*