

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.*'