

Today's Scripture readings challenge us to live out our vocational call. Like Samuel, God is calling each one of us. And like Samuel, we often do not recognize the call. More often than not, we find ourselves confused. What is it that God is calling me to?

Come and see, says the Lord.

Come and see. This response to the question where are you staying is quite intriguing. Why didn't Jesus simply give an answer? I'm staying at 220 Main Street, across from the blue house. Why must we come and see?

The answer to this question is what makes the Christian life fundamentally unique. You see, this life of Jesus', it isn't something that can be explained. It is something that has to be lived. The same thing is true with our own Catholic lives. When we were baptized into the Church, we were baptized into a way of life. Baptism is not a one-time event; it's the entrance into a specific way of life. In fact, the early Christians were known as followers of the way. The members of the early Church were identified by the way they lived their lives.

Our Christian calling in other words is not simply about believing in Christ or believing in his Church. It's about living those beliefs. Christianity is a way of life, not a belief. What we believe about Jesus, God and the Church, are not to remain private beliefs, but the basis for a unique way of life. Christianity has to look like something. It needs to be a way of life. Notice that Jesus never invites people to accept a set of intellectual propositions. Instead he invites them to come and see. What we learn from this is that Christianity cannot be understood apart from actually living a Christian life.

The way in which we are called to live must be radically distinct from the way society lives. Otherwise the words of Jesus to "come and see" are meaningless, because what people will see is that there is nothing different between living a Christian life and living an ordinary secular life. So if we are to be followers of this way, we need to live our lives in such a way that people can see what it is that makes us Christian.

When I was working in Washington, DC, I lived in a condo with 3 other Christian men. And one of the things we did was to purchase groceries together. And one of my friends asked me why I would want to do that? Wouldn't I be better off buying all my own groceries and have them do the same? What my friend didn't understand was that sharing, especially sharing food, is essential to Christianity. A lot of people also criticized the fact that we had a house rule that no girlfriends could stay overnight. But by having such a policy, there was something distinct about our lives. Our lifestyle stood in sharp contrast to the lifestyle of most single men in their 20's. Ours showed that we were following a particular, if not peculiar way of life.

This is what Christ calls each one of us to do. We are invited to come and see. We are invited to live a unique way of life. It's only by living this way of life that we can truly come to understand what it means to be a Catholic Christian. The Catholic way of life is a way that is informed by our Church. The doctrines and dogmas **of our Church**, and not our culture, must be the basis of this way of life. Too often we want our culture to inform the Church, rather than the Church to inform the culture.

But our baptismal call is one to live in such a way that we can be a light to the world. And it is impossible for our lives to be a light for the world if our lives look no different from that of the rest of the world.

As we prepare for another march on Washington to support the right to life movement, I was reminded of the testimony that moral theologian Stanley Hauerwas gave before Congress. Congress was meeting to discuss the abortion issue, and asked Professor Hauerwas for his argument against abortion. Professor Hauerwas responded, "Christians don't kill their children." A congressman responded by saying, "I understand that, but what is your argument." Professor Hauerwas responded, "That is my argument. Christians don't kill their children." What Stanley Hauerwas was effectively saying this is a religious issue not a political issue and it needs to be engaged on religious terms. It is about the way we live our lives. Professor Hauerwas was saying, "as a Christian, I am a follower of a particular way of life. And that way of life has certain ways of acting, and not killing our children is one of those ways." He was living his life in a distinct way. He was not allowing society to form him, but was himself trying to form society. He was being a light to the world.

Being a light to the world is a large task. But it's what we are called to be. Our baptismal call did not end once the ceremony was over. No, our baptismal call is a call to be a light to a world that does not always share our values. It is a call to live our lives in such a way that people can see a difference between us, as Catholic Christians, and the rest of the world. It is a call to live our lives in such a way that people when people ask us what is it that makes living a Catholic life different from any other lifestyle, we can respond by saying "Come and see."