

Reflection Tuesday 1st week of the year 2024

Our readings today present us with two people in dire straits, in a dark place, seeking the Lord's help. The Lord responds to their plea and grants them that for which they ask. Hannah cried out to the Lord for a child and showed her gratitude after he was weaned. She voluntarily gave him up to the Lord. His name was Samuel, the prophet who helped keep the people of God true to their calling. We know little of the man plagued by an evil spirit except that Jesus healed him. These are comforting readings for those who begin this new year carrying their own darkness and a need that cannot be met without the help of the Lord.

It is comforting to know that the people recognised the authority of Jesus. Not just in what he was able to do but in what he said. Jesus' authority was growth-giving, affirmative, positive and helpful. It was as though the people listening to him were able to see and understand their own possibilities. He inspired hope; a hope that the scribes were unable to give. The authority of Jesus enabled him to treat them as equals and as friends. Ultimately, Jesus called them to greater things than they had ever thought possible before.

Even if listening to Jesus did not necessarily make their lives easier, he certainly made them feel that their lives were more worthwhile. His authority made them do what all authority should do, including our own, and that is to **foster growth**.