

2nd Sunday ordinary time 01-18-09

Year B

Homily

Deacon Bob Corsaro

I Samuel 3:3b-10,19; Ps.40:2-4,7-10; I Cor. 6:13c-15a,17-20;

John 1:35-42

A man sat at a metro subway station in Washington DC and started to play the violin.

He played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes during morning rush hour.

Thousands of people went through the station that morning, most on their way to work.

Immediately, a middle aged man noticed there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried up to meet his scheduled train.

A woman walked briskly by, threw a dollar in the violinists open case, and continued on without stopping.

Most walked by, paying no attention, looking at their watches.

The violinist caught the attention of a very young boy. His hurried mother pulled him along, but the kid stopped to look at the violinist.

Finally the mother pushed hard and the child continued to walk turning his head to keep watching and listening.

This action was repeated by several other children and their parents.

In the 45 minutes the musician played, only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but continued to walk their normal pace.

He collected \$32.

When he finished playing and silence took over, no one noticed it. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

No one knew this, but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the finest musicians in the world.

He played one of the most intricate Bach pieces ever written with a violin worth 3.5 million dollars.

Two days before, Joshua Bell sold out at a theater in Boston, the ticket price averaging \$100 per seat.. It was standing room only.

Joshua Bell playing incognito in the metro station was organized by the Washington Post as part of a social experiment about perception and priorities of people.

The outlines were: in a commonplace environment at an inappropriate hour: Do we perceive beauty? Do we stop to appreciate it?

Do we recognize the talent in an unexpected context?

One of the possible conclusions from this experience could be:

If we do not have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world playing the best music ever written, what else are we missing in our daily lives?

Sure, thousands of people heard the music that morning, but only 6 adults stopped to LISTEN.

Makes you think about the difference between hearing and listening doesn't it?

During the course of our day we hear many things: some things register and some things don't. My wife Suzan of 32 years is quick to remind me of this.

But when we really LISTEN, there is no doubt about our focus.

In today's 1st reading, Young Samuel could only imagine that someone close by was calling him.

Samuel wakes up and runs to Eli three times to answer. When Eli finally realizes what is going on he instructs young Samuel to go back to sleep and if called again say, "Speak Lord for your servant is LISTENING."

It is in his listening that Samuel's calling is communicated and his vocation is assured.

There is a lesson here for us.. Even if we don't hear the Lord speaking to us in our minds, in our hearts in a profound way, the Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways throughout our day, our lives.... through events and through people around us.

We need to be open enough to really listen and recognize what the Lord is communicating to us.

Unlike Samuel, we don't spend all of our time in the church as he did, living in the temple.

But hopefully, we too may experience Gods voice while at worship.

We might realize a special message through the scriptures (or something within a fantastic homily such as this one, delivered by

a very handsome deacon.) Maybe the music and the words within a hymn, or the prayers of the faithful will speak to us. How about being energized in a special way when we receive the Eucharist?

As we are rushing through the subways of our busy lives, how can we slow down and listen? Remember God said, be still and know that I am?

If we slow down, we might get an insight or a sense of Gods nearness while feeding an infant, maybe experience the Lords grace while visiting and caring for a sick or dying person. Maybe something as simple as an act of kindness to a stranger will bring with it a divine moment.

It is through special moments such as these that God is communicating with us. It really is up to us to slow down, take in the moment...listen to what is happening inside us. Close our eyes for a moment,, and like Samuel say talk to me Lord, your servant is listening.

Let me ask you something.... What would have happened to the crowds in the Washington subway if a person started pointing toward the violinist proclaiming who he was, what he was and how famous he was?

If he was identified most certainly people would have taken the time to stop and listen. Really listen. Soak it all up.

How many would have rushed there if they received a text message that he was performing?

In today's Gospel we see John the Baptist pointing out Jesus. John not only sees Jesus, but possesses special insight about Jesus. Think about that for a moment. It has been said that Jesus was just another face in the crowd. He would have just been walking by unnoticed.

But John points and says... look there he is... The Lamb of God. (Can you see his two disciples reaching into their pockets, pulling out their cell phones, Andrew text messaging his brother Simon, typing , you better get down here right now, we found him, The Messiah is here, with us. Hurry, come.)

John spoke and his disciples listened. They turned to the Lamb of God and came forward to receive him. Sounds like a Eucharistic moment doesn't it?

As they turned to Jesus, what does Jesus do? He asks them, " what are you looking for?" And then he invites them, "come and you will see."

So they went and stayed with him, and soon Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus. Jesus met Simon and renames him Cephas, meaning rock, translated to Peter. Being with and listening to Jesus, Peter would learn of his own special calling, ministry, vocation.

Today, as WE turn to the lamb of God and come forward to receive him, are we prepared to walk with him?

Do we listen? Are we to find out what our calling, our vocation is?