

**My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

**As children, there was a lot of prayer going on in our house. Besides the grace before and after meals, there was the family Rosary after dinner. At bedtime, our Mother would sit on each of our beds and encourage us to pray—to pray for our family and friends, our teachers and those that we knew were sick or sad. Then, she would have us each pray, “Please God, help me to know Your Will for me and give me the grace and the strength to follow it.”**

**My Mom was a firm believer that each of us were called to serve God with our best talents and deepest desires. That prayer came to mind every time someone asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” For us, this was inevitably a question of vocation, not just a job or a career.**

**My Mother, leading us through prayer, played a role like that of Eli in our first reading today. She was directing us to pay attention not to her or society’s expectations, but to the voice of God, which would become clear if we listened.**

**Samuel served in the Temple under Eli’s care. By the third time the boy’s sleep was disturbed, Eli realized that God was calling him, and, like a parent who frees a child to seek his or her own destiny, Eli tells him to listen. Samuel listens as God leads him to become the last of Israel’s Judges, the first of its Prophets, and the one who anoints both Saul and David as King of Israel.**

**Likewise, John the Baptist tells his disciples to look and see what was before them. He sets them free and even sends them to follow Jesus. They, in turn, tell Andrew and his brother, Simon, whom Jesus anoints as “Cephas”, “Peter”, the Rock upon which he will build His Church. They simply ask him, “Where do you live?” Jesus’ response to them is His response to us, as well “Come and see!”**

**My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

**As we begin this New Year, it is a blessed moment to come to terms with the fact that God is calling each of us by name to fulfill the reason he has sent us forth into this world. Each of us have a (dare I say the word) VOCATION, that is a call by God.**

**Certainly there are vocations to the married life and to raise up families to the glory of God. But, can you really believe that there aren't any more calls by God to the priesthood and religious life? I don't believe that! I do believe that in our materialistic society, few listen for God's call and fewer parents and teachers encourage their children to pray and seek to do God's Will. I also believe that with all the noise in our children's lives, there is little opportunity for them to listen for the voice of God. Also, contrary to what Paul tells us in our second reading, our culture is telling our young people today that their bodies ARE made for immorality and that their bodies are their own.**

**Today's readings offer us an opportunity to reflect on vocation. In Eli and John the Baptist, we see the generosity and humility of mentors who point their disciples beyond themselves. With Samuel, we are reminded that we must be still and attentive if we are to hear God's call in the busy-ness of our lives. Together with the first disciples, we are faced with the basic question of the meaning of our lives and we realize that following Jesus will change everything. Finally, if we listen to what St. Paul assures us today, that who we are, flesh and blood, is good—so good, in fact, that individually and in communion with each other we can show God's glorious presence in our world. THAT IS ALL OF OUR VOCATION!**

**So, please pray with me as my Mother taught me, "Please, God, help me to know Your Will for me and give me the grace and the strength to follow it." Amen!**