

Telephones have certainly come a long way in the last fifty years.

When I was a child, all phones had dials on them - you had to put a finger in the corresponding hole, and spin the dial to the stop, and then release it. I remember as a kid having to learn how to do that - now-a-days, you just push a button with a number on it.

I remember having a party line, too when I was a kid - where several houses in the neighborhood shared one line - people could listen in to phone calls just by picking up the handset - not a very neighborly thing to do.

These days, we have all sorts of fancy additions and features on our phones.

Caller ID - so you can know who's calling before you even pick up the phone.

Three way calling lets you pick and choose who you might want to tie into a call - sort of like a party line without the eavesdropping effect.

And on the other side of things, now we have these automated phone calls - where people mispronounce your name and act like they're your best friend ... so they can sell you something or take over your mortgage or credit card or bank account.

There're even automated calls where you can listen to a recording of a politician. And somehow, they always seem to know when you're sitting down to dinner, or otherwise indisposed.

And finally, there are the ubiquitous cell phones. They are either ringing at the wrong time, or maybe it's ringing and you can't find it - what pocket did I put it in - or maybe it's lost in the bottom of your purse ... maybe you're in a restaurant and someone in the dining area forgot that they were surrounded by several dozen other people ... but still they are shouting into the phone about their business ... and all the other diners get to listen ... maybe you're in the middle of an important call, and your cell phone battery dies ... and you're nowhere near the charger.

Last week was vocations awareness week. And today's readings lend themselves to the idea of vocations.

My guess is that most of us have a distorted view of what a vocation is ... the English word "vocation" comes from the Latin "*vocare*" which means "to call."

Vocation isn't just about priests or nun or religious brothers and sisters. Rather, Vatican II reminds us that all baptized Christians have a vocation ... a "call" on our lives - as disciples of Jesus Christ ... by virtue of our Baptism.

But having a call ... and knowing what to do with that call ... these are often two things that are very difficult to connect.

In the First Reading, we hear about the call of Samuel. God speaks directly to Samuel, but he's so young, that the only person he expects to wake him in the middle of the night is Eli - and so he goes to Eli and asks what's up? Eli is equally clueless about what's going on until Samuel wakes him up a couple of times.

Only then does Eli recognize that it is God who is calling, and he tells Samuel to respond: *“Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.”*

For ourselves, we often have difficulty knowing just who it is who is calling us. Sometimes we “baptize” our own thoughts and tell people that God told us something or another. Other times, we give in to temptation, and try to blame it on God. More often than not, I think we just end up confused - by all the conflicting voices that we hear in television, radio, newspapers, and magazines - as to what is really going on, and what are we supposed to do about it ... and where God is in all this mess.

In the Second Reading, we hear St. Paul explaining to the Corinthians how they should behave as far as what we might call ... good stewardship of their bodies. The popular culture in Corinth during the first century was an awful lot like our own popular culture these days. The general population of Corinth was a bit on the racy side ... things that might even make a Sailor blush. And the Christians were torn between evangelizing the culture ... and being corrupted by the surrounding culture. Perhaps the most important thing St. Paul tells them is when he asks the rhetorical question *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?”* And finally, we hear in the Gospel the call of the first disciples.

Jesus speaks to each of them, saying *“Come, and you will see”*, and the rest is history.

In our own lives, wouldn't it be nice to have a Caller ID in our hearts that would let us know that it was God calling. Or maybe it wouldn't be so nice. Oftentimes, God calls us to do things that are a bit difficult to do; and sometimes we pretend we don't hear the call coming in.

Other times, we've lost the connection - or we think we've got it figured out on our own. And in reality we've left God out in the cold ... asking us over and over “Can you hear me now? How 'bout now?” We may vicariously live someone else's call - perhaps a Saint or a certain pious individual, or a particular spiritual author - in a sense ... listening in, but never responding to the call that is uniquely for ... you.

In the end, how we respond to God's call is up to us as individuals. It may take quite a bit of effort to sort out all the details - and in that area of life ... prayer is a very valuable tool. The more time we spend with God, the better we understand His ways and what He is asking - recognizing His voice. But without a solid relationship to God and Jesus Christ - we may end up never realizing our own vocation.

Let us pray for the perseverance and determination to listen and follow the call of God placed upon each and every one of us at Baptism. May we, the sons and daughters of God, learn to know His voice ... that we will hear and answer the call ... and follow Him ... where ever that might be.