

- Have you ever heard the Lord speak to you? In our first reading we hear the familiar story of our Lord speaking to the young Samuel.
- As you may remember, Samuel was born as a result of his mother's prayers. His mother, Hannah, had beseeched the Lord for a child, for she had been barren for many years.
- In thanksgiving she dedicated Samuel back to God, and he was raised by Eli the high priest at the tabernacle in Shilo.
- While he was still quite young, our Lord called Samuel to be a prophet, and we hear about this in the first reading today when Samuel hears God calling in the night.
- I'm sure many of us here have had the experience of wishing that our Lord would speak to us so clearly, especially when we're trying to make a big decision or discern something important.
- Unfortunately, for most of us our Lord doesn't speak to us with an audible voice, as He did with Samuel. However, I do think it's important to recognize that our Lord does speak to us, and that He is with us, even when we don't sense His presence.
- In fact, He communicates with us quite often, and in a variety of ways. The question is whether or not we have the eyes to see Him or the ears to hear Him.
- In our second reading today, St. Paul reminds us that we are living temples of the Holy Spirit. Through our baptism we know that our Lord actually comes to dwell within us.
- Every time I baptize a little baby, I am amazed that our Lord, who is infinite and all-powerful, squeezes His almighty presence into such a small and helpless creature.
- But it's true. At the moment we are baptized and the water is poured over our heads in the name of the Trinity, the Lord comes and takes up residence in our souls, and He stays there for as long as we stay in a state of grace.
- Sadly, any time that we commit a mortal sin, we actually evict our Lord from our souls. But the very moment that we are reconciled with Him through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, He comes right back – as if he had never left.
- You see, my friends, our Lord desires to be with us. He desires to be in such intimate communion with us so that He can more readily communicate with us.
- Usually the way the Lord communicates to us is through certain inspirations or movements of the heart by which we are inclined to do or say something that we might not otherwise have said or done.
- As a priest I experience this quite a bit. For example, there are times when I am counseling people or hearing confessions that the Lord moves me to say a particular thing that will be beneficial for a soul.
- Or there are times when I am going about my normal daily duties that the Lord may inspire me to reach out to someone through a phone call or visit, or to extend charity in some way.
- And certainly I sense the Holy Spirit's presence when I stand in this pulpit and preach. I can't tell you how many times I have prepared to say one thing, and our Lord has guided me to say something else.
- Now maybe some of you are thinking: "Of course God speaks to you, Father. You're a priest!" But it's not to His priests and ministers alone that our Lord speaks, but to everyone. And it's not only in the form of inspirations that He communicates to us.

- In fact, there is nothing that our Lord cannot use to communicate to us. Sometimes He speaks to us through the words of others, or through a book or television show or the lyrics of a song.
- He speaks to us through the love of our family and friends and through the beauty of nature. And our Lord speaks to us through the events of everyday life.
- With this in mind, I can't help but think about the plane crash in New York this week, for miracles like this are always a means of divine communication.
- Perhaps some of us see in this event a bit of a wake-up call...a reminder from God of the delicate and unpredictable nature of life.
- But I hope that all of us see in this event not simply a miracle, but rather a true manifestation of God's incredible love and mercy. In looking at this event, I think our Lord is trying to tell us how much He loves us, and He is reminding us that He is always in control.
- How often have any of us heard of a plane crash in which all 155 people on board survive – and with no life-threatening injuries? Certainly God's hands were in that situation.
- Truly, my friends, for those of us who believe in the Lord and trust in His love and mercy, there are no coincidences in life; there is only providence.
- As people of faith, we know that miraculous events are moments of tremendous grace in which God is reaching out to us to tell us that He loves us and that He is with us.
- Perhaps, as we consider the very evident darkness of our world as illustrated by the wars, and crime and terrible diseases and calamities that we often hear about, it would be easy to doubt that God loves us – or even doubt that He exists.
- But as Christians, we cannot allow that to be so. We must have faith. And while faith is a gift that God gives to us, it is something that we have to choose to exercise. In other words, we have to make the conscious choice to be people of faith.
- While there is much darkness in our world, there is also much goodness and much beauty. And if we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear, we'll also notice that God is constantly speaking to us in countless ways, and that He is really with us.
- My dear friends, just as the apostles sought after the Messiah in the Gospel story today, so too must we look for and seek after the Lord. Let us trust that in seeking Him, we will indeed find Him.
- And as we find Him speaking to us, let us do our best to follow Him and do His will.