

**The Reflection from Pastor Fr. John
Carlos, Holy Cross Church, Harrison, NJ,
January 17, 2021**

APPRECIATE

In the First Reading, we read how Eli, the priest, helps the young boy Samuel to appreciate what he is hearing. Samuel is awakened three times by a voice in the night that he takes to be that of Eli. Eli then helps Samuel to recognize that the voice he is hearing is no human voice, but rather the voice of God calling Samuel to serve him. Young Samuel needed a spiritual mentor to help him appreciate what he was hearing.

In the Gospel, John the Baptist and two of his disciples are standing together when a man walks by. The disciples do not appreciate the significance of the stranger until John the Baptist says, "Behold, the Lamb of God." Those two disciples needed John the Baptist to help them appreciate the importance of the stranger they were seeing.

Like Samuel and like those disciples of John the Baptist, we also need help to appreciate and recognize the voice and the presence of God.

The Church is just such a mentor and guide. Through its teaching and preaching the Church

helps us to appreciate the message of God found in the words of the Old and New Testament. The Church teaches us how to listen and discern what God is trying to say to us as we hear and read his words found in the scriptures.

The Church also serves as our mentor and guide when it comes to appreciating the presence of God. It teaches us to discern the presence of the Lamb of God in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, in the pouring of baptismal water, in the other sacraments, and in our fellow Christians.

The Church also provides us with spiritual directors, confessors, catechists, vowed religious men and women, and faith sharing groups that can open our ears and eyes to the message and presence of the Lord in our personal lives.

May this year bring us renew hope, Happy New Year filled with God's grace.

Father John Carlos