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Everyone needs an Eli

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez | Jan. 15, 2012 Spiritual Reflections

Two weeks into the new year, the sacred texts alert us yet again to the fact that we do not create our own lives or futures, regardless of our penchant for planning and organization. We are called into being, called to serve and called into the unknown future by a God who knows and loves us and never departs from us. Our response to God is constituted in what we do with all the divine calls that punctuate our days and nights with possibility.

In formulating his response to God, Samuel (first reading) was aided by the older and wiser Eli. Most of us have the need of an ?Eli? at one time or another in our lives. Some of us are also called to be an Eli for others. At times, serving as someone?s Eli simply means being present to them -- listening, talking, praying or sharing calm quiet with them. Finding an answer to every question is not always as necessary as just being a companion to another as they search and discern.

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19
Psalm 40
1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20
John 1:35-42
Full text of the readings [1]

Paul was such an Eli for the many converts he brought to Christ. In his Corinthian correspondence (second reading), he tells those who answer God?s call to faith and discipleship that they no longer belong to themselves. As God?s own, believers become holy places of encounter where others can meet and come into personal contact with God.

Jesus? first disciples (Gospel) recognized him as someone in whom God had made a home, and they wanted to share in that experience. They followed him, wanting more, further drawn to him by his words and actions. The fact that he invited them to come home with him should encourage each of us with the knowledge that God desires our presence. God wishes to know each of us intimately, and whatever we do for God and for others should flow from that relationship.

In an effort to help believers understand that their lives constitute a response to God?s call, Pope John Paul II allowed himself to be conscripted as an Eli. In that capacity, he explained that each person?s vocation merges at a certain point with his or her very being. At that point, vocation and person become just one thing. Moreover, it is not just priests and religious brothers and sisters who have vocations. Is medicine a profession? Is law? Is engineering? Yes, but at the same time, these can be vocations. To have a vocation means that everything one does in life, as regards knowledge, education, practice and skill, has the potential to realize some of the good ordained in the world by God through the saving action of Jesus. By valuing all we are and do as a response to

God?s call, we begin to understand how important it is to be quietly sensitive to the overtures of God, however these may manifest themselves in our lives (*Paths of Love: The Discernment of Vocation According to Aquinas, Ignatius, and Pope John Paul II* by Joseph Bolin, 2008).

As we consider the wisdom shared by the authors of the sacred texts, we are aware that God has sent us several Elis, each of whom can help us to become more keenly attuned to God?s call. In voices soft and strong, in accents familiar and foreign, God calls. Can you hear? Will you respond?

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This Sunday scripture commentary appears in full in NCR's sister publication Celebration, [2] a worship and homiletic resource. Preview a complete issue online at CelebrationPublications.org [2].

Celebration also posts **Daily Bread** [3], reflections on each day's Scripture reading. You may want to bookmark it. It's a great way to begin the day.

Celebrations editor, Pat Marrin, also maintains a daily blog called Pencil Preaching that combines his cartooning skills and a reflection on current events and the day's reading. That is available at **celebrationpublications.org/pencilpreaching** [4]

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