

Sermon

◆ **First Reading:** *1 Samuel 3:3-10,19*

◆ **Second Reading:** *1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20*

◆ **Gospel:** *John 1:35-42*

Two of John the Baptist's disciples are led by John to Jesus, and then Jesus invites them to come and stay with him. Andrew, one of the two disciples, goes to fetch his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus, who rather solemnly renames Simon as Cephas – a name which means “rock”. The story is familiar to us, but perhaps the significance and the background of the passage have not always been clear.

This scene echoes an incident in the Old Testament in which Joshua was leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. A group of Levitical priests were instructed by Joshua to carry the ark of the covenant into the river Jordan and stand there. The flow of water stopped like a wall, and the riverbed became dry. Joshua declared

SEE!, THE ARK OF THE COVENENT OF THE LORD OF ALL THE EARTH WILL GO INTO THE JORDAN AHEAD OF YOU (Josh. 3 ; 11 NIV). While the ark remained in the middle of the Jordan riverbed, the people all passed over on dry ground. Afterwards, God instructed Joshua to have twelve men take stones (rocks) from the riverbed, carry them out and pile them up near where the Israelites were camped.

The stones were to represent the twelve tribes of Israel and were to stand as a memorial of the event. When the priests carried the ark back to the shore, the water returned to its usual flow.

While Joshua pointed to the ark of the covenant as the sign of God's presence, John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God and, the Suffering Servant, who was to become "Covenant of the people".

In the same way that the twelve rocks were to represent the people of Israel, who had entered the promised Land, now Peter (the Rock) was to represent the people of God led by Jesus into the New Creation through his death on the cross.

There is a slightly strange emphasis on "looking" and "seeing" running through to-day's Gospel reading, which seems to indicate a moment of revelation of a vocation or mission, on the one hand, and an acceptance and response of the vocation, on the other. As with Peter, Jesus "looks intently" at each one of us – thus communicating a personal call. Do we see and respond?

SPEAK, LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING

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