

**January 18, 2009 – Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
*Prepared by Sr. Dee Smith, and Sr. Marlene Condon, MM, Guatemala*

First Book of Samuel 3: 3-19	Eli helps Samuel to see that he is being called by God.
First Corinthians 6: 3-15, 17-20	Glorify God in your body.
John 1: 35-42	The disciples discover Jesus and begin to follow him.

Today's readings weave a theme throughout of mission call, trust and obedience within the search for an authentic Christian life based on the ever unfolding understanding of Jesus and his mission life.

The call of Samuel reminds us that every person has a vocation and God calls that person to accomplish their mission. It is in trust that we say, as with the psalmist, "Here I come; to do your will is my delight."

Having chosen Maryknoll as the community in which our mission call can be a lived reality, working with those who have HIV and AIDS challenges us constantly to promote what is just and fair amidst such suffering and pain. Not just speaking of physical pain and suffering, but the social, mental and spiritual suffering caused by stigma and discrimination experienced by people with HIV and AIDS.

St. Paul mentions that we are quick to judge one another and take one another to task over a wrongdoing yet we do not recognize our own similar behavior from the past. Here in Guatemala, like most other countries throughout the world where there is a high incidence of HIV and AIDS, wrongdoing and blame making is the order of the day. People who have HIV are judged by many as being "sexually promiscuous or in the language of St. Paul, "fornicators."

Yet, when we think of the many women we accompany daily in our work, people like Lucy or Gladys or Anita who have been left widows with children to raise and are themselves HIV positive, we cannot label these hardworking mothers as sexually immoral.

The daily struggle with HIV and AIDS in Guatemala is compounded by the extreme poverty suffered by over half of the population. HIV is just one more problem facing the rural poor and the urban dwellers who live on the outskirts of the large cities and towns.

Finding Christ and living the authentic Christian life based on trust and obedience is illustrated for us by the response and call of many who live with HIV. Take Maria Felipe for example, who is a widow with seven children, an indigenous woman HIV positive who neither reads nor writes, and who speaks her indigenous language, Quiche, and some broken Spanish. Over 10 years ago, having just given birth to her seventh child, she was left a widow with HIV, living in a wooden lean-to building behind the local school in a small village not too far from the Pacific coast in southwest Guatemala. She was ostracized and was to be sent away from the village by the community.

Through our efforts to educate the men in the community and through Maria Felipe's trust in God and faith that we as Maryknoll missionaries would not judge or abandon her, a transformation occurred. The people of the village began to realize that

Maria Felipe had not been a sexually immoral person, rather a victim of circumstances, and that she needed support and encouragement, not rejection.

Over a period of time, Maria Felipe started to recover from some HIV-related illnesses and started taking antiretroviral medicines to strengthen her immune system and fight off new infection. She began to fight for her right to a piece of government-sponsored land on which to build a small home and through our help educate her children. Today, Maria Felipe speaks up for others who suffer discrimination on having been identified as HIV positive. For Maria Felipe this moment is another resurrection moment for her. For us, as Maryknoll missionaries, like the disciples of Jesus, we have come to recognize and discover Jesus in so many faces, including that of Maria Felipe.

Our life long journey as missionaries and Christians is this call to search and understand who Jesus is for us in this difficult and ever changing world.

### **For more information:**

As we wrap up our 2008 elections project, we encourage all to consider our educational work as just beginning. It is important to put our concerns for people living in forgotten communities around the globe before President-elect Obama and the new House and Senate. Read Maryknoll's important policy goals outlines in "Loving our neighbor in a shrinking world" and schedule an appointment with your new representatives today.

Email for a copy, or find the election guide here:  
[www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm](http://www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm)

**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Peace, Social Justice & Integrity of Creation**  
P.O. Box 29132 Washington, D.C. 20017  
phone: (202)832-1780 fax: (202)832-5195  
[ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)    [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org)