

**“IF TODAY YOU HEAR GOD’S VOICE,  
HARDEN NOT YOUR HEART”**

Fr. Max Oliva, S.J.  
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I have been reading a book on prayer; the section I read this week, providentially, connects to our readings for today. It is about **listening**. Listening to that ‘still small voice within.’ Paying attention, as the prophet Ezekial did when he heard God calling him to be His voice to the Israelite people.

The message of the Responsorial Psalm – “If today you hear God’s voice, harden not your heart” – indicates that God speaks to us far more than we realize. God wants to communicate with us directly and often. But we can “harden our heart” through fear, disbelief, or over preoccupation with life’s issues.

God can speak to us anywhere. In church, at our place of work, in our kitchen, backyard, while out for a walk, fishing, boating, and so forth. The idea for me to be a priest came to me in my office at the food cannery where I worked as a salesman. To be a Jesuit came to me while I was driving home that afternoon after work.

St. Ignatius of Loyola found God everywhere. Jesuits and those who follow our spirituality call this, “finding God in all things.”

Gratitude, peace, and joy are ways that God communicates with us; consolation too when we are in a stressful or sorrowful state of mind and heart. Some examples:

You are holding a baby, maybe your own, who looks at you with total trust and you feel a deep-down joy. Where does this powerful feeling come from?

You are outside in your backyard. It’s a beautiful sunny day and suddenly you are filled with gratitude for just being alive.

You are watching a show on television with your family and seemingly out of nowhere comes a great joy in just being with them.

You have just lost a dear friend and are deep in grief. In the midst of this trial a feeling of consolation overwhelms you.

**These are “God moments.”**

As a writer of spiritual articles and books, I am keenly aware of the role the Holy Spirit plays in inspiring me; sometimes by providing just the right passage from the Bible or from any book that enlightens me.

Jesus often met people in the midst of their busy lives: John and James, Peter and his brother Andrew mending their nets at the north shore of the Lake of Galilee; Matthew at his tax collector’s booth; a woman coming to fill her jar with water at

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Jacob's well; a poor man begging by the side of the road; and Mary Magdalene at a low point in her life. Jesuit and author James Martin writes: "In each of these encounters God said, *"I'm ready to meet you, if you're ready to meet me."*

One of my favorite Gospel scenes is when Jesus, now risen, appears to the apostles where it all began – the north shore of the Lake of Galilee – Jesus is standing on the shore, though none of them recognize him. He says to them, *"Children have you caught anything to eat?"* "Not a thing" they answer. *"Cast your net off to the starboard side and you will find something.* So, they make a cast, and take in so many fish they can not haul in the net. Then John cries out to Peter: *"It is the Lord!"* (John 21:1-7)

*"It is the Lord!"* is a wonderful way to express your joy whenever you have an experience of God entering your life.

## CONCLUSION

As I mentioned at the beginning of this Homily, the key to prayer is **listening**.

*"Speak, Lord, your servant is listening,"* the young Samuel is instructed by his mentor, Eli, to say when Samuel hears God calling him in the middle of the night. (I Samuel 3:7-11)

*"Be still and know that I am God,"* God says to us through the author of Psalm 46, verse 11.

Listening, paying attention, being attentive.

During the coming week, let's spend a little more time being attentive, listening for that still small Voice within.

**AMEN.**

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