

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Jan 14th 2018

As we settle into the new year, the gratitude I experienced over the Christmas holiday stays with me. One of my abundant blessings in my life is the presence of mentors. My life is better because of spiritual mentors, career mentors, parenting mentors and others who have guided, supported, taught and challenged me throughout my life.

A source of wisdom, a mentor takes the long view and offers encouragement and challenge at key times in life. The term comes from Homer's *Odyssey* in which Odysseus entrusts the care of his kingdom, Ithaca, and his son, Telemachus, to the wise Mentor. The readings today feature many powerful mentors.

The first reading from Samuel tells of the Lord calling out to Samuel but Samuel does not understand who was calling to him. Each time the Lord calls out, Samuel runs to Eli to answer. Eli finally pieces everything together and as a mentor to Samuel he helps Samuel understand how he should answer by instructing Samuel to say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." Eli's encouragement helped the young Samuel to be open to the word of God that guided Samuel throughout his life.

Another spiritual mentor, Paul, speaks to the Corinthians in the second reading. Paul says: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." Hearing these words through a lens of mentorship brings new meaning to the phrase "your body is a temple" which sadly has become a bit of a cliché. Excuses to not eat certain foods or to exercise a particular way can be framed in the "my body is a temple" phrase, but somehow the call to glorify God gets lost in the translation. Paul is challenging the Corinthians to consider their attitudes and practices about sexuality. Hearing Paul challenge the Corinthians breathes new life into this phrase and invites me to explore what attitudes about my life I need to pray about.

John the Baptist is a model of a spiritual mentor into today's Gospel from John. Just as a mentor can help someone find a life changing path, he declares to two of his disciples to "Behold the Lamb of God" when he sees Jesus. Trust is essential to a relationship between a mentor and the person being mentored and it is obvious John's disciples had great trust in him as they were open to his guidance and willingly followed Jesus as the Messiah they had been waiting for. The trust also extended among family as Andrew brings his brother to follow Jesus. The Gospel response says it so clearly, "We have found the Messiah: Jesus Christ, who brings us truth and grace."

Today I am inspired to look for opportunities to be a spiritual mentor to others. When can I invite someone to hear God's call? How can I challenge someone who might be making a choice that does not glorify God? What are some ways I can support those who appreciate the truth and grace of our Messiah? And how can I be open to the mentors in my life who urge me to behold the Lamb of God?

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