

## Speak Lord



Can you remember the voice of your father or mother calling you? Perhaps when you were late getting up in the morning they shouted for you to get ready or maybe they would call out that your tea was ready.

The voices of those we love calling to us remain with us always. Even if it is many years since our parents went to God we can still 'hear' them in our minds.

To hear the voice of God is more difficult. We haven't heard his voice in the way we do with those around us. Nevertheless, he still calls out to us.

This Sunday's story of the call of Samuel highlights how at first we may not realise God is speaking to us. Three times God called to Samuel and three times he thought it was the voice of the elderly priest, Eli. Even then the penny didn't drop for Samuel; it was Eli who realised God was calling him.

The reading gives us the reason:

*'Samuel as yet had no knowledge of the Lord and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him'*

Samuel couldn't have known. It's not just that he was young it is because he did not know God and he had not yet understood the word. It doesn't say that Samuel had never heard the word of God – he quite possibly had. So far the message of the word has not touched the heart and mind of the boy.

A person can know all that is contained in the Bible but be without understanding. It is that difference between hearing and listening.

Eli told Samuel to reply

*'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'*

Samuel then listened to the voice of God in the right way and came to know him, taking on board what was being said to him.

Each of us has the choice to listen to the Word of God or just hear it as so many words that never reach deep within us. At every Mass we have the opportunity to really listen or just let the words flow over us.

Have you ever left Church and then noticed you couldn't remember what the readings were about? It can happen to any of us when we have a lot on our minds or we are busy thinking about what we have to do. It takes real self-discipline to put our thoughts to one side and listen with attention to the readings.

God also speaks to us at other moments. It's not that we hear a voice calling but the events of our lives and the time we spend with others are special moments of grace in which God is present. Sometimes through the voices of others God is there talking to us. Again, we try to open ourselves to God's will and listen.

It's not always easy and we can mistakenly imagine that it is only in the 'holy' times that God is communicating with us. The Lord is an everyday God who is with us in humdrum events and even tedious moments.

In the familiar calling and conversations with others we hear the voice of the Lord. Even in our recollections of the voices of loved ones and incidents of the past God still speaks to us in the here and now.