

## Homily for Life Sunday

[Isaiah 49:1-7 / 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 / John 1:29-42a]

Our God is a God who calls. His calling out to us does not tire — from the first mysterious moments of our conception in our mothers' wombs until the final moments when we breathe our last. Our God calls. He calls us into fellowship with Himself, into a life that never ends.

Isaiah speaks of the Servant of the Lord. Looking back on his words we see them fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Servant speaking here: "The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name." The angel had said to the Blessed Virgin: "You shall call His name Jesus." And this One who was called from the womb of His Mother, has shown us then the sanctity of all that is in the womb - all the little ones in the womb are those who receive their life from God and He calls them to a glorious destiny. There's not a little one in any womb for whom the Kingdom of heaven is not God's aim and goal and plan. If He chooses to take them out of this life before they are born, then we bow before His inscrutable judgments and say with Job: "the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." But it must not be our hand or our conniving that deprives a single little one of its life in this world, of its place in the human family and finally in the family of God. For such a tiny bundle once was our Lord, called from the womb and named from the body of His mother.

But He wasn't just called Joe or Henry or Harry. He was called Jesus. He had a task to perform as Yahweh's servant. He was to save — which is what Jesus means. And the salvation began with Israel, but it didn't end there. "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

And so He came to be Jesus not for this or that people, or this or that age group, but as Jesus for all. Savior for all. The One through whom the call to salvation is spoken to all.

In today's second reading, St. Paul speaks of the call also. God has called him to be an apostle. Fancy that! Saul the great persecutor, the one who sinned by consenting to the death of the innocents. Such a one as he, was not beyond redemption — and not just being pardoned, but then being put to use to spread the call of God's forgiveness to others. He writes to the Church at Corinth, to those "called to be saints." That's what God calls us all to be: His holy people. A people different from the world around us. In that world, which always seeks to invade our hearts and lives, the value of a thing is in its

usefulness, especially in making life more convenient. And even people get “thingified”; viewed from the standpoint of their usefulness to me. The One who came as a helpless child in Mary’s womb and later in her arms, and still later on His cross, reveals something different. He reveals each and every human life as the object of a Divine Love, not a thing, but a person. Each one a unique person and each one loved all the way from womb to tomb with a Divine Love that ever calls us to live in Him. St. Paul is convinced that this Divine Lover who calls all people to Himself is utterly faithful. He has called us into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord — a fellowship in which each life is recognized, celebrated, and honored as an unspeakable gift of grace.

The calling God calls out through St. John the Baptist in today’s Gospel. St. John points his finger right at the Lord Jesus and testifies that this human being IS the Lamb of God, the One who takes away the sin of the world. He came among us, we who treat each other like objects for manipulation and use, and He lived a different life; a life that revealed each person as an object of God’s own love. Each life is one to which God personally called; inviting and summoning each to enter the fellowship, the communion with Him that is life itself. He lived that life among us. And the price for exposing the shameful way we treat each other, was the cross. He went there willingly. After all, from the womb He was sent to be Jesus, the Lamb of God. He would be the one who would offer His body and His blood, the sacrifice that wipes away before God the sin of this whole world. Yes, that means all of your sin. It means every time you’ve forgotten that your neighbor is the Beloved of the Lord and have treated them with contempt or hatred or carelessness or selfish thoughtfulness. He bore all that in His body on the tree that your sin might be forgiven before God and that it might die in you. He did it so that in Him you might rise to a new life.

Andrew and his buddy saw John point to the Lamb of God, and they were intrigued. They started walking behind him, and were soon invited and welcomed to where he was staying. You see, that’s how He treats each of us, like a beloved and valuable person. He was a stranger to them, but they were never strangers to Him. It wasn’t long before Andrew was running off and calling for his brother Peter to come and join them, to spend time with this remarkable Man, the Lamb of God, the Servant of Yahweh, the Messiah. Their time with Him changed them forever. He brought them to see life as they’d never seen it before, and to live life with Him like they’d never dreamt it could be!

Far from being insignificant peasants living in an occupied territory, scratching a living and heading toward death, they became mighty witnesses known the world around--- Peter and Andrew, James and John, and all the rest. What transformed them was their experience of the love of God in this Man, Jesus of Nazareth, the Lamb of God. Because of Him they came to realize that not only themselves, but each human life, is an object of a love so grand that it could never rest content until humanity had been rescued from sin and death and brought home to the Kingdom that God. And this was willed for each human being from the foundation of the world. This love changed them, and it changes us.

We taste it still as we come to the Eucharist today, as we receive into our very mouths the

body that was once in Mary's womb and later on Golgotha's tree and we hear: "for you, for the forgiveness of all your sin." This is the God who calls us into fellowship with Himself; the God who calls to us unceasingly, so that we might share in the unending life that is in Christ Jesus so that we might boldly proclaim to each and every life from the first moments of existence: God has loved you with an eternal love in His Son, to whom be glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.