

A stranger once asked a teacher, "What's your profession?" The teacher replied, "Christian," The stranger continued, "No, that's not what I mean. What's your job?" The teacher asserted, once again, "I'm a Christian!" Puzzled, the stranger clarified, "Perhaps I should ask, what you do for a living?" The teacher replied, "Well, I've a full-time job as a Christian. But, to support my sick husband and children, I teach in a school." That teacher had certainly understood the meaning of discipleship, the question is...do we.

All of us here today want to know and follow God's will for our lives. Some more and some less, but all of us share, at least to some degree, that fundamental desire; it's one of the reasons we have come to Mass. This desire is in itself a sign of God's presence in our souls, a sign that he is guiding us. That same desire that led Samuel in our first reading today and had John, Andrew and Simon Peter follow Christ in our Gospel reading. Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have received the same baptism and Catholic formation that we have, and yet, when was the last time they actually listened and heard God's voice as Samuel did? So many people don't develop a faith life anymore, don't act in any way like a Christian or in any way similar to how Christ taught us to act. They might claim Christian as a title, but they aren't the kind of disciple, the kind of follower of Christ that Samuel, John, Andrew or Simon Peter were.

As American's, we have had a rough year. We have spent an inordinate amount of time stressed out, worried, tired and more than anything else angry. We are going on more than ½ a year of frustrations, protests, riots and violence so I've got to ask, who are we to each other? God reminds us today that one of his favorite methods of communicating his will is through human messengers. How many of you truly believe that those committing violence, encouraging violence, allowing the violence to happen or ignoring it all together are messengers of God? Yet that is what we are listening to and that is drowning out God's voice. I don't care where that violence has taken place, whether it's Washington D.C., Portland, Minneapolis, Kenosha or any of the other hundreds of locations, the people doing this are NOT acting like Christians; they are NOT being the people God is calling them to be.

I've heard over and over this past year about how we may lose the soul of our country. I don't know whether we are or not, it probably depends on who you ask. However, this is what I do know, if we as Christians act in these ways, we are losing our souls to anger and division. We are losing our capacity to love and forgive. We are losing who we are as children of God so we can claim allegiance to a political party, a movement, a secular belief or an ideology that in no way can love us or do for us what God does for us when we become the people that Christ taught us to be.

I'm not saying that you can't be passionate about what is going on. I'm not saying that you can't or shouldn't do what you feel is right for yourself or your country. I'm not even saying that you can't be both a Christian and a member of a political party. What I am saying is that if you decide that your passion for those things overcomes your ability to forgive, your ability to listen or your ability to help and to love, you are prioritizing the wrong things.

Disagreement is a natural part of life; we can disagree and be patient with each other; we can disagree and still talk to each other; we can disagree and still be brothers and sisters in Christ. Let me reword that...we can disagree and **MUST** be patient with each other, we can disagree and **MUST** still talk to each other, we can disagree and **MUST** be brothers and sisters in Christ. What I have seen over this past year, the way people talk to and about each other over their response to the pandemic, the way people have been violent and treated each other during riots and protests, the way people have been violent and treated each other during this election, has truly bothered me.

We shouldn't come together just because we're American's, we **MUST** come together because we are Christians. We have to decide this year whether or not we are going to listen to people who are angry, whether it's the media, politicians or average people, or are we going to listen to God. Who do we want guiding our lives? The media, politicians, angry people or God? On any given day, how much do we pay attention to what God is trying to say versus what the media, politicians and angry people are trying to say?

So, who are we and what kind of disciples are we? This world and this country don't need more anger, politics and division, it needs more love, understanding and patience. We need to become more like Samuel, eager to hear God's voice in our lives and show others **BY OUR EXAMPLE** how all Christians should be. God speaks in so many ways, through so many messengers! Messengers just like you. What message are you sending? What do people see in you, do they see a follower of Christ or someone who let's anger and division define their life?

During this holy Mass, let's promise that we will become messengers of Christ in our words, deeds and lives. And before leaving this building, let's decide on a concrete commitment - even a small and simple one - that will help us keep that promise.