

January 11, 2022

Tuesday of the First Week in Ordinary Time

The name Hannah means “favor” or “grace.” After enduring constant belittlement from her husband’s extremely fertile other wife for being barren, and disparagement from Eli the priest who interpreted her grief-stricken prayer as drunkenness, through the grace of God Hannah conceived and bore a son whom she named Samuel, which in Hebrew can mean “God has heard.” Hannah honored the promise she made to the Lord and once Samuel was weaned, she left him with Eli in the temple. In time Samuel would become the voice of the Lord to all Israel, eventually anointing David as king. God’s favor shown to an insignificant woman, deeply sorrowful in her childlessness, became the vehicle for transformation of an entire nation.

The name Jesus means “God saves,” but the unclean spirit possessing the nameless man in the very first exorcism to take place in the Gospel of Mark called him something else, the Holy One of God. Although it sounds as if the evil entity was making a confession of faith, it was actually attempting to exercise mastery over Jesus and ward off his power by using his precise name. The demon recognized Jesus’ identity and the inevitable destruction of its influence his presence signaled. And all the people who witnessed the event, already astonished by this newcomer to their synagogue teaching with authority, were utterly amazed at his mastery over even unclean spirits. Jesus’ favor shown to an anonymous man afflicted with a destructive force outside his control became the vehicle that spread his fame throughout all of Galilee. The mercy and compassion of our God to insignificant and nameless individuals seems to be God’s way of impacting the entire world. Let us go and do the same.

1 Sm 1:9-20; 1 Sm 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd; Mk 1:21-28

Cathy Lentz

Director of Adult Faith Formation

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church