

Here I am! Presence and Readiness

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

1 Sm 3:3b-10, 19 / Ps 40 / 1 Cor 6:13c-15a,17-20 / Jn 1:35-42

Ave Maria Catholic Church, Sunday, January 14, 2023. Fr. David M Vidal

The scripture passage taken from the first book of Samuel gives us three words that summarize all that is contained in the readings of today's liturgy: "*Here I am.*"

With these words, young Samuel answered God's call. First, Samuel thought that Eli was calling him. Samuel believed he was answering a man. He did not realize that with his "*here I am,*" he was answering to God. But when Samuel became aware of God's presence, he said: "*Speak, for your servant is listening,*" (1 Sam 3:10).

The intention of today's liturgy is to teach us –that we must be ready to respond "*Here I am*" to God, who constantly calls us to be closer to Him.

First, "Here I am" signifies "presence."

Whoever lives in the presence of God can say: "*Here I am.*" That presence was lost after the original sin. The book of Genesis teaches us that after the sin of Adam and Eve, God asked Adam: "*Where are you?*"

In this question, we can behold the wounded love of our Heavenly Father. The wounded love of our Good Father who knows what sin means for us: "*Where are you? See how far from Me you are!*" Mortal sin places humanity at an immeasurable distance from God.

Then Adam answered: "*I hid myself,*" (see Gen 3:8, 10). Adam hid himself from God's presence. Adam tries to hide himself from God, who not only knows where he is but also knows what is in Adam's mind and heart.

To say, "*Here I am,*" signifies the opposite. To say, "*Here I am,*" means "*I am present,*" and "*I remain in your presence, O God; you who probe me and know me*" (Psalm 139: 1).

This is the first lesson, we learn from today's liturgy: We must remain in God's presence, not breaking the bond that unites us with Him. We stay in his presence by living in the truth and having an upright conscience.

Second, we must proclaim our "Here I am, as members of Christ."

Our *Here I am* in Christ reaches a higher dimension. We just celebrated the mystery of the Nativity of our Lord and the glory of that holy night in Bethlehem. On that night, Jesus manifested by his presence among us what today's Psalm said of Him as a prophecy:

“Sacrifice or oblation you wished not, but ears open to obedience you gave me. Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not; then I said, Behold I come . . . To do your will, O my God is my delight, and your law is within my heart!” (Ps 40:7-9).

“Behold, I come to do your will,” this is the *“Here I am”* of Jesus. Then, He took the form of a servant, showing that to do the will of God was his delight. (Ps 40:9; see Heb. 10:7).

Our Christian *“Here I am”* before God is united to the salvific and redeeming *“I am present”* of Jesus, and we can say, *“Here I am, redeemed by Christ.”*

In the second reading, St. Paul is asking us a question. He wants us to be aware of this new dimension of our lives in Christ, as he says, *“Do you not see that your bodies are members of Christ?”* And then, he answers: *“You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within the Spirit you have received from God. You are not your own. You have been purchased and at a price. So, glorify God in your body!”* (1 Cor 6:15).

We can see from these words coming from St Paul, how great is the richness present in our Christian *“Here I am.”* Through Jesus's act of redemption, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are present in us, in our human *“I,”* in our soul, body, and whole being. For this reason, aware of this wonderful truth, Saint Paul writes: *“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?”* (1 Cor 3:16).

Third, “Here I am” not only signifies “presence” but also “readiness.”

“Here I am,” in the life of the Son of God who was made flesh and went to the cross for our salvation, means: *“Behold, I come to do your will.”* Jesus was ready to accomplish the will of the Father, as we read in the gospel of St John: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life”* (Jn. 3:16).

The first apostles of Jesus, who were disciples of John the Baptist, after the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, were guided by the same spirit. In today's gospel, we read how John the Baptist, pointing to Jesus, said: *“Behold the Lamb of God!”* (Jn. 1:36).

The disciples of John the Baptist expressed their *“Here I am”* with readiness. The gospel tells us that *“the two disciples heard what [John the Baptist] said and followed Jesus, (Jn. 1:37). Afterwards, Andrew led his brother Simon to Jesus, telling him: “We have found the Messiah!” (Jn. 1:41)*

For us, *“Here I am”* means readiness to listen to God's invitation to be part of his providential plan of redemption here on earth.

Each one of us has heard God's call. First, in our baptism, God called us to live a life of holiness. That call was renewed on the day of our Confirmation when we were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we were asked to defend and protect what we believe.

Now, this life of holiness must be exercised in a particular state of life, known as a particular vocation. Some will look for holiness by being married and raising a family; others will look for holiness by consecrating themselves to Christ in the priesthood or religious life. We all are called to be united to Christ by fulfilling a particular vocation here on earth, and in this way, our readiness is tested.

Let us be ready to say our "*Here I am.*" God constantly speaks to us. He calls us to be in His presence, He calls us to be united to Christ, and He calls us to a particular vocation. May our Blessed Mother help us to echo her response: "*Let it be done to me according to thy word.*" Amen