

## The Wilderness, V

"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone." (1 Kgs. 17:50)

When you venture out into the wilderness as an adult, you have some good idea of what to expect. When you go out as a child, you have little or no idea of what to expect. This may be seen in a spiritual sense in the life of St. David.

We would be foolish to think that the calling of David and his victory over Goliath is of little importance to us. Oh it is an interesting story in itself, to be sure, something that a Hollywood director eager to make some money could make a film about. But the story is about our own calling, and the deliverance of the Church in every age, and our conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

There was nothing to recommend David. He was from an obscure little town called Bethlehem; the youngest of many brothers and his brothers couldn't stand him. His father Jesse seems to have loved him dearly, but he didn't think much of David, and so put him in charge of feeding the sheep. And when Samuel came to Jesse at God's command in order to choose one of his sons to anoint, Jesse didn't even think to present David. It seems then that he was born to live and die amongst the sheep. But David is the one God chose.

Why God will choose this one and not that one we cannot tell. Some people are born into the Church and are baptized; others are not baptized at all. Some are born of bad parents, irreligious parents, and receive no real education or a bad one. So why have we been chosen? Why have we been baptized and led to the immemorial Mass? We cannot tell. We are not better by nature or in any other way than those whom God has not chosen. God simply gives, but then He commands.

The order is important. God gives, *then* He commands. He did not say to Adam "Obey me and I will make a paradise for you." He made a paradise and then commanded Adam to obey Him. He does not say "Obey me and I will give you a kingdom." He says "I give you a kingdom, and now I command you to obey me." He does not say "Obey me and I will send you the Paraclete as a reward." He says "I give you a Paraclete that you may obey Me." He tells us to obey Him, not to gain His favor, but in order not to lose the favor we already have. He does not say "Get well first, and then I will receive you."

Neither does He say "Be sinless before you pray and then come to Me," He says come to Me all you who are heavy burdened." He cures us of disease and receives us, and then says "Take care, go and sin no more, and stay out of danger."

This is our condition brethren. If we are living in His grace, then we are kings; heirs of a kingdom. Even if you are feeding sheep, or some other lowly occupation in the world, God sees not as man sees. He has chosen you.

And notice in the call of David that he was chosen by means of the anointed prophet Samuel. God told Samuel, "Fill thy horn with oil, and go, for I have provided Me a king among his sons." And when Samuel anointed David, the text says that "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." And so, when we were baptized by a priest – the anointed of the Lord – from that day forward our gift is far greater than David's. The spirit of the Lord did not visit David occasionally, but dwelled in him, and in like manner the Spirit of the Lord will dwell in us, even to the wild extent of making our bodies temples of the Lord.

And what happened to David after the anointing? Nothing really special – Saul had him play the harp and sing some songs, then he was sent back to his sheep. All was to come in good time, but not all at once. So it is with our baptisms. You can't see anything different in the child after his baptism can you? The baby looks like any other baby, smells like any other baby, sounds like any other baby. Yet in time the difference can become enormous. Sooner or later the work of God becomes manifest, which at first was secret. Remember that right after our Savior was baptized, "immediately the Spirit of God led Him into the wilderness." And up to that time what He was and what He did was secret to the world. Into the wilderness to do battle.

David went up to see his brothers who were in battle, and he had no idea that he was going to be picked to fight Goliath. Just so, children that are baptized have no idea what they are going to be called to do. They laugh and giggle and play as if there were no sorrow in the world, and no high destiny laid out for them. They are heirs of a kingdom and don't really know it. But in God's own time He forms them and readies them to do battle with Goliath.

And who is their Goliath? Who must we contend with? The answer you already know. The devil is our Goliath. We have to fight Satan, who is far more fearful and powerful than ten thousand Goliaths, and who is capable of utterly destroying us. We are not brought up to fight him at once; for some years we are almost without a fight. By degrees we start to fight him as children, but as time goes on, this enemy comes at us with sword and spear, and once this war has begun, it lasts all our lives.

And how should we behave when he comes to assail us? Sometimes he comes openly, sometimes with cunning and craft, sometimes he tempts, other times he frightens. And if we saw him even once, we would be so revolted by the sight of his abomination that we would flee from any temptation, which is why he hides himself from us.

We behave like St. Michael. You know the prayer – “May *God* rebuke him we humbly pray...and do thou Prince of the heavenly host cast *by the power of God* cast into hell Satan...” We rely on God, not our power.

So when Goliath comes against you, recollect that you have already been chosen, dedicated, anointed, espoused to Christ. When your Goliath comes against you, speak like David did to Goliath and say, "Thou comest against me with a sword and a spear and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts." You come to me with temptation; you would allure me with the pleasures of sin for a brief time; you would kill me if you could, nay, you would that I kill myself by embracing sinful thoughts, words and deeds; you would make me take my own spiritual life by choosing evil companions, choosing light and gossipy conversations, choosing amusements, by profaning the Lord's Day, by keeping me away from confession and the Mass, by tempting me to swear, and curse, and mock and lie and cheat and steal...but I know you; you were a liar from the beginning. I come to you in the name of the Living God, in the name of Jesus Christ my Savior. David came with a shepherd's staff to battle Goliath, I come with the Cross. David chose five stones from the brook for his sling; I choose the five wounds of the Lord of Hosts.

.