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A few years ago in one of his letters to the worldwide clergy, the late Holy Father said priests must not become so immersed in the work of the Lord that they overlook the Lord of the work.

The spiritual life is as much about taking time out to be solely with the Lord in prayer as it is about such things as raising money for the poor or going on charity walks or sponsored silences or even environmental issues which of course are very noble things in themselves, but not the complete picture.

A prayer life will involve drawing spiritual nourishment from the Word of God followed by silent listening so that we can get to know the Lord and His Will for us in a one-to-one encounter. Remember the story of Mary and Martha. It was Mary, not the busy Martha, who chose the better part by sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to His words. Even Jesus Himself needed to listen to the Word of His Father. He said 'my teaching is not my own but the teaching of the one who send me'. He would have absorbed that teaching when alone with His Father in prayer – something he did frequently.

The First Reading from Samuel also brings out this same point. Eli, when he eventually realised that it was the Lord who was calling the young Samuel, told him to answer with the words: "*Speak Lord, your servant is listening*" - not "listen Lord your servant is speaking". There is of course a time for speaking, but without listening the focus will be too much on our own individual needs and not on what the Lord asks.

Blessed Mother Theresa always insisted that her nuns spend an hour in prayer early in the morning before they set out to tend to the 'poorest of the poor' in Calcutta. Otherwise they may just be doing a job and fail to see the face of Christ in these people in dire need.

The Gospel today is the story of the Lord calling the first apostles. However, before he did this, the scriptures tell us that he spent the whole previous night in prayer to God so that His choice would not be arbitrary but based on the Will of his Father. We notice from the Post Office scandal that trusted politicians made very ill-advised arbitrary decisions in the past regarding IT software causing untold mental suffering and even imprisonment for hundreds of innocent people.

In the first reading Samuel 'let no word of the Lord fall to the ground'. If the word of God proclaimed at Mass does not figuratively speaking 'drop from my head into my heart', then it may very well end up on the ground. Letting His words fall to the ground is akin to carelessly letting drop the Sacred Host at Mass - something we wouldn't dream of doing.

If we listen to the Lord we will know what to do and when to do it. Today's Psalm reads: "you do not ask for sacrifice and offerings but an open ear" which is followed by: "here I am Lord; I come to do your will". This suggests heartfelt listening to the Word of God is a prelude to entrusting our whole selves into His hands ensuring 'we too, like Jesus only do what pleases Him'.