

18 January 2009

Epiphany 2, Christian Unity

1 Samuel 3 1-10

Revelation 5 1-10

John 1 43-end

Look at that first reading: the call of Samuel. That made a great impression on me at Sunday school about 50 years ago, and the hymn that goes with it: Hushed was the evening hymn, the temple courts were dark. The idea that the Lord calls us by name.

The experience of the gospel.

It makes us ask what experience of the Lord do we have? A personal communication? An urge? A faint stirring that perhaps we ought to do this or that? Not everyone has a direct call like Samuel—though some do. People are sceptical these days about such supernatural events, but I know that there are people here who have been blessed with such phenomena.

But it's not just these direct calls that matter. It's tempting to say that people who have these direct calls are somehow more favoured than those of us that don't. But this ain't so. We don't all have the same experience of the Divine. We don't all have the same personality types. We are made differently. Faint stirrings can be very productive – might oaks ...

We are all called.

It must have been easier for the disciples: at least they were face to face with Jesus. he must have been a charismatic leader to make people follow him so readily. And yes, he was a leader. Yes, a leader. Not a chairman, not a democrat, not a committee man, but a charismatic leader: put yourself aside and come and follow me.

There is in humanity a longing for something better (Barry Gibbs funeral last week): there is a hunger, witness interest in paranormal.

We see that there's no lasting comfort to be had from storing up possessions; hoarding money is rather pointless, or club memberships. There is a yearning for something 'other'. Maybe now is the time for you to act on that stirring within.

Nobody is too old. Everybody can do something.

Candles, Serving, Offertory, Chalice assistant, Reader, leading the praers. House groups. Reaching to the community, Book group, Anything. I can't do everything, and neither do I want to control everything. I want to enable lots of things, and control only the things that I am duty bound to control.

This is a message that I urge every one of you here today to consider. I would like to encourage everybody to think what they can do to enrich the life of the church and the community. Maybe something stirs inside you that you'd like to do this or that.

There's a danger in every church community that everything is left in the hands of a few people, and it's easy for those people to get swamped with what they have to do.

So don't be shy. Be bold! If you feel unworthy: Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah, Elizabeth, Mary

G K Chesterton: *"I caught the thief with an unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world, and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread."*

Chesterton's image is a metaphor for God's patient way with us. We are hooked, and he lets us "wander to the ends of the world," but will bring us "back with a twitch upon the thread." Maybe this gentle urge, this longing is sch a twitch upon the thread.

That's the story of Jonah, too. He sought to flee to the ends of the world, but God brought him back.

And hear the Blessed George Herbert

The Collar