

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

01/15/12 2 B

-- Most of the time, when we try to solve a big problem or figure out a big issue on our own, we can't do it. It's so easy to get sidetracked, or to be led down a dead-end path. But if we have someone to bounce our ideas off of, it becomes a bit easier to do.

-- As a young man, Samuel tried to figure out who was speaking to him. He heard a voice inside him, and his first instinct was to go to the old man Eli. Eli served him as what we would probably call today a mentor. He was helping Samuel train to serve in the priesthood of his people.

-- Eli was far from an angel. There was corruption in the religious circles of the day, and his sons were a big part of that. They took more of the offerings than they were entitled to. And they had sex with women who served the dwelling of the Lord. That, of course, could be the subject of another sermon, given our 2nd reading today.

-- Eli made a weak effort to put his sons in line but generally did little about it. He allowed the corruption to continue. His blindness in his old age symbolized the dark state of the people in general.

-- Despite his faults and weakness, he was still able to help Samuel figure out that the Lord was calling him. It took several interruptions of his sleep, but he finally told Samuel to open himself to the Lord's call.

-- And when Samuel opened himself up to the Lord's call, God gave him a stern message to send to the people, to straighten them out. Over time, that message had some effect.

-- We live in a time when we've had our own share of corruption. Our leaders, even Church leaders, have looked the other way at sexual abuse and other crimes. Financial corruption and fleecing of the poor still occurs in many circles.

-- And when it comes to our respect for our sexual powers, we would have to hang our heads in shame. We can hardly say that, in St. Paul's words, we treat our bodies (and others) as temples of the Holy Spirit.

- Despite all this, God does not give up on us. And God continues to call young people to respond to his call to serve the Church.
- Like Samuel, though, most need people older and wiser than them to help them figure that calling out. They need guidance, and they need people who will open them to God's possibilities in their lives.
- We need not be perfect people to do this. Eli was far from perfect, but he served as God's instrument for Samuel. Each of us can do the same.
- In my experience, nearly every one of my fellow priests has been strongly influenced by both family members and priests they knew in answering their call from God. I know I have.
- As we conclude this National Week of Prayer for Vocations, God's word invites us to serve as mentors for our young people. We are called to help nurture their faith. And we are challenged to detect the signs in them that they might be called to some special service to God's people.
- What happened to Samuel with Eli's help over the course of one night is played out again and again, usually over a much longer period of time. A young man or woman has a movement from God within them, but they can't quite figure it out. They need the help of someone older and wiser to do this.
- I'm convinced we have many people here at St/ Caspar's who can play that role of mentor. And I also think a number of young people would listen to that call, with proper guidance.
- The Lord does not fail to call people to do his work. But we must be listening. Whatever our state in life, may we pray for listening hearts.