

# BIBLICAL RESOURCES



**1 Samuel 3:3-10,19; Psalm 40 (39); 1 Corinthians 6:13-15,17-20; John 1:35-42**

## Look, here is the Lamb of God!

John 1:35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 42 He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

### INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

In the ancient tradition, there were three "epiphanies" after Christmas: the visit of the Magi (the Epiphany proper), the baptism in the Jordan (the voice from heaven) and the wedding feast at Cana (they saw his glory). Although we now use a three-year cycle of readings, this triple epiphany influences today's choice of John's Gospel and the acclamation of the Baptist "Here is the Lamb of God." Below, greater than usual space is given to the commentary, because the text is so rich and powerful.

### OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one;



the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. (Ex 12:1-6)

### KIND OF WRITING

The call stories in the Synoptic Gospels strip away all questions of human psychology and practicality, so that the sovereign voice and call of Jesus may stand out. John's Gospel uses the call stories to present a profound Christology. In this chapter one, from v. 19, Jesus is named "one whom you do not know", the lamb of God, the Son of God, Rabbi, Messiah, "the one about whom Moses wrote", the King of Israel, the Son of Man.

Theology drives the narrative and the apparently historical verisimilitude of human response and chain reaction is the creation of the author.

### NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND

(a) The Fourth Gospel has a special outline for these days.

- a. The first day: the proclamation of the Baptist (1:19-28).
- b. The "next day": John bears witness to Jesus (1:29-34)
- c. The "next day": the call of Andrew and Simon (1:35-42)

### Thought for the day

It is good to stop from time to time and ask myself, what am I looking for? This can be answered in the ideal: "what do I think I *should* be looking for?" or in the real: "what do I actually want as evidenced by my choices and actions?" To move from one to the other we need the *grace of dissatisfaction*. In the words of Augustine, "You must be dissatisfied with the way you are now, if you ever want to get to where you are not yet."

(Sermon 169)

### Prayer

Shake us up, Lord, and help us to see ourselves as we truly are, often settling for less, for the moderately good and the reasonably faithful. Give us a longing for more, for all you have in store for us, and on the way bless us with exhilaration that we may be joyful bearers of your Good News. Amen.

d. The "next day": the call of Philip and Nathaniel (1:43-51)

As the following story begins "on the third day", the author seems to have lost count or is writing with some symbolic intent. In any case, the sequence of days in chapter 1 means the chapter is to be read a whole, given that one story gives rise immediately to the next.

(b) Passover in John: see John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. (John 19:28-29; see Exodus 12:22).

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers

came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, *they did not break his legs* (John 19:31–34; cf. Exodus 12:46 regarding the Passover lamb).

#### ST PAUL

Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. (1Corinthians 5:7)

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed—namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. *God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith.* This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness. (Romans 3:21–26 NET version)

#### BRIEF COMMENTARY

**Verse 35** John's Gospel counts the days in the early part of the Gospel (see above). John the Baptist has just given an oblique account of the baptism, and it is time for Jesus to call his disciples. The Baptist apparently directs two of his disciples to Jesus. This is unlikely historically, but, nevertheless it is true that the core constituency of the Johannine community was former followers of the Baptist (also Pharisees [ch. 3], Samaritans [ch. 4] and Gentiles[ch. 4]).

**Verse 36** Note the contrast between the static John and the dynamic Jesus. The words here are the first human reaction to Jesus in John's Gospel and they are accordingly rich in resonance. Passover is a key to the structure of this Gospel, in which three Passovers are marked. The final Passover receives a very careful introduction in 13:1-4.

Furthermore, in this Gospel, the final Passover is Friday night to Saturday, not Thursday night to Friday. At the very time on Friday, when the slaughter of the lambs for Passover began, Jesus is handed over by Pilate to death. This is the explanation of the otherwise puzzling

timing "Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon." (John 19:14).

Finally, the treatment of Jesus' body after death echoes the instruction regarding the Passover lamb in Exodus 12. All in all, the acclamation of the Baptist exposes a deep vein of theological reflection.

**Verse 37** John the "voice" has spoken. The two followers of the Baptist detach from him to follow Jesus. Who these two are we will learn in a moment.

**Verse 38** The first words of Jesus in this Gospel are resonant: *what are you looking for* (lit. seeking). (i) This is a Gospel of quest stories, of which this is the first. (ii) The words of the Risen Lord to Mary at the tomb resemble these words but are significantly different: *whom are you looking for*. In a word, Jesus proclaimed a message; the first Christians proclaimed a person. The explanation of Rabbi tells us the Gospel was finally edited outside of Jewish territory. Rabbi is positive in this Gospel (John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8).

"Staying" (or in the older translation "abiding") is a word of deep significance in this Gospel (John 1:32–33, 38–39; 2:12; 3:36; 4:40; 5:38; 6:27, 56; 7:9; 8:31, 35; 9:41; 10:40; 11:6, 54; 12:24, 34, 46; 14:10, 17, 25; 15:4–7, 9–10, 16; 19:31; 21:22–23). One example: As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. (John 15:9–10) To find out where Jesus is staying/abiding it is not sufficient to have his address!

**Verse 39** To come and see is an invitation firstly to experience (see 1 John 1:1-4) and then to witness (1 John 1:5). It is also an invitation to the seeing of faith, an ambiguous value in this Gospel where there are two kinds of seeing. The translation of "four o'clock" is hopelessly up-to-date! The number ten is a figure of completion (ten plagues, ten commandments, ten men in a synagogue congregation) and something is coming to completion here. Tenth hour is better.

**Verse 40** At last we learn who these are. The sequence is a flat contradiction of the Synoptic tradition and may reflect the Johannine reserve towards the Peter traditions. Nevertheless, it is presumed all readers/hearers know who Simon Peter is.

**Verse 41** The proclamation is startling. In the Synoptic tradition, this confession is the fruit of experience and struggle and, furthermore, is assigned to Simon himself. By the time this Gospel was written, "Christ" is almost a personal name for Jesus.

**Verse 42** This is also a surprise. First of all, this is the only occurrence *in the Gospels* of the Aramaic "Cephas", immediately translated as Peter. Secondly, only in Matthew 16:13-20 is the change of name appended to the confession at Caesarea Philippi. There is no motive given for the change at this very early stage in John's narrative. In fact, Peter gives no reaction whatsoever at this point. Thirdly, there is a related "confession" of Peter in typically Johannine form in 6:68-69, but no special appointment or change of name follows. All in all, an intriguing puzzle.

#### POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. John pointed the disciples towards Jesus as the one they should follow. Remember the people in your life who have pointed you in a new and life-giving direction? Perhaps in some cases this may have involved directing you away from your association with them—e.g., leaving home, changing jobs, etc.

2. Accepting an invitation to "Come and see" may be part of exploring a new path in life. When has this been so for you? Who issued you the invitation? What benefits came to you from accepting the invitation?

3. Andrew did not keep the good news to himself but also invited his brother to join him in following Jesus. What is your experience of receiving, or giving, an invitation to join in some worthwhile venture?

4. Jesus looked at Peter and could see what he would become. Who have been the people who have been able to name for you your potential? For whom have you been able to do this?

#### PRAYER

From our earliest days, O God, you call us by name. Make our ears attentive to your voice, our spirits eager to respond that, having heard you in Jesus your anointed one, we may draw others to be his disciples.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

# Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you

1 Cor 6:12 “All things are lawful for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “All things are lawful for me”—but I will not be controlled by anything. 13 “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both.” The body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 Now God indeed raised the Lord and he will raise us by his power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16 Or do you not know that anyone who is united with a prostitute is one body with her? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” 17 But the one united with the Lord is one spirit with him. 18 Flee sexual immorality! “Every sin a person commits is outside of the body”—but the immoral person sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.

## INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Within and outside of faith, sexuality remains an issue of intense interest and debate. There is not a lot of direct teaching on sexual morality in the New Testament, much of it found in these chapters in St Paul. The apostle was obliged to speak about it because of the attitudes and practices of the Corinthians. The full section runs from v. 12 to v. 20. It might be clearer to read the full version because the Lectionary excerpt, beginning with v.13b, is missing the motive behind the argument, making it harder to understand. It is obvious why v. 16—restored here—is omitted in the lectionary.

## CONTEXT IN THE COMMUNITY

Corinth had a name at the time for sexual licence, but perhaps unjustly because the city was really no different from other places in the Empire. The ancient world, in contrast to ours, did not directly connect religion and ethics. In this, they resemble some people today. Sex outside of and before marriage was countenanced for males only.

At this point in the letter, Paul responding to a number of issues, as follows:

Sexual immorality: 5:1-8, 9-13  
Lawsuits among believers: 6:1-11  
Glorifying God in your body: 6:12-20

## KIND OF WRITING

This is deliberative rhetoric, as St Paul tries to change the minds of some Corinthians. In it, he cites *slogans* of the different parties (noticed in inverted commas). He argues—from faith in the resurrection and from Scriptures—for the integrity of bodily and spiritual existence. Rhetorical questions enliven the argument. Finally, he brings in his theology of the Holy Spirit and salvation. Although very brief, this “proof” is penetrating and deep.

## RELATED PASSAGES

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple. (1Corinthians 3:16–17)

You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters. (1Corinthians 7:23)

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other. (1Corinthians 10:23–24)

## BRIEF COMMENTARY

**Verse 12** Ancient documents did not use inverted commas. It is, nevertheless, virtually certain that Paul is citing slogans and the opinions of others. Paul is very much for freedom but at the same time for the correct use of freedom.

**Verse 13** The translation used here is the NET (not the usual NRSV). This is because it makes more sense to extend the inverted commas to include the phrase “but God will do away with both.” Apparently, some had argued (i) that sex, like hunger, is a natural appetite to be satisfied without moral risk; (ii) that the body doesn’t matter anyway because we will be spiritual in the world to come. The first argument responds to (ii). The body is not irrelevant: it is *for the Lord*. Here and elsewhere, Paul rejects any kind of dualism.

**Verse 14** Paul argues for an Easter eth-

ic: the body matters because Jesus was raised from the dead and we will be too.

**Verse 15** Rhetorical questions touch the mind and the heart. Food satisfies the stomach but sexual intercourse in and of itself involves the whole person.

**Verse 16** Paul calls on the book of Genesis to make his point about the integrity of the sex act: *Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.* (Gen 2:24)

**Verse 17** Building on the previous image of union (one flesh), Paul points out that Christians are one flesh / spirit with Christ. To involve yourself in casual sexual activity is to involve Christ as well.

**Verse 18** Beginning with an exhortation, Paul once more cites a slogan, a very telling one. Even if some other sins may be materially “outside” the body (and therefore irrelevant?), this is absolutely not the case with sexual sin. The sinner sins against himself or herself—an argument from self regard and interest.

**Verse 19** This important image of the temple—significant elsewhere in Paul—is brought to bear ethically here. Because each of us is a member of the body of Christ and each of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit, a distinctive ethic integrating the whole person is demanded.

**Verse 20** The cultural reference here is to manumission, the setting free of slaves. We have been set free, and let us remain free and thus glory in the grace of God in Christ.

## POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The good use of hard-won freedom can be a challenge in many spheres of life. How do I manage?
2. Paul argues for oneness of the human person—what I do is who I am. In my own journey of integration, where do I find myself?
3. Paul does not argue from social custom but rather against it. What are the sources of your morality?

## PRAYER

God of all gifts, you love us enough to love the whole human being, all that I am. Help me to respond to your love with my whole self, not less that everything, that you may glorified and I may flourish and be fully alive.

## And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

1Sam. 3:3 Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. 4 Then the LORD called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” 5 and ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down. 6 The LORD called again, “Samuel!” Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. 8 The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. 9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

1 Sam 3:19 As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

### INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

For a better grasp of the context, all of 1 Samuel 1-2 should also be read. Samuel was the prophet in ancient Israel who anointed Saul as their first king. Today’s reading is the story of his call as a prophet, the foundation of his ministry.

### ORIGIN OF THE READING

The present form of the great narrative arc from Joshua to 2 Kings is deeply marked by two, much later, moments. (i) The reform undertaken in the seventh century BC, in the time Josiah and (ii) the second was the Deuteronomistic reform, which crystallised during the Exile around 550 BC. 1 Samuel begins the great story, with the miraculous birth and calling of the prophet. In effect, Samuel is presented as a kind of transitional figure, combining the roles of prophet, priest and judge (in the OT sense). Part of the agenda concerns the demise of the priest Eli and his sons. Eli thinks Hannah is drunk, while in reality she is in anguished prayer. He is the one, in chapter 3, who by being deaf to God

barely manages in his role as mentor to the boy Samuel. After this shaky start, Samuel becomes a real spokesman for God, as we can see in 1 Sam 3:20–21.

### KIND OF WRITING

This is a call story, but an unusual one, in the form of a “commissioning report.” Examples could be Is 6; Jer 1:4–10; Ezek 1:1–3:15. The typical features include a *dialogue* in which God calls a prophetic. Initially, there is some objection or hesitation, followed by an affirmation of the call, which then leads to the mission of the prophet. These features are present here but *obliquely*, as signified by the slowness in realising what is happening. It is a kind of acoustic “vision” (cf. Is 6, Jer 1:11–13; Ez 1:1–3:15 etc.). As in stories of epiphanies, the reader is informed ahead of the characters and knows more than they do. The attention of the reader is not on *who* is speaking (we know that already) but on *how* the recipients will come to recognise the speaker. Suspense is created by having Eli come to the realisation first, although Samuel is the recipient.

### RELATED READINGS

*Here I am* is found as a response to God’s call: Abraham (Gen 22:1, 11); Jacob (Gen 31:11; 42:6); Moses (Ex 3:4); Isaiah (Is 6:8); Mary (Lk 2:38) etc.

### BRIEF COMMENTARY

**Verse 3** The call story is a fulfilment of an oracle (1 Sam 2:27–36). Samuel is resting very close to the Holy of Holies, the location of the most sacred object in the Temple, the ark of God.

**Verse 4** The response of Samuel is the correct one at the very start. The “error” lies in not recognising the source of the voice, on account of his innocence and perhaps also on account of his humility.

**Verse 5** A kind of serious comedy unfolds. The priest, official communicator with God, is asleep and “deaf”, while the trainee is awake and alert. The sleeping priest recommends sleep, at first.

**Verse 6** In folk stories, you have the “rule of three”. Something happens, it is repeated verbatim (as here) to create a pattern, so that at the third occurrence

the pattern is varied and a breakthrough occurs (as here). In a fatherly way, Eli this time calls Samuel “my son.”

**Verse 7** Samuel himself is excused by these verses—he simply had not yet experienced the Lord. The reader is reminded emphatically that the ominous absence of God at the top of the chapter (1 Sam 3:1) was about to come to an end.

**Verse 8** On the third occurrence, Eli at last comes to insight and discernment.

**Verse 9** The advice of Eli is resonant and powerful: *Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*

**Verse 10** This is rather more than a voice: “the Lord came and stood there”. Samuel omits the address Lord, as recommended by Eli, perhaps from a sense of awe. (The next few verses are left out in the lectionary, because the demise of Eli and his sons would distract from the purpose of the reading today.)

**Verse 19** The translation here is a little ambiguous on account of the use of “his.” It means the Lord fulfilled the prophecies of Samuel, and as a result his “words did not fall to the ground”. In vv. 3:19–4:1, Samuel is confirmed very fully as a prophet in God’s sight.

### POINTERS FOR PRAYER

**1.** The story may remind us of times in our own lives when we were asleep and deaf to God. What was that experience like? How did we come out of that state? Was there some person or event, of special significance?

**2.** “You called, shouted, broke through my deafness; you flared, blazed, banished my blindness; you lavished your fragrance, I gasped and now I pant for you; I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst; you touched me, and I burned for your peace.” Augustine, Confessions 10:27.28

**3.** The great discernment at the centre of the story lies in the words: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” It is a very open prayer, unreserved and unconditional. Have I prayed such a prayer and what difference has it made?

### PRAYER

Loving God, often we are asleep and deaf, distracted by the cares of life and “the desire for other things.” Speak to us, Lord, your servants are listening; may your word penetrate our hearts and continue to change our lives.

# THE LITURGY



## 1 Samuel 3:3-10,19; Psalm 40 (39); 1 Corinthians 6:13-15,17-20; John 1:35-42

### READINGS 1 AND 3

The Gospel recounts two call stories. The first is quite like our first reading: just as Eli directed Samuel to the Lord, John directs his disciples to Jesus. The sense of both discovery and discernment continue in the second part of Gospel, when Andrew draws his brother to the Messiah. In both the first reading and in the Gospel, there is a marked receptivity and openness to the call of God.

### THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 40 (39) is perfect for this reading and for the Gospel. The response says it all: *Here I am, Lord! I come to do your will.*

### SUNDAY INTRODUCTIONS

#### First reading

*1 Samuel 3:3-10,19*

When God tries to get through to us, sometimes we are not ready, deaf in some way. This experience is reassuringly mirrored in today's story in which the young Samuel needs help to recognise that it is God who is calling him.

#### Second reading

*1 Corinthians 6:13-15,17-20*

Corinth in the time of St Paul may see a long way away from twenty-first century reality. Human nature is, nevertheless, the same and the same issues that come up now came up then: how to bring together my Christian values and my everyday life? In this particular example, notice the reasons given—are they still valid for us today?

#### Gospel

*John 1:35-42*

Today's gospel challenges us with a simple phrase: "come and see." How did the first disciples get to know Jesus? How do we get to know him today?

### WEEKDAY INTRODUCTIONS

#### Monday 15 January

*St Ita*

*1 Samuel 15:16-23*

Today we hear of a clash between a prophet and a king, between Samuel and

Saul. Details of this story are difficult for us today: why would God order extermination? Yet, even in this excerpt there is something for reflection: what does God require from us—outward gesture or inward obedience?

*Mark 2:18-22*

The gospel is about the shock of the new: in Jesus, new teaching must lead to new practices to sustain new life.

#### Tuesday 16 January

*1 Samuel 16:1-13*

As we saw at Christmas, Bethlehem and king David are important in Christian religious imagination. Today we hear why this is so, as a very persistent Samuel is sent to find a king to succeed the rejected Saul. The fact that David was originally a shepherd also resonates in the story of Jesus, the Son of David, our good shepherd and our king.

*Mark 2:23-28*

This Gospel, very familiar, is more powerful than we think. The Sabbath was given by God at creation and to Moses on Mount Sinai. Jesus sets the Sabbath aside, which means his authority is somehow even greater.

#### Wednesday 17 January

*St Anthony, abbot*

*1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51*

This story of the weak against the strong, the small against the mighty, has inspired people down the centuries. For Israel at the time, then as now a very small state surrounded by powerful enemies, the story offered great encouragement. There is a message for today: it is not always the mighty who have the last say.

*Mark 3:1-6*

Our conflict story is again about the Sabbath but it is more intense because *they were watching him*. The Sabbath was meant to mark creation and liberation: what better gesture than to heal a man? And yet, tradition gets in the way.

#### Thursday 18 January

*1 Samuel 18:6-9, 19:1-7*

In the stories we are hearing, Saul comes

across as an unstable character, capable of unpredictable violence. He is dangerously jealous of the younger David. A good word put in by Jonathan, Saul's son, calms the king down, at least for the moment. There's something for us too: in a conflict, the right word can be very effective.

*Mark 3:7-12*

Jesus was immensely attractive to people, who felt drawn to him and made significant sacrifices to get to hear him. We are not as "gospel greedy" today but we could be if we listened from within.

#### Friday 19 January

*1 Samuel 24:3-21*

Today, a drama takes place. Saul, again unstable, sets out to kill David. By a brilliant, generous gesture, David convinces Saul of his good intentions. It's a great story with a lesson for us as well: not exercising power can be much more effective than exercising it.

*Mark 3:13-19*

For any Bible reader, the number twelve must recall the twelve tribes of Israel, descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. By appointing twelve men, Jesus symbolises his own programme: the restoration of Israel. In reality, they are not all equally important and one of them will turn out to be really dangerous.

#### Saturday 20 January

*St Fabian or St Sebastian*

*2 Samuel 1:1-4, 11-12, 17, 19, 23-27*

There can be great humanity in bible stories. Today, David gets news that his enemy is dead...and yet, he weeps for him. In a very touching lament, David mourns both Saul and Jonathan. The poem of lament is very generous, very humane.

*Mark 3:20-21*

Today's Gospel is short and enigmatic. Who are these relatives? The same people seem to be involved later in the chapter: 3:31 (confirmed by the omitted v. 19b: "he went home"). The issue is that even those closest to the prophet will not understand him and will even reject him.