

## **Pro-Cathedral**

12 January 2022

### **Welcome**

Our first reading today could easily be imagined. It is night, in the Temple at Shiloh. The priest Eli has gone to bed and his servant/apprentice Samuel is also asleep. It might even be a slightly spooky place. Samuel somehow hears a voice – thinking first it must be Eli, calling him, and so he responds.

### **Topic**

From this attractive short story, three things can be learned.

### **Steps**

First of all, it can be hard to know when the Lord is speaking to us. Usually, it is unclear, like in our story. We hear God through the inner voice of conscience, through others people and also through the Scriptures. But it is not always easy to identify the voice and harder again to listen.

Secondly, as we heard in the story, the Lord is insistent. He calls one and then twice and then a third time. The Lord's insistence does correspond to our experience. The hungers of the heart are also insistent, even though we often quell them with busy-ness or distractions. The good news is the Lord does not give up on us – but keeps knocking on the door of our heart. There's a marvellous image in the book of Revelation, where the risen Lord stands at the door of each one of us:

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. (Revelation 3:20)

Notice that we have to open the door.

Finally, what is the proper response to the voice of God? Speak, Lord, your servant is listening. We put ourselves in the position of hearers of the word – reading to hear, ready to receive, ready to do whatever God asks of us. This is who we are simply as human beings and also as believers.<sup>6</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Bible stories can sometimes seem to be locked in the past – stories about fortunate individuals of long ago who encountered the Lord. But our story today is not at all like that. Instead, it speaks directly to our experience as believers. Each one of us is Samuel: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."