



## The Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone

### Speak, Lord, I Am Listening

Eli, the high priest, watched the woman who prayed before the tabernacle. She cried bitterly as she spoke to the Lord.

The woman's name was Hannah. Every year, she came to Shiloh with her husband, Elkanah, to make a sacrifice to God. Hannah was very sad because she had no children. Today, she made a very special promise to God. Eli listened as she spoke.

"Oh, God, if you will bless my husband and me with a son, I promise to bring him back here to the high priest so that he can serve you all the days of his life."

When Eli heard Hannah's prayer, he felt very sorry for her and said, "May the God of Israel grant your request."

God did answer Hannah's prayer. When her son was born, she named him Samuel, because the name meant "asked of God."

Hannah loved Samuel very much, but she knew that she must be faithful to the promise she had made to God. When Samuel was only three years old, she brought him back to the tabernacle when the family went to Shiloh for the annual sacrifice.

She brought her son in to see the high priest, Eli, and said, "Do you remember me? God has answered my prayer and given me a son. I will leave Samuel here with you so that he can serve God."

It was difficult for Hannah to say goodbye to her son. But she saw Samuel every year when she came with Elkanah to the tabernacle. Each year Hannah made Samuel a special linen coat. It made her very happy to see what a fine boy Samuel was becoming.

Eli, the high priest, was glad to have Samuel as a helper. He listened carefully to Eli and was quick to follow his instructions. Eli had two sons of his own, Hophni and Phinehas. They had been trained to serve as priests at the Lord's tabernacle. But Hophni and Phinehas were not like Samuel. They were greedy and not worthy to minister to the Lord's people. Eli knew his sons were evil, but he did not punish them.

Several years passed, and Eli grew old. He was almost blind, and came to rely on Samuel more and more.

One night, Samuel thought he heard Eli calling him. He rose from his bed and went to Eli's room.

"Yes, Eli, what is it that you want?" Samuel asked.

"Why, nothing, Samuel," Eli answered. "I did not call you."

A few minutes later, Samuel heard the voice again and went to see Eli a second time.

"No, Samuel," said Eli, when the young man questioned him again. "I did not call you. Now go back to bed."

When Samuel went to see Eli for the third time, Eli finally understood that it was the Lord who was calling to Samuel in the middle of the night.

"Samuel, go back to your room," said Eli. "This time when you hear the voice call you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

The next morning, Eli asked Samuel what the Lord had said to him. Samuel was sad about what he had heard, but he knew that he must be obedient to God.

"Eli, God is displeased with the evil you two sons have done. He is angry with you for not punishing them," Samuel replied. "Soon, God will punish all three of you."

After that, the Lord had many important messages for His people. He spoke these words to Samuel, who became known as a prophet for all of Israel.

**For discussion:**

- 1) Hannah dedicated her son, Samuel, to serve God. In what ways can we serve God?
- 2) Why didn't God speak to Eli's two sons?
- 3) We speak to God when we pray. How does God speak to us?
- 4) What is a prophet?

**For further reading:**

The story of Samuel's early life is found in the Old Testament in the First Book of Samuel, Chapters 1-3.

## World synod brought Church agenda into next century, Cardinal Krol says

Philadelphia (NC) — Last year's extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome set "the basis for the pastoral agenda of the next 20 years," Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, one of the synod's three co-presidents, said Jan. 9.

One "useful instrument" for that agenda, he said, "might be national and diocesan synods."

Several dioceses around the country recently have completed a diocesan synod or are engaged in extensive preparations for one. Cardinal Krol's reference to a national synod as a possibility was similar to a suggestion raised last year by Bishop James Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and another participant at the synod in Rome.

Cardinal Krol said the synod made it clear that "the theology of collegiality is much more extensive than its mere juridical aspect."

Before the synod Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation, had strongly emphasized the strict juridical meaning of collegiality, or the authority of the world's bishops acting in unison with the pope. Much of the presynod debate had focused on how collegiality was to be understood and what is the appropriate role of less-than-global groupings of bishops, such as national bishops' conferences.

Cardinal Krol reflected on the Nov. 24-Dec. 8 world synod in an essay published Jan. 9 in his archdiocesan newspaper, The Catholic Standard and Times.

The synod, called by Pope John Paul II to review the state of the Church 20 years after the Second Vatican Council, drew more than 150 bishops from around the world. It produced a public final document — a rarity in the short history of world synods — and Cardinal Krol focused most of his remarks on that document.

He said the synod participants expressed "unanimous appreciation of Vatican II" but also showed "a sense of realism in not closing one's eyes to abuses."

One of their complaints about post-conciliar developments in the Church, he

said, was that of "a partial reading of the council."

"We have not spoken enough about God, Jesus Christ, and too much of the renewal of the Church's external structures," Cardinal Krol commented.

In a related area, he said, the synod members "reminded believers of their universal call to holiness" in an era when "so many" feel an interior void and spiritual crisis.

To continue the implementation of Vatican II that the synod sought, Cardinal Krol urged renewed emphasis on the council's four central documents, those that dealt with liturgy, divine revelation, the Church, and the Church's relation to the modern world.

"There is a need for not separating the spirit from the letter and for respecting the continuity of Vatican II within the tradition of the Church.... It is not appropriate to separate the pastoral character from the doctrinal rigor of the documents," he wrote.

Specific areas that the synod stressed, he said, included a "new effort in evangelization and in integral and systematic catechesis," including the development of a general catechism or compendium of Church teaching "as a 'point of reference' for locally designed catechisms."

The synod also placed emphasis on ecumenism and on the advancement of inculturation, or the ingrafting of the Gospel message into diverse cultures, he said.

Cardinal Krol called the synod a "frank and honest" assessment of the Church today and "a great grace for the Church."

The "clear result" that emerged from it, he said, was an affirmation of Vatican II "yet a realism and an honesty about the Church today that is the basis for the pastoral agenda of the next 20 years."

### Elmira Service for Bereaved

The pastoral care department of St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira invites family members of those who have died to a memorial service Wednesday, Feb. 12, at 7 p.m. in the Little Flower Chapel. For more information, call (607)733-9137.

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