

COMMENTARY ON READINGS FOR SUNDAY, JAN. 15, 2006
(Year B, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time)
(1 Sam 3:3b-10, 19; Ps 40; 1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20; John 1:35-42)

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The theme of today's readings is consecration, being dedicated or "devoted" (from the word "vow") to the holy God. This is what being "holy" is all about, and it is the expression of, and our response to, the fact that we, along with the whole creation, belong to God. In our case, all the more so, because after having been made in God's image, we were redeemed at a great price, that of the spotless Lamb, 1 Pet 1:13-21.

Samuel was born not out of human possibility —his mother Hannah was sterile— but as her answered prayer,. And she vowed him to the Lord as a consecrated Nazirite (see Num 6). Samuel then lived in the Lord's temple, and it was there that God revealed himself to him in intimate terms. Samuel became a prophet, a "servant" of the Lord.

Ps 40 is one of petition, where the psalmist offers himself to God, rather than offering animal sacrifices which were purchased. He offers himself by doing God's will. This psalm is importantly cited in Heb 10 in regards to Christ's own priestly sacrifice of himself. The second reading discusses the consequences and demands of belonging to Christ, being part of the body he offered up to God as a perfect oblation (cf. Ezek 46:13, 15). This body is God's Temple, and God has ownership rights over it, over us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and in the Body of Christ (John 14:15-17; Rom 8:9-13; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Tim 1:14).

In John's gospel, John the Baptist calls Jesus the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). This is the lamb of Isa 53, who was silently led to the slaughter and whose pouring out of his life (or blood) was a type of sacrifice (Hebrew *asham*, Isa 53:10) connected with remorse, guilt and reparation. It is this "guilt or sin-offering" which Paul has in mind in Rom 8:3. Jesus is also the true Passover Lamb slaughtered at the same time as the other lambs in John's gospel (18:28; 19:14).