

I wonder if Alexander Graham Bell had any idea - when he invented the telephone in 1876 - just where phones would be nearly 150 years in the future. His first patent was for the telegraph - and one of the names for the telephone was the "voice telegraph." Yet phones have gone from novelties ... to necessities; and from large, heavy table-top machines ... to tiny pocket-sized devices ... that do quite a bit more than just phone calls. We get phone calls ... just about everywhere and at all times. If you get a call in the middle of the night, you may worry - asking yourself "what's wrong?" Maybe someone is in trouble ... or someone has passed away. If the phone rings during dinner, it's an inconvenience. Not only is it difficult to eat and talk at the same time; but often, those dinner-time calls are from politicians or advertisers. If you're lonely, you might gaze longingly at your phone, hoping it rings - and when it does, you're excited about who it may be - and maybe it's the person you were just thinking about. If you're busy, you might see a phone call as a bother - and either ignore it, or else pick up and ask the person if they can call back later.

For me, it seems that just as soon as I sit down for dinner, the phone rings. And the person on the other line feigns familiarity. They use your first name - or maybe mis-pronounce your last name if it's longer than 5 letters. It's awkward - at least - in that they usually pretend to know you ... and in the end are selling something you don't want - or don't need... and reading rapid-fire from a prepared script. It's certainly an imposition, and there are ways to put yourself on a national "do-not-call" list ... which may or may not stop the inconvenient calls.

Yet when a loved one calls, you may recognize them just by their voice - or the way they say "hello." You know who they are ... and they know you. There is a bond there - a connection beyond the electronic or electrical connection. A relationship ... and far from being an inconvenience, you may find yourself talking long into the night about all sorts of things.

Today is "Good Shepherd Sunday" - and we did just hear a short reading from St. John's Gospel where Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd.

It is also known as "Vocations Sunday," as well. Often we hear a story from the priest or a religious about how they felt God call them to their state in life.

And indeed, the word “vocation” comes from the Latin verb “*vocare*” which is where we get the English word “voice” ... and the original meaning of the word is “to call.”

We are all called by God to a particular state in life at our Baptism. But, like the calls we receive on the telephone, our Baptismal call can get lost in a flurry of other calls ... from other sources. And unless we have a solid relationship with God and Jesus Christ - we may not recognize His voice when He calls. We might even consider God’s call to be an inconvenience ... if we don’t recognize His voice ... or if we’ve ignored His call on our life.

A Christian Vocation is not limited to priests and religious. There is more. We may have heard in the past few years about the “Vocation of Marriage” or the “Call to a generous single life.” Because, well ... everybody has a vocation ... and it’s important that we consider our Christian Vocations seriously.

A Christian Vocation is serious business because it comes from God Himself, through our Baptism and Confirmation. Jesus Christ calls each of us ... saying “Follow Me” ... at various times in our lives.

A Christian Vocation is distinct to each person - because each person is unique. So a call to priesthood, religious life, married life, or generous single life - is far from a fixed and inflexible format. God has made each one of us unique ... and our own particular vocation - our own particular call from God ... is as individual as each and every person in this room ... and as unique as each person on the planet.

Yet, our vocation can get lost in the day-to-day busy-ness of life. Our call from God can be lost in the noise that surrounds us out-and-about in the world. And our ability to recognize God’s voice can vary based on our own familiarity with Him ... our own relationship with the Almighty - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for a deepening of our relationship with Jesus Christ - in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Let us ask for the graces we need to make our relationship with Christ more loving, more living, and more lasting. So that we might become the unique individuals according to God’s plan for us, showing forth the message of the Gospel through the actions of our daily life, and in preparation for our time in Eternity ... where we will receive the gift of Eternal Life.

Phone calls

Late night - worry ... what's wrong?

Dinner - inconvenience ... who is it now?

Lonely - joy ... I was just thinking about you

Busy - bother ... Can I call you back in a few minutes?

Unknown caller

Uses your name

Acts like they know you

False familiarity

How does that feel?

From a loved one ... a sibling, a parent, an old friend

Knows your name

Really knows you

True familiarity

We all know that feeling.

Good Shepherd Sunday aka Vocations Sunday

Vocation = to be called

Like the telephone, the “calling” we have chosen to live ... to follow ... can be a true calling, or a false calling

Vocation

not only priesthood or religious life

but also marriage and generous single life

Our Christian vocation comes from our own calling from Jesus Christ Himself

Our Christian vocation grows from our own relationship with Jesus Christ Himself

Relationship with Christ

Loving - His sacrifice for our salvation

Living - His care for us in our daily lives ... our “daily bread”

Lasting - Nothing can snatch us from Him or the Father - “I give them eternal life”

As we approach this altar ...

- (1) Pray for a deepening appreciation of our salvation in Christ - to love God and to love others more intensely day-by-day through God’s outpouring of Grace
- (2) In receiving the Eucharist - our daily bread - may we become more aware of Christ’s care for us and our own need to care for each other
- (3) So that we may proceed along the Way ... the Way of the Gospel ... Christ’s way ... and be drawn more deeply into our relationship with God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ... by accepting our call to eternal life.