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A few years ago in one of his talks to priests, the late Pope John Paul 11 cautioned them 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 with the Lord in private prayer as it is about performing works of charity which of course is a very good thing in itself, but not the full picture.

Schoolchildren are taught how to raise money for good causes – the Good Shepherd Fund is a good example. This should be balanced, however, with teaching them how to imbibe the Word of God in the classroom through reflective reading of scripture, followed by prayer and silence so that they can get to know the Lord in a personal way. This will in turn enhance their participation in the Mass at a deeper level

The First Reading from Samuel also brings out this same point, when he said, "speak Lord, your servant is listening". So, listening to the Lord in prayer is as important as speaking or acting. How easy it is to twist Samuel's words around and say the opposite: "listen, Lord, your servant is speaking".

Everyone admires a person who performs charitable actions but a word of caution – they are best backed up by prayer of the listening kind. This will ensure we're working for God's glory and not our own. **Blessed Mother Theresa** always insisted that her nuns must spend an hour in prayer each morning before they visit the poorest of the poor. Otherwise they may not see Christ in these needy people.

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 prayerful dialogue with His Father.

Activism or being overly active can be a stumbling block to growth in the life of the spirit and yet it is prized highly by the world. **Pharaoh**, who enslaved the Israelites of old used to say: "Make these slaves work harder, so that they have no time to listen" to God or Moses who intends to free them.

If we listen to the Lord we will know what to do and when to do it. What do we read in **today's Psalm**: "you do not ask for sacrifice and offerings but an open ear" which is coupled with: "here I am Lord; I come to do your will". It seems to suggest that listening with the heart is a vital first step to entrusting our whole selves into His hands and doing His Will.

So let us open our ears and hearts more earnestly to the Lord so that we can be His trusted disciples and like Samuel say with confidence – "here I am Lord – I am ready to do your Will".