

While studying theology at a Catholic university, there are many opportunities to pray - not like at a public school or university, where the only praying is in desperation while taking a test.

At one gathering of graduate students, I remember praying for some very particular things and people - most likely by name. And at a break, one of my classmates asked me why I thought God has time for so many of my personal little issues - when there were people starving and wars going on.

I was a bit taken aback, because if in a theological sense we really believe that God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent ... and if in a mathematical sense we really believe that God is infinite ... well, the only Person who has time for all of anyone's personal little issues ... is God!

Which of course begs the questions - how big do we think God really is - and are the limitations on our relationship with God self-imposed?

In today's first reading, we hear the call of Samuel. The Lord calls out to Samuel, who assumes it is the voice of his teacher and mentor Eli. And when the Lord calls, he answers immediately - but then runs off to Eli thinking it was Eli's voice that called him.

Samuel didn't expect the Lord God to be waking him up to speak with him ... but after this happens a few times, Eli realizes what is happening.

Do we recognize the call of God on our lives? Do we understand the call of God in our lives? Is it a sort-of annoyance that we deal with ... "yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever" ... or do we really stop and listen. Our times of prayer can often become one-sided - where we do most of the talking.

And in the Gospel, we hear of Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law ... and His disciples telling him the next day: "Everyone is looking for you."

Oftentimes we miss God in our lives because we're looking in all the wrong places. God does care about us as individuals, and Jesus came to redeem each and every person. Do we realize that God is with us at every moment? Do we have expectations that we place on where and when God is allowed to act in our lives?

Let us take the time in our daily prayers to pause and dare to be silent ... and with the Prophet Samuel, let us pray: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Knowing that God is with us and is waiting for our permission to act.