

In this first reading, the suffering servant says that God formed him and called him to bring the people of Israel back to their God. He would be faithful to that call. Then the Lord continues that it is not enough for him to bring back the people of Israel. He would be a light to the whole world.

That mysterious servant thought his mission was local. Encrypted that means a hidden meaning, within it was a purpose for his life that was much larger. That is the call within the call.

The second reading, actually only the greeting, from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians has an intriguing detail. St. Paul refers to his brother Sosthenes. The other is an incident that occurred earlier in St. Paul's life.

When Paul was preaching in Corinth, Sosthenes was the synagogue leader who had Paul arrested and brought before the Roman governor. When the governor dismissed the case, the members of the synagogue turned on Sosthenes and beat him to a pulp. This sparked his conversion to Christ and he became an aide to St. Paul.

As events change our life, we do not know the direction in which the Lord has yet to take us. We all know people who have experienced sudden and dramatic turns in their life even in the late afternoon and evening of life.

That call of Christ, mysteriously encrypted in suffering more often than in prosperity, shapes their life and soul, as it did to Sosthenes. That is the call within the call.

Lastly, our Gospel reading gives us John the Baptist's recollection of Jesus' baptism. John says that he didn't recognize Jesus at first. When the Holy Spirit came down in the shape of a dove, John realized that here is Someone Who would not only take away the sins of Israel but of the whole world. Later in his life, John realized, "That is why I was sent, not only to preach repentance but to identify the Messiah." That is the call within the call.

We all have a vocation on this earth. Every one of us was brought into being for a reason. The vocation everyone sees is the obvious part of it. But hidden within it is a deeper purpose that is not always known to us. We cannot choose it. We cannot plan for it. It is encrypted into our life by God. We are here in this place, at this time and with these people for a reason.

The things that occurred in our lives in the past happened for a reason. The prosperity we have known and the sufferings we have endured are for a reason.

It might be that we will speak saving truth or invite another to Jesus Christ. None of us fully knows the complete purpose of our life here on earth and what use God has yet to make of it. We will know the full impact of our life at the Last Judgment when we will see the full effect of our life here on earth. For now we are called to be faithful. This is an awesome truth on which to reflect in our prayer and meditation.

Like that mysterious suffering servant of the first reading, there is a mission and significance to our lives larger than we can imagine. Our focus is local; God's purpose for us may be much larger than we think.

Like Sosthenes, our life can move along one path when suddenly a reversal, a tragedy reveals whole new worlds to us. It tears away our illusions and turns us more deeply toward the Lord. What was at one time an omission in our life now becomes our mission.

Finally, like John the Baptist, we can be called to point the way to Christ for others.

Our lives are surrounded by the mystery of God's will with a purpose or mission known only to Him. When things occur that we don't expect, that encrypted call may be beginning to surface. Within our public vocation is the "call within the call" known only to God. This means that everything, everything that happens to us has moment, mystery and purpose.