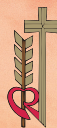


# Vocations *and* Prayer



The Catholic Magazine on Vocation Ministry

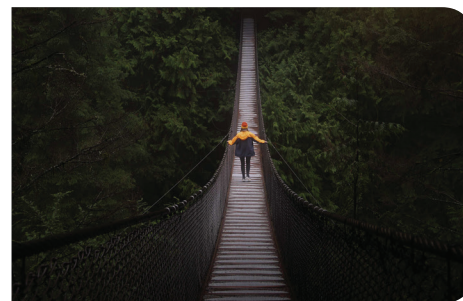
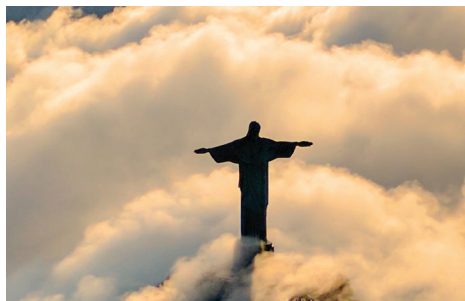
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**A Welcoming Place for Youth**





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By Paul Shuang

# Synod 2018

## Young people, "You are in my Heart"

By Fr. ANTONIO FIORENZA, RCJ

**W**hy a Synod on the theme of "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment?"

Pope Francis gives us the best answer to this question in his letter addressed to young people on the occasion of the presentation of the Preparatory Document for the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "I wanted you to be the centre of attention, because you are in my heart."

One might wonder if his words are a slogan or demagoguery, but they can not be anything but the truth. Pope Francis is sincere. He says what he thinks and uses simple and direct language.

The words of Pope Francis, the visible leader and guide of the church, allow us to understand that young people are truly at the heart of the church, as children are at the heart of a mother. A church that does not take care of young people is a church without a future.

The Synod of the Bishops will draw the attention of all Christian communities to the importance of young people in the church and the need to rethink the pastoral care for youth, according to the challenges of today's culture and society. In light of Pope Francis's purpose, the Synod is an opportunity to listen to young people:

"The Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith; even your doubts and your criticism. Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls."

Pope Francis' thought in this regard is surprising: He wants to listen to young people not only to know their world, but to better understand the path of the church in today's world, because "the Lord often reveals the younger what is best" (Rule of St. Benedict, III, 3).

The church received from Jesus the mandate to proclaim the Gospel to all creatures (see Mark 16: 9-20). Young people are at the same time

recipients and protagonists of this announcement.

The Pope's thought and the Preparatory Documents of the Synod reveal important guidelines which will certainly be examined in depth by the Assembly of Bishops and forcefully reiterated to the whole Church:

- Christian communities today are called to put young people at the center of their pastoral plans;
- Youth ministry must be the focal point of the pastoral program at the parish and various ecclesial groups and movements;
- Christian communities must above all be a welcoming place for young people, where no one feels judged or excluded for his/her ideas and his/her personal situation; a place of prayer and service, of accompaniment and discernment of God's gifts;
- Christian communities before being places where a doctrine is taught must be a place where the joy of faith is communicated and an encounter with the person of Christ is experienced through listening to the word, the celebration of the sacraments and the testimony of charity.

Personally, I express confidence that, in the light of the Synod's guidelines, there will be a rebirth of youth ministry which will mark in turn a flourishing of the life and evangelizing action of the Christian communities. I am also convinced that from the rebirth of youth ministry there will be also a renewal of the pastoral care of vocations. There cannot be a vocational pastoral care without youth ministry. Nor can there be true youth ministry that is not vocational at the same time. ■



FR. ANTONIO FIORENZA, RCJ

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# The Church is Young

## “Let the Children Come to Me”



By ARCHBISHOP JOSÉ H. GOMEZ

**T**he Church in Los Angeles is young and growing.

Each year in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, we baptize about 60,000 infants — far more than any other diocese in the country.

Of course, baptism is the beginning of a journey, not the end.

The Church’s mission is to walk with these young families and their children, to help them grow in their faith, follow Jesus with joy and courage, and to work to build this world into the Kingdom that God

wanted for his people.

### The Importance of Young People in the Church

I was reflecting recently on the Gospel passage of Jesus multiplying the loaves and fish.

At the center of the miracle is a young boy, some translations call him a “lad.” We do not know how old he was, but he had heard the call of Jesus and followed him to that grassy mountainside to listen to him.

Unlike many of the 5,000 adults who had followed Jesus there, the boy had

come prepared — he brought along some fish and bread, in case he got hungry. This boy offered all that he had to Jesus and his apostles, and Jesus used his gifts to perform a miracle that revealed the power and mystery of the Eucharist.

For me, this boy with his loaves and fish is a sign of the importance of young people in the Church.

Our God is a God who takes the lives and gifts of young people seriously. Think of the stories of Joseph and Samuel and David and Daniel in the Old Testament. Think of the child Jesus, teaching in the Temple.



"Let the children come to me," Jesus said.

This must be the goal of all our pastoral plans and programs for young people in the Church. What must we do to bring young people to Jesus? How can we help them to hear his call in their lives and to follow him?

This is what we are trying to do with *City of Saints*, our annual festival of prayer and praise for teens and young adults that we hold on the UCLA campus. What is always moving to me at City of Saints is to see so many young men and women who are so happy to be Catholic and living their faith with joy and dedication.

When our young people come together you can really see that Jesus Christ is alive and his Church is alive — always young, always being renewed.

## Youth, Evangelization and Today's Realities

Young people are the present and future of the Church. We all know that.

But we also know that passing on the faith to the next generation becomes a greater challenge as our society becomes more secularized and the once-tight networks of Catholic families, neighborhoods, parishes and schools have come apart.

Some are pessimistic about evangelizing our young people. I am not. Just the opposite! I believe young people are the way for the Church and the hope for the new evangelization of our culture.

It is true that research on young adult Catholics should give us cause for deep concern.

There is no question that their attitudes and ideals are shaped by the environment of individualism and relativism we find in our culture and schools — the general "air" that says there is no right or wrong, no true or false, just different opinions and viewpoints and that what matters most is feeling good about our-

selves and getting what we want out of life.

Young people are also definitely marked by the disappointments and pains of broken families. This experience is widespread and it means many young people find it hard to trust in permanent things or makes commitments that will last for the whole of their lives.

These are the realities of our times. But they are not destiny. There is also a deep concern these days about young people drifting away from the Church or becoming indifferent to the faith.

*"Our task is to inspire young people."*

I share that concern, I am especially troubled about the growth of the so-called "nones," those who do not affiliate with the Church or any other religion. According to studies, one-third of millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) describe themselves as either atheists, agnostics or believing in "nothing in particular."

This will be a crucial conversation at the upcoming meeting of the world's bishops that Pope Francis is convening in October in Rome. I have the privilege of being one of the five bishop delegates to the Synod on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, along with our Auxiliary Bishop Robert Barron.

## Exploring New Ways to Announce the Gospel to Young People

My hope for the Synod is that we will explore new ways to proclaim and explain the Church's teachings to our young people, especially our teachings on marriage, the family, and sexuality. We also need to understand and address the dominant mentality in our society, which is shaped by science, technology and a mechanized and consumerist approach to life.

But our young people also need a new witness to the power of the Gospel. Christianity is a way of life, not a code for conduct. I think too often researchers and reporters focus on "issues" where young people are supposed to be out-of-step with traditional Church teaching and practice.

Faith is a way of life that flows from the heart's response to the gift and invitation of Jesus Christ. The Church is entrusted with the Word of life, which is not a "word", but a divine Person, the Son of the living God.

What the Church teaches only makes sense — it only has power to change lives — if we know who God is and who he made us to be.

So we need to continue in everything we can to lead our young people to the encounter with Jesus Christ who calls them to come to him.

True youth ministry begins right there — in bringing people to the encounter with Jesus Christ.

To meet Jesus! To hear him calling our name! To let him touch our heart, so we know his love and mercy. This is where everything starts, this is when we truly begin to live. This is the beautiful reality that we need to bring to our young people. From this reality everything else in their lives can grow.

Passing on the faith to the next generation does not mean pandering to



them or apologizing or ignoring areas where they might question traditional teachings.

Passing on the faith means walking with our young people, listening to them, serving with them and always being open to dialogue and conversation.

Young people in every generation are looking for something and someone to give their life to. This was true in the 1900s and it is true in the 2000s.

The challenges may change, but in every time and place the young heart remains open, restless, longing for love, longing for God.

Our young people know there is something missing in the vision of life that is presented to them in our society.

They know there is something more than the sounds and visions, the possessions and pleasures offered to them by a consumer-entertainment culture. They know that happiness is not found by simply choosing a lifestyle or identity from among various superficial options.

Young people have questions that “Siri” can never answer - Why is there evil and innocent suffering? Where do I come from, why am I here? How can I find love, how do I know my life matters?

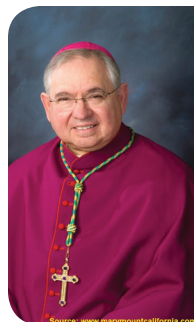
Jesus Christ is that answer - yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Our task is to inspire young people — to seek Jesus and to find him; to take him as their friend and to follow him, love him and stay with him on the journey of their lives.

And all of us in the Church - families, pastors, parishes, schools - we need to be right there on that journey with our young people. We need to be leading by example, taking Jesus as the way for our lives and the model for how we should live.

Let us ask our Blessed Mother Mary to help us,

*May Blessed Mary, Mother of the Church, watch over us and guide us as we seek new ways to share the joy of faith with our young people, so that they can know that everything is possible when we let Jesus into our lives.■*



**Most Reverend José H. Gomez**

Is the Archbishop of Los Angeles, the nation's largest Catholic Archdiocese. In his ministry, Archbishop Gomez encourages people to follow Jesus Christ with joy and simplicity of life, seeking to serve God and their neighbors in their ordinary daily activities.

## Synod Facts

### 15th Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops on Young People

**Theme:** “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment”

**Dates:** October 2018

**Place:** Vatican City

**Purpose:** “An opportunity for the Church ‘to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, and to ask young people to help her in identifying the most effective way to announce the Good News today.”

#### Delegates from the United States

- Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, President of the USCCB
- Archbishop José H. Gomez, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Vice President of the USCCB
- Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth
- Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, Diocese of Bridgeport, member of the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth
- Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis

**Topics of discussion:** The topics to be discussed at the Synod will emerge from the *Instrumentum Laboris* and there will be conversations that include participations by bishops and small group dialogues.

**Source:** <http://www.usccb.org/about/bishops-and-dioceses/synod-of-bishops/synod-2018/index.cfm>



# Called to be Happy

## A Path of Faith for the Youth

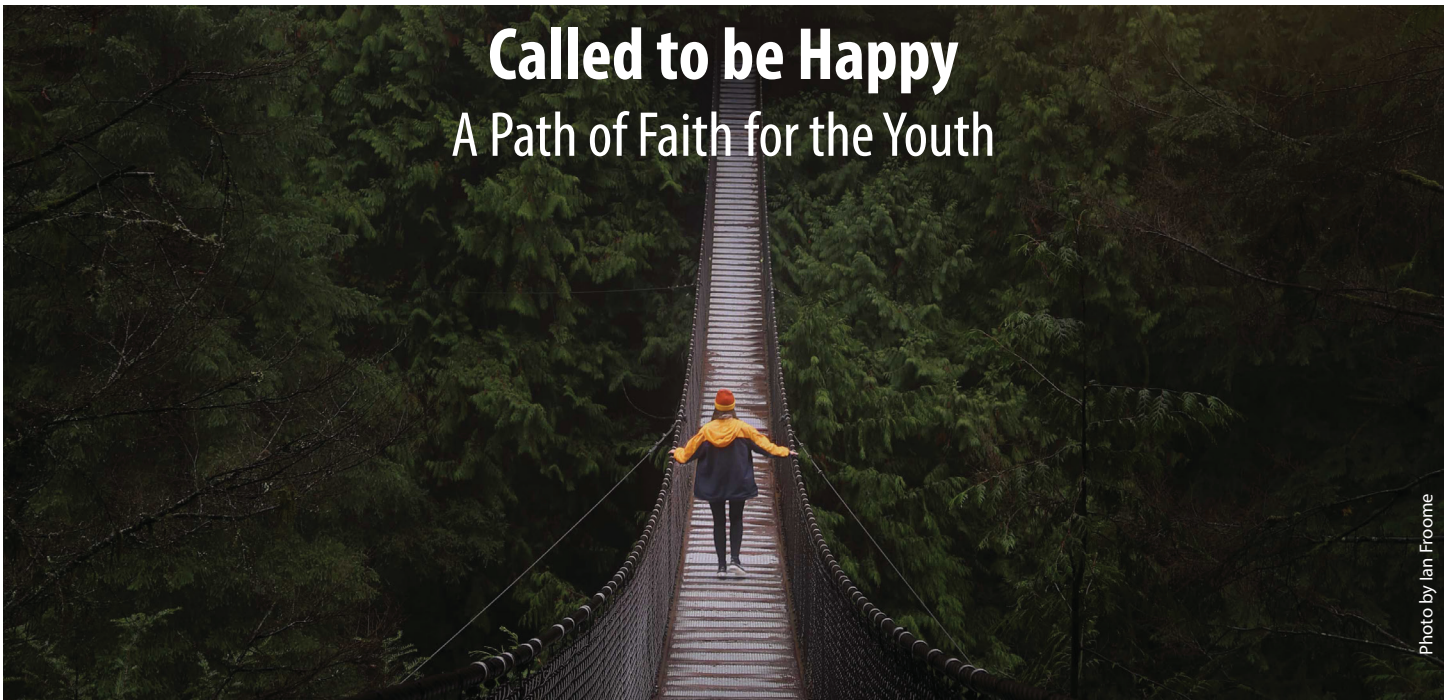


Photo by Ian Froome

By JOAN WEBER

**E**xcitement is building among ministry leaders in the Church regarding the upcoming Synod on “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” If ever there was a “carpe diem” moment for those who work with young people, it is now. We need to seize the opportunity being offered to support teens and young adults in discernment—in recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives and listening to God’s voice in prayer and reflection. Too often young people make major decisions based on secular values because they don’t know any other way. God’s voice can easily be drowned out amid all the noise coming from the rest of the world.

### The Need of Knowing God

Before young people (or anyone else for that matter) can discern God’s will for their lives, they first need to know God. They have to build a relationship which is intimate and strong enough to know they can rely on and trust God. Many Millennials (those born in the 80’s and 90’s) and the Gen Z generation which follows profess faith in God and a desire for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This openness provides a unique opportunity

for Church leaders to provide more encounters with Christ in their ministries. The sacraments, prayer experiences, adoration, retreats, uplifting music, faith witnessing, and faith sharing are some of the ways the Church can help young people know God, recognize God’s presence in their lives, and ultimately grow in their relationship with God.

The Pre-Synod Document which emerged from the meeting of Pope Francis with young adults from around the world in March of 2018 noted that “A common dream across continents and oceans is the desire to find a place where the young person can feel that he or she belongs.” This is key to engaging young adults. The Catholic Church must first make them welcome in a non-judgmental, joy-filled, loving way. Inviting them into a community of faith which cares about all their needs—physical, emotional, psychological, social, financial, and spiritual—provides a foundation for discovering the face of Christ and letting him guide their lives.

### “Vocation to the Joy of Love”

A great gift of Pope Francis to the young people of the world is his reassur-

ing words about trusting in God’s will for their lives. Young people are often wary of surrendering their lives to God (with whom they may have only a distant relationship), fearing it will make life too hard or too lonely or too boring. Pope Francis always leads with joy. He reminds younger generations that God wants them to be happy. In *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Francis and his fellow bishops write that all of us are called to the “vocation to the joy of love.”

We cannot overstate the importance of sharing the joy of our faith with young people.

In his recent *Gaudete et Exultate—On the Call to Holiness in Today’s World*, the Holy Father writes:

“We need, though, to ask the Holy Spirit to liberate us and to expel the fear that makes us ban him from certain parts of our lives. God asks everything of us, yet he also gives everything to us. He does not want to enter our lives to cripple or diminish them, but to bring them to fulfillment.”

Getting young people to understand that they are first called to holiness is



another step on the journey of discernment. Sons and Daughters of the Light, the U.S. Bishops pastoral plan for ministry with young adults, leads with the idea that all of us are called to holiness by virtue of our baptism. Pope Francis reminds young people of this call in *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

## The Power of Authentic Witnesses

A key insight to which all of us should pay attention comes from the young adults who met with Pope Francis. In the Pre-Synod Document we hear, “Ultimately, many of us strongly want to know Jesus, yet often struggle to realize that He alone is the source of true self-discovery.” The young adults go on to state that having authentic witnesses—men and women who vibrantly express their faith and relationship with Jesus while encouraging others to approach, meet, and fall in love with Jesus themselves.” Faith communities which want to support young people in discerning God’s will should be ready to step up and share their own faith journeys, with all the struggles and failures as well as the joys and accomplishments they’ve experienced in their relationships with God. If a young person hears how God has worked in the life of someone else, he/she can more readily begin to recognize God’s movement in his or her own life.

## Teaching Discernment to Young Adults

The preparatory document for the synod challenges Church leaders to teach discernment to young adults. Ignatian spirituality gives us a technique for helping young people get comfortable with discernment. It’s called consolation/desolation, and involves people reflecting on their lives by getting in touch with their feelings. If they are feeling more hopeful, more joyous, more loving, more trusting, they are in consolation and are moving closer to God. But if they find themselves feeling more doubt, fear, and anger, they are in desolation and are moving away from God. Those who work with young people might consider having them share a consolation or a desolation in small groups at the beginning of faith forma-

tion sessions, on retreats, or in prayer. As young people become more aware of the relationship between their feelings and their relationship with God, they begin to see how vital God is to their lives.

Another Jesuit exercise which can help young people discern is doing a daily examen. While there are many versions of the Examen, a simplified version might be a great place to start. It involves a three-minute nightly exercise before going to sleep. The first minute is spent reflecting on all the good things that happened during the day and then thanking God the Father for all the blessings. The second minutes involves asking Jesus for forgiveness for the missed opportunities to love, for the failures—the sins—of the day. And the third minute is praying to the Spirit for the courage and grace to do better tomorrow. If young people practice this spiritual discipline for a period of time, they can be introduced to deeper versions of the Examen which exercise their spiritual imaginations.

On a deeper level, we can support young adults in discerning God’s will by teaching them the Ignatian (or another) discernment process. The steps of discernment as laid out by the Jesuits include:

1. Praying for indifference and guidance, with indifference meaning the ability to detach from personal preferences and outside influences and guidance coming from the Word of God;
2. Assessing the facts by exploring the pros and cons of each possible choice, exploring how it would affect self and others, and talking it out with a trusted person;
3. Seeking confirmation of the choice from God by examining which path truly leads to inner peace.

Obviously, discernment is a key practice for those who want to follow God’s will for their lives. In *Gaudete et Exsultate*, the Holy Father asks:

“How can we know if something comes from the Holy Spirit or if it

stems from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil? The only way is through discernment, which calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. It is a gift which we must implore. If we ask with confidence that the Holy Spirit grant us this gift, and then seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely we will grow in this spiritual endowment.” (166)

## Key to Discernment

The Holy Father emphasizes that prayer and a readiness to listen, frequent reading of Scripture, and following the Gospel and the Magisterium are key to discernment. His words can be a source of inspiration and motivation as the Church accompanies young people in discerning their God-given purpose in life. His words in *Gaudete et Exsultate* are especially moving:

“Discernment is not about discovering what more we can get out of this life, but about recognizing how we can better accomplish the mission entrusted to us at our baptism... Discernment, then, is not a solipsistic self-analysis or a form of egotistical introspection, but an authentic process of leaving ourselves behind in order to approach the mystery of God, who helps us to carry out the mission to which he has called us, for the good of our brothers and sisters.” (174)■



**JOAN WEBER**

Is Project Coordinator for Youth and Family Ministry Services at the Center for Ministry Development. She holds a Master’s Degree in Pastoral Ministry.



# Pray You Tell Me

## The Prayer In Vocational Discernment



By Fr. DOMINIC TRAN

**T**he theme of the upcoming Synod of Bishops “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” is telling. There is no discernment without faith.

In the letter to young people on this Synod, Pope Francis cites the example of Abraham whose faith enables him to listen to God. The Pope also recalls the encounter with Jesus of the first disciples in the Gospel according to John. They listen to his invitation and spend time with him. This allows them to follow him.

Therefore, listening to God with faith is the primary element in discernment. This act of listening to God with faith is the essential aspect of prayer on the part of a discernor.

### An Encounter with a Loving God

Having been involved in youth ministry and vocation ministry, I must admit that we, vocation ministers, often hastily steer

young people to look for the particular vocations to which God invites them. Sometimes the temptation is to offer a quick solution, a kind of discernment knowhow or manual, “This is how you are going to figure out your vocation.” That approach overly emphasizes the limited what and the how of discernment. Unfortunately, by focusing on “figuring out the call,” it might bypass encountering the Caller. The Caller – God – can then be mistakenly perceived as a tyrant who demands everybody to fit into some kind of a master plan that does not take into consideration the free will of the one called.

Growth in Christian living in general and healthy vocational discernment in particular must begin with an encounter with the loving God in prayer. There, we meet the God whose desire is for us to know God’s love and the plan God has for each one of us to grow in that love.

With this approach, the foundational vocation for all to discover and to embrace is the vocation of being children of God. Then, the discernment of the particular vocation is about discovering how each

one of us is called to live the way of Jesus, the Son of God.

### The Teaching of the Gospel about Prayer

The Gospel according to Mark, used for the current liturgical Year B, offers us some insights into Jesus, the Son of God, at prayer. Moreover, biblical scholars share the consensus that identifying Jesus as the Son of God is the central theme of the writer of this Gospel. Mark mentions this theme at the very beginning of this Gospel in no uncertain terms, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.” This theme is repeated at key moments in Mark’s narrative. They include Jesus’ baptism by John at the Jordan at the beginning of his public ministry (1:11) and the Transfiguration while on the way to Jerusalem to fulfil his mission (9:7). Finally, at the foot of the cross, Mark records that the centurion “who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last [he] said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” (15:39).

For our purpose, it is important to point out that for Mark, Jesus knows this core

identity of his through prayer. After the first full day in his public ministry, Jesus “went off to a deserted place, where he prayed” (1:35). At the Transfiguration, he was in communication with his heavenly Father who identified Jesus for the sake of the disciples present (9:7). He prayed in Gethsemane before his arrest (14:32-39). And the culmination of the Son of God at prayer is on the cross before his death (15:34).

Thus, in the life of Jesus, prayer enabled him to be in communication and communion with the Father so as to discover and live out his identity of being the beloved Son of God and to be affirmed of his mission of salvation that the Father had sent him to accomplish.

So must it be for all those who want to follow the Son of God.

## Communal and Personal Prayer

Discernment is not searching for something but for Someone. Once we have encountered God, we find ourselves and who we are called to become.

Like Jesus, in prayer we encounter God. This enables us to respond to Jesus’ invitation given to all “to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In prayer, we then discover our particular vocation to be witnesses and instruments of God’s holiness and love in the world.

In this context of praying as listening to God in faith, we have been blessed with the opportunities to encounter Jesus in formal prayer, in the community of Christ’s Body, in personal prayer, and in silence.

In formal prayer, Jesus speaks to us at Mass (and also other liturgical celebrations and prayer services where Scripture is proclaimed), in personal and communal Bible studies, in meditating and sharing of Scriptures. We encounter him in the Eucharist as he is present to us in the Sacrament and in his mystical Body, the Church.

Meeting Jesus in his ultimate sacrifice of the Cross, present to us eternally in the Eucharist, connects us with his mysti-

cal Body, the Church. But it is not just the people present in the liturgical assembly. The Eucharist gives us the eyes of faith to recognize Jesus Christ in his vulnerable brothers and sisters – most especially those who are suffering and “on the peripheries” of our society. In Christ’s brothers and sisters, we also are in communion with him. Service to others then is a form of prayer.

Praying as communicating with God is not limited to communal and liturgical moments and service to others. Personal prayer is irreplaceable. One can never know a friend deeply enough without spending time alone with that person. Similarly, we cannot know God and know ourselves as children of God if we do not spend time alone with God.

Personal prayer naturally includes silence. Spiritual writers all teach from their own experiences that God speaks in the silence of our hearts. We need to be silent from both external and internal noises because those noises can prevent us from recognizing God’s gentle presence and hearing God.

## The Only Path to Know God

It is impossible for this kind of an article to cover all aspects of prayer in vocational discernment. Yet, it might be enough to conclude by re-emphasizing that prayer is the only path to know God in order to live as God’s children. And the more we know God and live as God’s children, the clearer we can discover the particular vocation that God has for each of us.

Therefore, the most consequential task of vocation ministers in vocational accompaniment must be to help young people to grow in their prayer life.

Of all created beings, Mary is the utmost example of one who fulfills her vocation. She began first by being in prayer. From the moment of the Annunciation, she is presented as being in communication with God. May she now help us all to pray as she did. ■

## References:

1. <http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/pope---young/letter-of-his-holiness-pope-rancis-to-young-people.html>
2. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002, p. 330.
3. Scripture quotes are taken from the New American Bible.
4. Pope Francis.
5. While it is not the topic of this reflection, it is important not to forget that works of charity often help discerners to focus in on the particular area of ministry God calls them to. This, of course, is an important aspect of vocational discernment.



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# Fostering a Culture of Vocational Discernment

## A Conversation with Most Rev. Joseph R. Kopacz, Bishop of Jackson, Mississippi

By PAMELA SELBERT

Originally from Dunmore, Pennsylvania, Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz, 67, attended a Catholic elementary school and high school, then St. Pius X Seminary, and the University of Scranton, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History in 1972. He entered Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, New York, earning a Master's Degree in Theology. He was ordained to the Diaconate in 1976, and was ordained to the Priesthood the following year.

His many assignments (all in Pennsylvania) include Assistant Pastor at Our Lady of Peace, Brodheadsville; at the Church of the Epiphany, Sayre; and at St. Mary's, Swoyersville; and Administrator at St. Patrick's, Nicholson. Father Kopacz' first pastorate, in 1989, was at St. Michael's, Jessup, where he later also served at two other churches, St. James and St. Stanislaus Kostka.

In 1995, he was appointed Pastor at Nativity of Our Lord Parish in Scranton, serving there till he was appointed Vicar for Priests and Formation Director at St. Pius Seminary three years later. In 2000, Father Kopacz earned a Doctorate in Human Development from Marywood University in Scranton.

Other appointments include Pastor of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Scranton; Vicar General of the Diocese of Scranton; Pastor of St. Mary of the Mount, Mount Pocono; and Pastor of St. Ann, Tobyhanna. He also assumed pastoral duties at St. Bernadette, Canadensis, serving the three churches -- St. Mary of the Mount, St. Ann and St. Bernadette -- till they were consolidated to form Most Holy Trinity Parish.

Over the years, Father Kopacz has also been President of the Catholic Schools' Board of Education, Trustee at St. Mi-



chael's, advocate in the Tribunal, member of the Diocesan Finance Council, Director of Continuing Education for Priests, faculty member and Formation Director at St. Pius X Seminary, and Coordinator of Hispanic Ministry for Monroe County, among many other positions.

In December 2013, Pope Francis appointed Reverend Kopacz, then Pastor of Most Holy Trinity Parish, Mount Pocono, as the eleventh Bishop of Jackson, Mississippi. He was installed in February 2014, at the Catholic Church of St. Peter the Apostle in Jackson.

Bishop Kopacz recently answered the following questions about vocations in his diocese:

**Are you seeing increased interest in vocations to the priesthood or religious orders in your diocese? If so, why do you think this is?**

Over the past four years since becoming the bishop of Jackson, MS, I don't believe that we are experiencing a greater interest in vocations to the priesthood, but we have held steady with our number of seminary candidates. We currently have eleven candidates, seven in theology and four at the undergraduate level. If our candidates remain in formation, we will be ordaining two each year over the next four years. In the past three years, I ordained five priests for the Diocese of Jackson at an average age of thirty-four.

**If so (increased interest) is it mostly young people who are considering the vocation? What is the age range?**

We range in age from twenty to forty. Our two transitional deacons this year are twenty-five and thirty years old. The average age for our seminarians is approximately thirty, which we are happy about. So in a very real way we are blessed.

**What do you do to encourage a person's interest in pursuing a religious vocation?**

We have a significant number of religious men and women working in the Diocese of Jackson, but no religious order has their motherhouse or provincial headquarters in the Diocese of Jackson. Religious women began serving here in the Diocese of Natchez, MS in 1847, and there has been a steady stream of dedicated religious men and women for the past 170 years. The Diocese of Jackson just marked its 180th anniversary. The personal contact with the members of religious communities through the years has sparked vocations. For example, Sister Theo Bowman became a Catholic at nine years old through the service and influence of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of La Crosse, WS, and later on she joined this religious community.

**How do pastors and youth ministers help a person discern God's call?**

In recent times there has been a shift toward a more positive attitude among pastors and youth ministers toward a young person considering a vocation. I have witnessed first hand on a number of occasions in our parishes and schools an encouraging word from pastors, teachers in our Catholic schools, and youth ministers. Each priest, teacher or youth minister is different, of course, in the manner of promoting a vocation, but I believe the appropriate encouragement of religious and priestly vocations will bear good fruit, while at the same time begging the harvest master through prayer to send workers into the

vineyard.

**Is there prayer for vocations throughout the parishes?**

In many of our parishes there is consistent prayer for vocation, especially in the intercessory prayers at Mass. In some of our parishes the faithful pray the rosary before Mass for vocations, and/or at the end of Mass, a family comes forward to receive a special blessing and take home with them for the week a Pilgrim Virgin Statue, or a Chalice to pray for vocations in their home. This is very inspiring. Moreover, over the past year we have begun the implementation of a reinvigorated Vision along with Pastoral Priorities throughout the diocese. The Holy Spirit directed this process through seventeen listening sessions around the diocese throughout 2016. One of our three priorities is to facilitate the life long formation of intentional disciples with a specific goal of creating a culture of vocations in our parishes, ministries and schools. A universal prayer for vocations in our parishes will be forthcoming, as well as more focused efforts on the local level around the diocese, the particulars of which will be left up to those in each ministry. We seek to balance communion across the diocese with subsidiarity, two hallmarks of a vibrant Catholic diocese.

**What is the role of parents and other family members in helping a young person discern God's call?**

This is critical, of course, and fostering a culture of vocational discernment with particular focus on the ordained and religious life, but by no means excluding the vocation of marriage, will hopefully open the hearts and minds of parents to encourage their children to consider a vocation, and also support them if they are discerning one. Cultivating a positive environment for family and parental support is a never-ending labor of love. I have had discussions with parents who would love to have a vocation in their family and who are willing to support a child if there is an interest. On the other hand, there are those who are ambivalent about vocations, and still others

who will not support a vocation to the priesthood and religious life under any circumstances. There is much work to be done in every generation.

**Should family members actively encourage a vocation?**

Without a doubt, the family is the incubator for vocations. But a young person, by God's Grace, must also be attracted to the truth, beauty and goodness of a vocation that overflows in the lives of religious and ordained who currently are serving the Lord Jesus in the Church for the salvation of all.

**How can a person be certain they've been called?**

Most persons are not certain in the early stage of vocational discernment, and those who think that they are must not be closed to formation. It is necessary to accompany someone who expresses interest or a desire for the priesthood or religious life in a mutual discerning process. It's about relationships. First and foremost, it is about a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ under the promptings of the Holy Spirit. But it is interwoven with family life, experience in a parish community, school or ministry, the influence of a priest or religious, and the opportunity to speak with seminarians at home, in diocesan ministries, and at the seminary. It's a mutual discernment process between the individual and the Church, and ultimately the person presents himself or herself to the Church, and the Church affirms the call by accepting the individual into formation or not. Along the way in formation certainty emerges regarding God's will for the individual's life. But at the outset, subjective certainty must be tested as gold is in the furnace.

**How does your Office of Vocations work? What sort of spiritual direction do you offer?**

Our Vocation Director, a priest, makes himself available in our schools and parishes, during retreats for youth, and at whatever opportune event presents



itself. He tries to be proactive in whatever way he can and personally interacts with a viable candidate who is sincerely searching for God's path in life. As a matter of course, he will assign a candidate to a diocesan or religious priest serving in the diocese prior to seminary acceptance, who can be a spiritual guide in the discernment process.

**How is Pope Francis' leadership affecting interest in vocations?**

Pope Francis clearly has tapped the pulse of the planet and has directed the Church to be a visible sign of God's mercy in Jesus Christ, and to serve the poor and marginalized especially as missionary disciples. These are signs of the times for the Church's mission in the world. I know that Pope Francis is inspiring many people both within and far beyond Church membership, but I cannot say for sure that he has directly inspired recent admissions to the seminary. I know that he is having a profound impact on those who are involved in seminary formation, which in turn is having a positive impact on our candidates for the Diocese of Jackson. We are a mission diocese, and many already are serving here with a missionary spirit.

**How do you in your diocese create an inclusive vocation culture?**

Over the past year we have begun the implementation of a reinvigorated Vision with Pastoral Priorities throughout the diocese. One such priority is to facilitate the life long formation of intentional disciples with a specific goal of creating a culture of vocations in our parishes, ministries and schools. A universal prayer for vocations in our parishes will be forthcoming, as well as more focused efforts on the local level around the diocese, the particulars of which will be left up to those in each ministry. We seek to balance communion across the diocese with subsidiarity on the local level. ■



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# The Route to Jesus

## Vocational Discernment with Young People Starts with Discipleship



Photo by Robert Nyman

By JOHN RINALDO

**W**e cannot dare foster vocations in the Church until we adequately foster discipleship in our young people. The question of vocational discernment becomes much easier to address when we are dealing with youth who know Jesus and are in community with the Church. Therefore, our work in vocations should start with evangelization. Vocations is a by-product of effective evangelization.

From March 19 through 24, 2018, more than 300 young people from around the world gathered in Rome at the inaugural Pre-Synodal Meeting of Young People to develop a document that is meant to encompass the insights of youth for the Synod of Bishops that will take place in October 2018 that will look at the topic of "Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment."

During those six days, the goal was to summarize the input of youth from around the world and give the Synod

specific insight into what youth are thinking about when it comes to faith, vocations, and the Catholic Church.

It is from their final document that we find specific guidance from our young people that directs our efforts as leaders to instill a spirit of vocational discernment in youth. Instead of 'reinventing the wheel,' it would be best to follow the encouragement of our youth and listen closely to what they have to say.

The 21st century Church is inundated with people who know of Jesus but don't know Jesus. As the young people in Rome said,

"There are many young people who know and have a relationship with Jesus as their Savior and the Son of God... Others may not have such a relationship with Jesus but see Him as a moral leader and a good man. Many young people perceive Jesus as a historical figure, one of a certain time and culture, who is not relevant to

their lives."

If young people only know Jesus as a 'nice guy,' then young people don't know Jesus as depicted in the Gospels. The best way for one to know Jesus is to know me...know you...disciples of Christ who care deeply for the Church and its mission. Therefore, the route to Jesus is through the community of God as found in the local church.

Yet, "for many young people, faith has become private rather than communal... It can seem that the Church forgets that the people are the Church, not the building." The privatization of faith has become one of things that cannot be talked about in the public setting.

So how do we connect youth with the community of faith? How do we help young people know Jesus? How do we accompany young people towards discipleship?



# The Call to Holiness

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*From the apostolic exhortation "Gaudete et exsultate" of the Holy Father Francis on the Call to Holiness in Today's World:*

To the extent that each Christian grows in holiness, he or she will bear greater fruit for our world. The bishops of West Africa have observed that "we are being called in the spirit of the New Evangelization to be evangelized and to evangelize through the empowering of all you, the baptized, to take up your roles as salt of the earth and light of the world wherever you find yourselves." Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace. For in the words of León Bloy, when all is said and done, "the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint".

## 2. EXPOSITION *(Another eucharistic hymn may be sung)*

*O salutaris Hostia quae caeli pandis ostium  
bella premunt hostilia da robur fer auxilium.  
Uni Trinoque Domino sit sempiterna gloria  
qui vitam sine termino nobis donet in patria. Amen.*

## 3. ADORATION

V. O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine,  
R. All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.

Lord Jesus Christ, we place ourselves in your presence. We adore you, our Savior, present here as God and man, in soul and body, in true flesh and blood. We acknowledge and confess that we kneel before that Sacred Humanity, which was conceived in Mary's womb and lay in Mary's bosom; which grew up to man's estate, and by the Sea of Galilee called the Twelve, wrought miracles, and spoke words of wisdom and peace; which in due season hung on the cross, lay in the tomb, rose from the dead, and now reigns in heaven. We praise you and we bless you, and give ourselves wholly to you, who are the true Bread of our souls, and our everlasting joy, and who live and reign for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## 4. SONG

*Suggestions: Holy, holy, holy/This is holy ground*

## 5. SCRIPTURE READING

Exodus 19:3-8	A holy nation
Matthew 5:43-48	Be perfect
Mark 10:17-27	Come, follow me
Matthew 5:13-16	Salt and light
1 Thessalonians 4:3-8	God called us to holiness
1 Peter 1:13-16	Be holy because I am holy

## 6. HOMILY/BRIEF EXHORTATION

## 7. SACRED SILENCE/SONG

## 8. HOLY ROSARY/VESPERS

Rosary Mysteries with vocation intentions are found at the end of this section.

## 9. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Let us pray to the Father, the source of all holiness, and ask him to lead us to holiness of life, saying:

*May we be holy as you are holy, Lord.*

- That the holy Church proclaim the Good News and witness to God's presence among us, let us pray to the Lord.
- That we may abound in doing good works, let us pray to the Lord.
- That we may be one in his name, let us pray to the Lord.
- That we may grow in perfect love, let us pray to the Lord.
- That the dead, having been forgiven, perceive the light of God's face, let us pray to the Lord.

God our Father, you alone are holy; without you nothing is good. You call all in your Church to live a holy life. Like a wise harvest master, clearly call laborers to reap the harvest of souls. May some become holy priests, formed by the Gospel; may some find their way to religious communities filled with love for you. Inspire them by your Holy Spirit to leave their way of life and share the work of your Son. May each of us respond with courage and generosity to our particular vocations, and may the Church recognize the Spirit's call to men and women of good will, trusting in your abundance to answer all our needs. Grant this through Christ our Lord.  
All: *Amen.*

## 10. BENEDICTION

*Tantum ergo sacramentum veneremur cernui:  
Et antiquum documentum novo cedat ritui:  
Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui.  
Genitori, Genitoque laus et jubilatio,  
Salus, honor, virtus quoque sit et benedictio:  
Procedenti ab utroque compar sit laudatio. Amen.*

V. You have given them bread from heaven,  
R. Having all sweetness within it.

Let us pray.

Lord, give to our hearts the light of faith and the fire of love, that we may worship in spirit and in truth our God and Lord, present in this sacrament, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
All: *Amen.*

## 11. REPOSITION

Blessed be God. Blessed be his holy name. Blessed Jesus Christ, true God and true Man. Blessed be the Name of Jesus. Blessed be his Heart filled with love. Blessed be Jesus, present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Blessed be the Mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Blessed be Saint Joseph, chaste and responsible spouse. Blessed be God in the glory of all his saints.

May the Heart of Jesus in the most blessed Sacrament be praised, adored and loved with grateful affection at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. *Amen.*

# Rejoice and be Glad

### 1. INTRODUCTION

From the apostolic exhortation "Gaudete et exultate" of the Holy Father Francis on the Call to Holiness in Today's World:

Although Jesus' words may strike us as poetic, they clearly run counter to the way things are usually done in our world. Even if we find Jesus' message attractive, the world pushes us towards another way of living. The Beatitudes are in no way trite or undemanding, quite the opposite. We can only practice them if the Holy Spirit fills us with his power and frees us from our weakness, our selfishness, our complacency and our pride. Let us listen once more to Jesus, with all the love and respect that the Master deserves. Let us allow his words to unsettle us, to challenge us and to demand a real change in the way we live. Otherwise, holiness will remain no more than an empty word.

### 2. EXPOSITION (*O salutaris Hostia*)

O saving Victim, open wide the gate of heaven to us below. Our foes press on from every side; your aid supply, your strength bestow. To your great name be endless praise, immortal Godhead, One in Three; O grant us endless length of days in our true native land to be. *Amen.*

### 3. ADORATION

V. O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine,  
R. All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.

Lord Jesus, each time we look at the sacred Host, sanctify our eyes, that they may be closed more and more to all that is merely earthly. Each time we look at the sacred Host, send a ray of divine light into our souls, that we may better know you and ourselves. Each time we look at the sacred Host, send a flame of divine love into our hearts to consume everything in it that is displeasing to you and to set it all on fire with your love. May our only desire be to contemplate the infinite beauty of your divine countenance which delights the angels now and forever.  
R. *Amen.*

### 4. SONG

*Suggestions: Open the eyes my heart/You alone are holy*

### 5. SCRIPTURE READING

2 Chronicles 7:12-17	God's promise to Solomon
Matthew 5:1-12	Rejoice and be glad
Luke 6:43-45	A tree is known by its fruit
Luke 12:16-21	Parable of the rich fool
1 Corinthians 6:16-20	Glorify God in your body
Ephesians 1:3-10	The Father's plan of salvation

### 6. HOMILY/BRIEF EXHORTATION

### 7. SACRED SILENCE/SONG

### 8. HOLY ROSARY/VESPERS

Rosary Mysteries with vocation intentions are found at the end of this section.

### 9. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Brothers and sisters, let us ask the Lord to serve him and to be holy and righteous in his sight. Let us call upon his name and say:

*Holy Lord, graciously hear us.*

- That young people might seek to live the truth of Christ, we pray.
- That young people might seek God's will for them in their lives, we pray.
- That young people might hear the call to give their lives for the mission of the Church, we pray.
- That all priests and religious might be renewed in the spirit of the new evangelization, we pray.
- That Bishops might be strengthened to be courageous shepherds, we pray.
- That we may always zealously pray for and promote vocations, we pray.
- That those who are being called to be priests and religious might respond generously, we pray.

Holy and loving God, we ask you to send more servants to your people. Choose from our parishes, from our homes, from our schools and colleges, an abundant harvest of apostles for your Kingdom: priests, sisters, brothers, deacons and lay ministers. We pray that those you call may never lose awareness of the dignity and need of their vocation. Grant this through Christ our Lord.  
R. *Amen.*

### 10. BENEDICTION (*Tantum ergo*)

Down in adoration falling, this great Sacrament we hail. Over ancient forms of worship newer rites of grace prevail. Faith will tell us Christ is present when our human senses fail. To the everlasting Father and the Son who made us free, And the Spirit, God proceeding from them each eternally, Be salvation, honor, blessing, might and endless majesty. *Amen.*

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

Let us pray.

Lord our God, you have given us the true bread from heaven. In the strength of this food may we live always by your life and rise in glory on the last day.

R. *Amen.*

### 11. REPOSITION

Blessed be God. Blessed be his Holy Name. Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man. Blessed be the Name of Jesus. Blessed be his most Sacred Heart. Blessed be his most Precious Blood. Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy. Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception. Blessed be her glorious Assumption. Blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and mother. Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse. Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints. May the Heart of Jesus in the most blessed Sacrament be praised, adored and loved with grateful affection at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. *Amen.*



# In Constant Prayer

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*From the apostolic exhortation "Gaudete et exsultate" of the Holy Father Francis on the Call to Holiness in Today's World:*

Though it may seem obvious, we should remember that holiness consists in a habitual openness to the transcendent, expressed in prayer and adoration. The saints are distinguished by a spirit of prayer and a need for communion with God. They find an exclusive concern with this world to be narrow and stifling, and, amid their own concerns and commitments, they long for God, losing themselves in praise and contemplation of the Lord... Trust-filled prayer is a response of a heart open to encountering God face to face, where all is peaceful, and the quiet voice of the Lord can be heard in the midst of silence. In that silence, we can discern, in the light of the Spirit, the paths of holiness to which the Lord is calling us.

## 2. EXPOSITION (*Adoro te devote*)

*God, with hidden majesty, lies in presence here, I, with deep devotion, my true God revere: Whom this outward shape and form secretly contains, Christ in his divinity manhood still retains. Blest reminder of the death suffered for mankind, Sacrament of living bread, health to every mind, Let my soul approach you, live within your grace, Let me taste the perfect joys time shall not efface. Amen.*

## 3. ADORATION

V. O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine,  
R. All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for the gift of the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of your love and your abiding presence with us through this sacrament. May we always experience your presence in our lives. As we your Church continues our pilgrimage on earth with our eyes fixed on heaven, may your Eucharistic presence and power permeate every nook and corner of our homes, of our lives and the lives of those who come in contact with us. May we become a Eucharistic family as we consecrate ourselves to your most Holy Name. You live and reign for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## 4. SONG

*Suggestions: Be Thou my vision/My hands belong to you*

## 5. SCRIPTURE READING

1 Kings 19:9b-16 The word of the Lord came to Elijah  
Mark 1:35-39 Jesus went off to a deserted place to pray  
Mark 6:30-33 The return of the Twelve  
Luke 9:18-21 Peter's confession about Jesus  
Galatians 5:16-26 Live by the Spirit

## 6. HOMILY/BRIEF EXHORTATION

## 7. SACRED SILENCE/SONG

## 8. HOLY ROSARY/VESPERS

Rosary Mysteries with vocation intentions are found at the end

of this section.

## 9. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the model of all perfection. He does not only unceasingly urge souls to strive toward this lofty goal, but also move them by the power of his grace to follow him in this exalted path. Let us pray that many may hear and willingly obey his loving inspiration and embrace their vocation, saying:

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

- That there may never be lacking devoted men to take Christ's place at the altar proclaiming his Gospel and offering his Body and Blood for the salvation of the world, let us pray to the Lord.
- That there may never be lacking devoted servants of his own charity to take his place day and night at the side of the orphan, at the bed of the sick, near the old and the infirm, let us pray to the Lord.
- That in classrooms and universities the voice of those who teach may be the echo of Christ's voice, pointing out the way to heaven and the duties incumbent on each and all, let us pray to the Lord.
- That no land, however distant or inhospitable, may be deprived of the Gospel message that invites all people to enter God's kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.
- That in every part of the world those called to a life of contemplation and penance may offer reparation for the sins of humanity and draw down God's infinite mercy and forgiveness, let us pray to the Lord.

O Lord, enlighten many generous hearts with the ardent rays of your Holy Spirit and by the powerful intercession of your most loving mother, Mary, enkindle and sustain the fervor of your love in these hearts so they may offer themselves in service to you as a priest, deacon or consecrated religious. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: *Amen.*

## 11. BENEDICTION (*Tantum ergo*)

Come adore this wondrous presence, bow to Christ the source of grace. Here is kept the ancient promise of God's earthly dwelling place. Sight is blind before God's glory, faith alone may see His face. Glory be to God the Father, praise to his coequal Son, Adoration to the Spirit, bond of love, in Godhead one. Blest be God by all creation joyously while ages run. *Amen.*

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

Let us pray.

Lord our God, may this sacrament of new life warm our hearts with your love and make us eager for the eternal joy of your kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: *Amen.*

## 12. REPOSITION

Blessed be God, Father and Creator. Blessed be Jesus Christ, Son of God and our Brother. Blessed be his Word that endures for ever. Blessed be his Body delivered up for us. Blessed be his Blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Comforter. Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

May the Heart of Jesus in the most blessed Sacrament be praised, adored and loved with grateful affection at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. *Amen.*

## The Holy Rosary for Vocations

*After each decade, pray the following prayer:*

O Mary, Mother of the Church,

R. Pray for us and obtain for us many and holy vocations.

### JOYFUL MYSTERIES

#### 1. The Annunciation

Mary answers "Yes" to God's call. Even though it was unexpected and the Archangel Gabriel gives her only the details she needs to know at the present moment, she responds generously. Let us offer this decade for those who are being called to the priesthood or religious life that they, like Mary, may have the grace to respond wholeheartedly.

#### 2. The Visitation

Mary wastes no time in acting upon the grace of her vocation. Through her cooperation the plan of salvation is already unfolding. Let us offer this decade for those who have been called but are hesitating. May God's grace hurry them forward to answer the call and thus begin to labor for the harvest.

#### 3. The Nativity

Our Savior comes to us in the midst of a family. How crucial is the role of the family! Let us offer this decade for all parents that they may provide an atmosphere of love and faith in the home. May parents thus help foster their children's vocations.

#### 4. The Presentation

Joseph and Mary presented Jesus in the Temple and dedicated Him to Almighty God. They knew their Son was a gift from God that was to be given back to Him. Let us offer this decade for the grace parents need to recognize the gift of their children and thus offer them to the divine plan of God. May His will determine every moment of their lives.

#### 5. The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple

For days the hearts of Mary and Joseph ached with sorrow until they found their Son. Let us offer this decade for those parents who find it difficult to understand and thus support their child's vocation as a priest or religious. May they be graced with the faith to support God's will for their children and, like Joseph and Mary, to hold the mysterious ways of God in their hearts.

### LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

#### 1. The Baptism of Jesus

The mystery of our Lord's Baptism is the mystery of Jesus taking upon Himself the mission of the Messiah. Thus begins His public ministry. Let us offer this decade for those called to the priesthood and religious life but are afraid to answer feeling that they're not worthy. May the Lord grant them courage to realize that no one is perfect and that to minister in his name, all they need to let God work through them.

#### 2. The Wedding Feast of Cana

Through the intercession of Mary, Jesus transforms ordinary water into wine. What incredible things God's grace can do in our lives! Let us offer this decade for those who are being called but doubt that they have much to offer. May they trust in the power of God to bring all things into completion and say "yes" to His call.

#### 3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom

Our Lord begins his public ministry by announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of God. What joyous news this is for all humanity

to hear! Let us offer this decade for an increase in vocations that there might be many more priests and vowed religious who will joyfully proclaim this truth and bear witness to it with their lives.

#### 4. The Transfiguration

Jesus strengthened the faith of his Apostles by allowing his divinity to be momentarily perceived. He wished them to gain a supernatural perspective on his forthcoming Passion and Death. Let us offer this decade for all those who are being called as priests and religious that they may have the grace to recognize God's call in the midst of life and courageously accept their call to pick up their cross and follow him.

#### 5. The Institution of the Holy Eucharist

Jesus gives himself in the Holy Eucharist through the ministry of his priests. Let us offer this decade for more priests for our diocese. May Our Lord call many more men to share in his Priesthood and may they respond generously.

### A LITANY FOR VOCATIONS

Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.* Christ, have mercy. *Christ, have mercy.* Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.* Christ, hear us. *Christ, graciously hear us.* God the Father in heaven, *have mercy on us.* God the Son, Redeemer of the World, *Lord, have mercy.* God the Holy Spirit, *Lord, have mercy.* Holy Trinity, One God, *Lord, have mercy.*

Holy Mary, Mother of God, *pray for us.* St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, *pray for us.* St. Michael, Defender in Battle, *pray for us.* St. Peter, the Rock upon which Christ built His Church, *pray for us.* St. Paul, Protector of the Faithful Remnant, *pray for us.* St. Francis of Assisi, Re-builder of the Church, *pray for us.* St. Anthony, Hammer of Heretics, *pray for us.* St. Pius V, Restorer of the beauty of the Sacred Liturgy, *pray for us.* St. Pius X, Foe of Modernism, *pray for us.* All ye Holy Angels and Archangels, pray that we may resist the snares of the Devil. *pray for us.*

Through your mercy, *send workers into your harvest,* O Lord. Through Your kindness, *send workers into your harvest,* O Lord. Through the fervent prayers and sacrifices of Your people, *send workers into your harvest,* O Lord. Through the power of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, *send workers into your harvest,* O Lord. Through the intercession of all the Saints and Angels, *send workers into your harvest,* O Lord. Through the sanctification of the family, *send workers into your harvest,* O Lord. Through parents being generously open to life, *send workers into your harvest,* O Lord. Through the example of priests and religious striving for holiness, *send workers into your harvest.*

Let us pray:

O God, who chose the Apostles to make disciples of all nations and who by Baptism and Confirmation has called us to build up your holy Church, we implore you to choose among us, your children, many priests and religious who will love you with their whole heart and will gladly spend their entire lives making you known and loved by all. Through Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*



## Telling Your Story of Faith

The foundational element starts deep within you and I. We cannot dare to help young people in their vocational discernment if we do not know Jesus. I would argue that many adults in the Catholic Church have experienced a true conversion and know Jesus intimately and personally. Yet, those stories of faith are not being shared with others. What inspires others in faith is not catechesis. Rather, it's our stories of faith, of triumph, of grace, of mercy and forgiveness that inspires us all, young and old. We've lost our ability to share stories.

When we look back to the early Church, it was the stories the disciples shared about Jesus that sparked the Church we know today. The story of Jesus was told in the homes, around the dinner table, around the fire, and it inspired people to be baptized in Jesus' name.

When did your journey of faith start? When did you personally connect with Jesus? When did you take your call to discipleship seriously? These are the basic questions that we must answer as we accompany young people on their journey of faith. If we have not answered these questions for ourselves, then we must step away in prayer to reflect on these. It is your story of faith that inspires. It is that story that points others to God.

## Connecting Youth to the Community of Faith

I grew up in a family that I would call 'culturally Catholic.' What I mean is that we went through the motions of being Catholic without it meaning very much. I received my sacraments when I was supposed to. I attended faith formation regularly. I went to Mass weekly with my Mom and brother. But that was it. We did our obligation and we left. What happened on Sunday had no bearing on my life Monday through Saturday.

Not until God connected me with other youth my age who took their faith seriously. It was three of my peers in particular that brought me to know God. How?

It was in this community that we freely and openly talked about faith, God, and what it meant to be a Christian today. We trusted each other. We failed as Christians together. We triumphed together. It was this community that brought me to intentional discipleship.

As a Church, we must foster this in our young people. Youth ministry plays an essential role in building a community of faith and we need to encourage comprehensive youth ministry in every parish. But youth ministry is not the only way.

Today, as the father of three children, I intentionally surround myself with other families who are striving for holiness and are on similar journeys as I. As much as this nourishes me, more importantly, it exposes my children to other Godly families. It is in this community where I try to replicate for my family what I had as a youth.

The easiest way for me to meet other families like this is through the Sunday Mass experience. We need to create intentional experiences of hospitality and welcome so that no one comes to Mass as an anonymous person.

## Defining the Diverse Call of Vocation

Once we are able to share our stories of faith within the context of a warm and welcoming community, it is at this time that we can begin to more clearly define the call of vocation with our young people.

"'Vocation' has sometimes been presented as an abstract concept, perceived as too far out of the reach of the minds of many... The term 'vocation' has become synonymous with the priesthood and religious life in the culture of the Church. While these are sacred calls that should be celebrated, it is important for young people to know that their vocation is by virtue of their life, and that each person has a responsibility to discern what it is that God calls them to be and to do."

Vocational discernment should be

rooted in the giftings and strengths of our young people. Part of this journey should include examining and naming the gifts youth bring to the Church. Adults and parents play a role in helping young people name those gifts and to translate how they might share that gift with the Church. Although that might be as a priest, deacon, or religious brother or sister, the naming of gifts should also include ways they can serve as lay ministers.

Often, all it takes is for one caring adult to encourage a youth to live out their vocational call as a disciple. If that young person knows Jesus and is connected with the community of faith, then it becomes quite easy for them to say "yes" to their call to serve God and the Church. ■

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**JOHN RINALDO**

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# From the “Kerigma” to the Consecrated Life

## A Vocation Discernment Path

By Sr. ANNA LILIA FRIAS VARGAS

**F**ather Fray José del Refugio Morales, OFM founded the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in 1874, during the religious persecution in Mexico. Our charism is: “Be constructive members through total dedication to Christ, poor and humble, in prayer, sacrifice and apostolic action.” Currently, we are present in thirteen countries and have a great variety of apostolates: education, homes for the elderly and retired, hospitals, Missions ad Gentes, and parish pastoral work.

Four years ago, my beloved Congregation asked me to serve as promoter of vocations for the Province of St. Clare in the United States. During this time I have experienced great joy in being able to observe, up close, in each young person, the call of the ever-present Jesus who says: “Come follow Me.” I have also seen, sadly, how young people receive the call but opt instead to stay with their families, pursue their studies, continue with their lives, in many instances returning to a life tied to material things which will not bring them peace or eternal happiness.

With the help of my sisters, we have formulated a series of activities that help young people discern their vocation and know themselves better regarding the different vocations: matrimony, priesthood, religious life, and committed lay people. These consist of a series of retreats gradually intertwined in such a way that young people begin to understand better the vocation to which she is called.

### Kerigma

The first retreat is called “Kerigma.” It is here where topics of initiation are

shared. These are the “callings” which we have in our lives, beginning with our call to existence, our call to service, our call to develop the gifts which God has “gifted” us with. In this first retreat we focus on the time of conception and the beautiful call to existence; here young people begin to understand how, before they were even born, God began to call them through different pathways.

### Retreat of a Specific Vocation

The second retreat is called “Retreat of a Specific Vocation.” It is here where different vocations are viewed more closely, and people, experts on the topic, share their own personal living-out of their vocation and help young people begin the discernment of their vocation.

### Retreat of Consecrated Life

The last retreat, called “Retreat of Consecrated Life” is for those who have already made a decision to consecrate themselves to the Lord and it is here where, on a more profound level, consecrated life is explained more fully, especially in regard to the charism, mission, and values of our congregation. During this process young women experience an opportunity to spend time with the sisters on what is called “Vocational Get-togethers” where we meet informally to pray, play and eat together monthly. In this way, they will be able to express themselves and externalize their doubts about their vocation.

### Come and See

As a follow-up to this process of discernment we have the “Come and See” program. This is where we open the doors of the convent so that the youth in discernment will be able to live the experience of spending some time with

us and discover what it is that we do in our journey. Finally, we provide personal accompaniment wherein we help them discern their vocation to consecrated life more closely. This accompaniment lasts for at least six months - but one year is preferable. During this time a young woman is presented with a series of vocational worksheets whereon she dwells more profoundly on her life on all levels: human, Christian, family and social. They are, in total, seventeen worksheets accompanied with direct experiences with the Congregation, such as monthly retreats, formation gatherings, experiences in the different apostolates and, of course, interviews every other month... and working on the worksheets. Upon concluding this process, young women can freely apply for entrance to the Congregation.

This time is very important for discerners so that they may have the ability to discern their calling to a religious vocation more clearly and to enter any congregation.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Divine Shepherd who continues to call by name young people who in our day and age need more help in listening to the voice of God, since they find themselves immersed in the noise and distractions of our world today. I invite all vocational promoters to be guides who help youth on their journey of discovering their vocations, so that they, through true discernment will be able to leave everything behind to follow our Lord in whatever vocation God has for them.



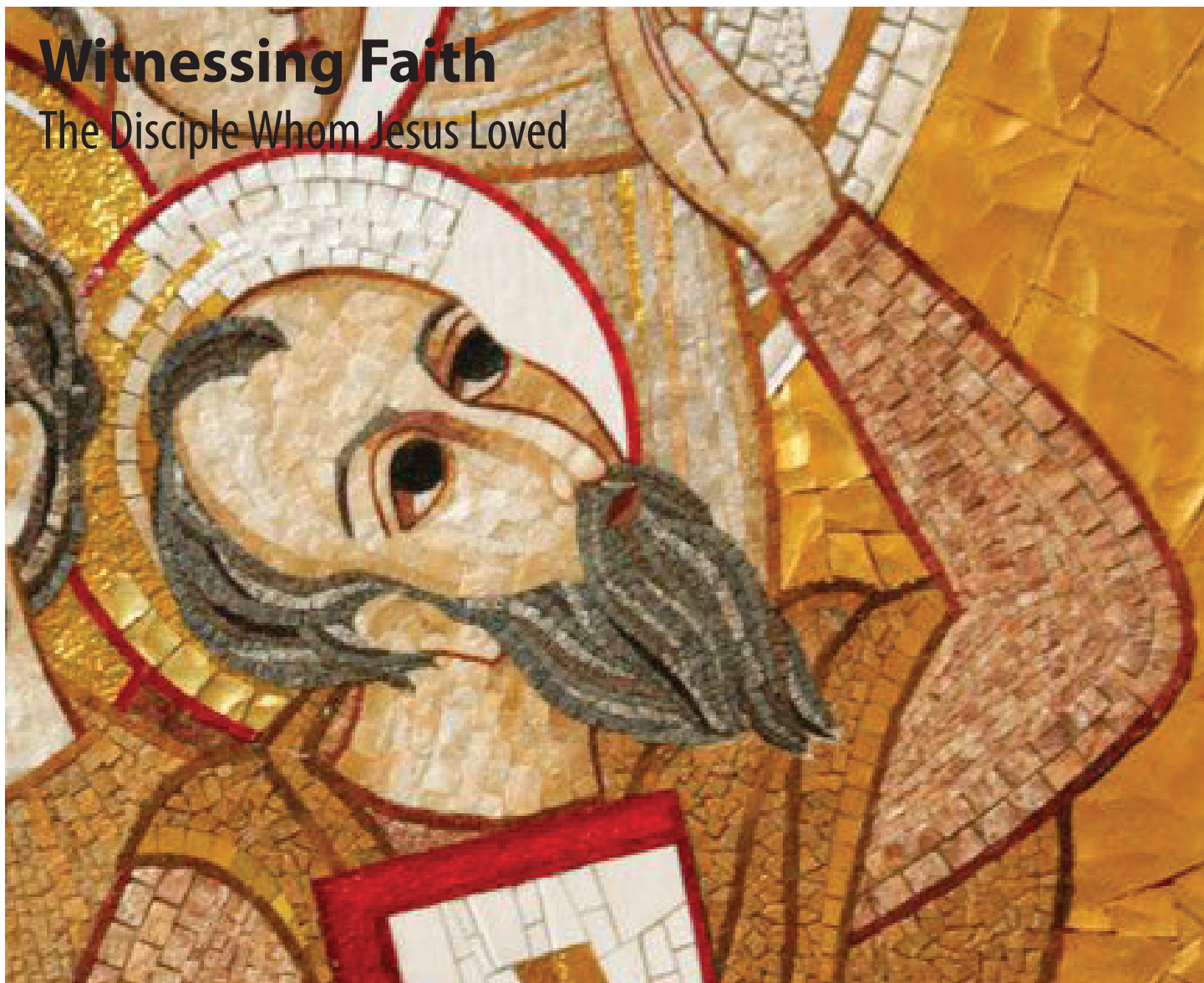
SR. ANNA LILIA FRIAS VARGAS

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# Witnessing Faith

## The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved



By FR. GIUSEPPE DE VIRGILIO, Ph.D.

### Master, Where Do You Live?

The first encounter of two young men with Jesus in the Gospel of John represents a defining moment that demonstrates the dynamic between disciples and the faith (cf. Jn. 1:35-42). The story contains expressive verbs: “fixing his gaze” on the passing Jesus, the Baptist exclaims: “Behold the Lamb of God” (Jn. 1:35). The two disciples begin to “follow” Jesus, after having heard the testimony of John. They receive a question from the Lord: “What are you looking for?” (Jn. 1:38). The disciples ask Jesus, “Master, where do you live?” The Lord’s invitation follows: “Come and see.” For the disciples, a new phase of

life begins that centers on their personal relationship with Christ. For Andrew and John, this unforgettable beginning of their friendship with Jesus is so special that they remember the exact moment in time it begins: four o’clock in the afternoon (Jn. 1:39). Through personal encounters with the Lord, we witness faith.

Witnessing faith involves being welcoming and willing to “remain” in His home. Being disciples means choosing to follow the Master and to share with him the path of salvation.

### The Head On His Chest

Among the disciples of Jesus, a singular place is occupied by a character in the

Gospel of John called in the second section of the Gospel, the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” We find this anonymous figure in six contexts: in the Last Supper (Jn. 13:21-29); in Peter’s denial (Jn. 18:13-27); at Jesus’ crucifixion (Jn. 19:25-27); in the race together with Peter to the empty tomb (Jn. 20:1-10); and in the apparition of the Risen Christ near the lake of Tiberias, where he quickly recognizes the Lord (Jn. 21:1-14); and, finally, in dialogue with Simon Peter (Jn. 21:20-23). The relevance of the “beloved disciple” is a result of his being a “witness of faith.” After having washed the feet of the apostles and taught them that to be a teacher means to become a “servant,” the Lord announces to much commotion the forthcoming betrayal from “one of his own.” The apostles

regard one another in shock, not knowing to whom Jesus was referring. The hour of the Supper also becomes the moment of truth, which imposes the discernment between light and darkness. At the request of Simon Peter, the “beloved disciple” places his head on Jesus’ chest to ask who the traitor is. This most tender gesture will always be remembered as a sign of profound union and fraternity.

## Behold Your Son

The tragic events that upset the group of disciples the night of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus see the “beloved disciple” present in the story of the drama, which culminates at the foot of the cross. The scene of the crucifixion in the Fourth Gospel becomes a sublime moment of revelation of the spiritual motherhood of the Virgin (cf. Jn. 19:25-27). The words of Jesus from the height of the cross constitute a spiritual testament for all believers. “Jesus, seeing his mother and next to her, the disciple whom he loved, said to his mother: ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple welcomed her as his own” (Jn. 19:25-27). In the hour of the crucifixion, the “beloved disciple” becomes “son” of Mary and the grieving Virgin asserts her motherhood over the Church. From this new relationship, the role of the disciple assumes a fundamental ecclesial value.

## He Saw And Believed

In the Resurrection stories, together with Mary Magdalene, the “beloved disciple” accompanies Simon Peter in the race towards the empty tomb (cf. Jn. 20:1-9). Since the first announcement of Jesus’ resurrection, his faith in the Risen Christ. The evangelist notes that the disciple runs faster and arrives before Peter at the tomb, but stops at the entrance without entering. When Simon Peter enters the sepulcher, he sees the bandages and the shroud “rolled aside in a separate place [than at the initial burial].” He is the beloved disciple who “saw and believed,” becoming a witness to an experience of life without precedent. His witness to the physical resurrection is accompanied by

his witness to the faith. Simon Peter and the other disciple return home without displaying any reactions or feelings about what has happened. We grasp the silent role of the beloved disciple, who assumes a revealing function: he grasps the mysterious reality of revelation by seeing with his eyes signs of death, but accepting with his heart the hope of life. Later, it will be Mary Magdalene to recognize the Risen Lord in the garden, while the other disciples will see him in the cenacle.

## It Is The Lord!

The last mention of the loved disciple is in the closing scene of the Gospel of John, where the apparition of the Risen Christ appears on the shores of the Lake of Galilee. This is the same scenario in which the vocational adventure of the disciples began a few years earlier (Lk. 5:1-10, cf. Jn. 21: 1-14). Simon Peter and his companions go out fishing, which lasts for the whole night without a single catch. As dawn approaches, the Risen One appears on the bank without being recognized. From a distance, he invites the fishermen to throw their nets without being discouraged. Having followed his instructions, they obtain a bountiful harvest: “They could no longer pull the net up for the large amount of fish.” Faced with such wonder, the “beloved disciple” declares to Peter: “It is the Lord!” (Jn. 21:7). The testimony of the disciple follows Peter’s generous response; he wraps his garment around his hips and throws himself into the sea.

The symbolic value of this gesture prefigures the “Easter faith” of the head of the apostles, who in the hour of the passion had denied his Master. Now, he “throws himself into the sea” to reach his Lord; it is no longer time to linger before the risen Christ. While in front of the tomb they had not yet understood the Scriptures, now the Scriptures are fulfilled in the presence of the Lord, who was crucified and is now risen near the lake. The story continues to describe Jesus rehabilitating Simon Peter; the apostle who had denied him now confirms his love (Jn. 21:15-19).

## His Testimony Is True

It is interesting to note that in the conclusion of the Gospel the figure of the “beloved disciple” returns, continuing his “testimony” until the Lord returns. This last episode highlights the role of the ecclesial community that commemorates the two witnesses of the Christian faith, Peter and John. Until the coming of the Risen One, he is the beloved disciple to “stay.” He is the “witness of love” to the end. He is the one who remained on the breast of Jesus, who witnessed the denial of Peter, who was elected “son” at the cross. Together, with the Sorrowful Mother, he believed in front of the empty tomb, and he recognized Jesus on the shore of the lake and bears witness to the truthfulness of the Mystery Incarnate. The message deriving from this biblical figure is clear: Christian love implies the personal and courageous witness of faith. Even if the “beloved disciple” remains anonymous, his “witness presence” speaks with the credibility of life. ■

*Translated from Italian by Stephan Llerena*



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"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."

1 Peter 4:10



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1 Sam 16: 1-13

# “The Lord Looks into the Heart”

## God’s Discernment Method

By SR. EMILY BEATA MARSH, FSP

**T**his colorful, vivacious passage from the first book of the prophet Samuel invites us to consider the call of King David. To be honest, I have never prayed very much with the call of David up to now. I always appreciate hearing the story when it comes up as the first reading in the liturgy every other year or so, but I have never felt drawn to pray with it. Praying with it in preparation for this Lectio Divina, however, I noticed three elements that converge to speak quite powerfully about how God calls and what God’s way of calling says about God, about us, and about our response. These elements are illustrated in three verses that form sort of a golden thread running through the whole passage: “...you are to anoint for me the one I point out to you” (v. 3); “God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart” (v. 7); and “...the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David” (v. 13).

“You are to anoint for me the one I point out to you.” Imagine this in a modern-day context. A college admissions officer from Harvard goes to a small town, with paperwork for this year’s last available slot for the university. Or someone from the human resources department of Google shows up in the same small town to hire someone for a high-ranking, well-paying position. Now imagine their boss saying to them, “Don’t choose the person you think is the most qualified or the best for the position. I will tell you whom to choose and what to do. Choose the person whom I point out to you.”

We might think that this college admissions officer or the person from human resources were crazy for not looking at the candidates’ qualifications, accomplishments, skills, and talents. And they would be! But this helps us to see that God’s “checklist” for calling someone is not even

on the same plane as our checklist for calling, choosing, or hiring someone. In the first place, God does not hire us to do a job; he calls us to belong to him. And in second place, we do not earn a call from God; God calls us simply and solely because he loves us.

This is exactly what our second verse expresses: “God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart.” We can only see the appearance. But God sees the heart. And in a certain sense, God can only see the heart. Appearances do not exist for him. This should prompt us to ask for two graces in the discernment of our vocation. First, to begin seeing as God sees—that is, to see the heart. To see the heart of the people around us, but also to see to the heart of our discernment, of the situations that we’re involved in, of the events that occur in our lives, and to see the heart of God. Second, we can ask God to reveal our own heart to us. He sees it more clearly and more truly than we do, and he wants to reveal it to us.

“The spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.” This is another verse worth imagining. What does it feel like when the wind rushes upon us? We are surprised, refreshed, perhaps taken aback, perhaps pleased with the freshness and the beauty of nature. What does it feel like when the Spirit of the Lord rushes upon us? He surprises us, refreshes and renews us, at times interrupts us or takes us aback, and brings us beauty, newness, freshness, and joy. And this happens. It is real. The Spirit of the Lord did not rush only upon David, or John the Baptist, or Mary. The Spirit of the Lord rushed upon us in our Baptism and in our Confirmation, and the Spirit of the Lord rushes upon us in daily moments when we need his enlightenment, or courage, or strength in a particular way.

The light that we can draw from this is to believe in the Lord’s movement in our lives.

The word “rushes” is important, because it speaks of a sudden movement. Of course, the Lord is always working in our lives. He is always pouring a continuous flow of grace into our beings. But he also works in little bursts and spurts. At the right moment, the right grace will come. The Spirit of the Lord will rush upon us in a way we could not have predicted nor expected. We can believe in this. In any situation, and in a particular way with regard to our discernment, we can trust in these spurts of grace from the Lord.

The passage of the call of King David guides us to prayer and to discernment in a particular way. What do I believe about my call? Do I believe that God called me because I have certain gifts or talents? Or do I believe that He calls me because he has a desire for a special relationship with me? What do I desire to believe about my call? Let us ask King David to intercede for us as we make our journey of discernment, a journey that is not so much about “figuring out” what God has in mind for our lives, but is more about trusting in God’s “method.” And the method of God is not like ours, for we “see the appearance. But the LORD looks into the heart.”

*Lord, look into my heart. Give me your eyes and help me to see into your heart as well. Give me your heart as I look at my discernment, at others, at the world. Rush upon me and fill me with the joy of responding to you. Amen. ■*



SR. EMILY BEATA MARSH, FSP

Professed her final vows in June 2018. Sister Emily is currently the National Vocation Director for the Daughters of St. Paul.

# Glorifying God

## A "Can Do Attitude"



Photo by Stephen Leonard

By MARIO M. DIWA

When the priest reads the Gospel in a Sunday mass, "A reading from the holy Gospel according to..." we, the faithful, respond, 'Glory to you, oh Lord,' while simultaneously making the sign of the cross on our forehead, lips and heart. The cross is the sign of Jesus. The cross is a positive sign. Jesus wants us to live in hope, faith, love, plenty, peace, joy, victory. When He lived as human on this earth, He made Himself a role model on how to live life that would glorify God. He taught us to be positive in thoughts, words, feelings and actions.

### Positive Thoughts

I cannot. It is impossible. It's not doable. These are the popular lines of

negative thinkers. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." A believer who knows this has a "can do attitude." He believes that he can be a productive servant to the church, to the community and to humanity. There may be physical hindrances or natural obstacles to refrain him from serving or doing but if God really wants to use him for His purpose, God will provide the strength to bring into fruition his beneficial dreams for himself and others. A person with a positive thought is like God's assistant who continues to accomplish the many beautiful things God has intended His children to enjoy. Many of the good things that people enjoy today are products of positive thoughts. Product of the minds empowered by God because God loves us so much that He likes His children to be in comfort. Minds that are negative

do not contribute to a successful plan of God. They receive good thoughts but they negate them right away because they think that it is so difficult to accomplish them by themselves, forgetting the idea or discounting the belief that in everything we do, God helps, God assists, God contributes, and God strengthens us.

### Positive Words

Many human conflicts at home, at work, or simply anywhere arise from misunderstood, unpleasant, nasty words but "gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body" (Proverbs 16:24). Some parents are guilty of raising their children in negative or inappropriate words. Thus making them grow with low self-esteem and bitter about life and



wonder later why. Proverbs 18:21 declares that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue. And those who love it will eat its fruit." Positive words are motivating, inspiring. At home, they strengthen the family bond. If used at work, they encourage workers to be more productive. They make people smile when they hear them. They make you earn more respect points when you always utter them anywhere. So, if we believe in Christ and claim to be Christians, let us be careful of what comes out of our mouth because it is such that defiles a man.

## Positive Heart

Jesus showed in many cases, while on earth, how to glorify God by having a positive heart. He demonstrated His positive heart by being compassionate and merciful in many instances. He fed the more than 5,000 people who were with Him for three days before sending them away because He did not want them to faint on the way. He cleansed the leper who begged for his mercy. He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were demon-possessed. Of his one hundred sheep, He sought the missing one. Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man. He brought to life Lazarus. He forgave Peter who denied Him three times. He promised salvation to one of the thieves hanging on the cross. God will be so glorified if He sees His children compassionate and merciful to his brethren. It doesn't sound easy but with the spirit of God dwelling in us, these things God wants us to emulate look do-able.

## Positive Action

The greatest positive action ever recorded in the history was when God came in human form to save us and die for our sins. God never required any of His children to duplicate this act. All He asked for was to die from our sins in order to reconcile with God. Refraining from doing anything that will not please God is admirable. Helping the needy is one outstanding advocacy. Bringing the children of God close to the church is outstanding. Evangelizing either through our way of life or through spreading the world

literally is commendable. Encouraging the depressed, defending the oppressed, feeding the hungry, healing the wounded, lighting those in the dark, motivating the hopeless, keeping company the lonely, guiding the blind and misguided, sharing your blessings, caring for the unwanted. These are positive actions worth doing and truly glorify God.

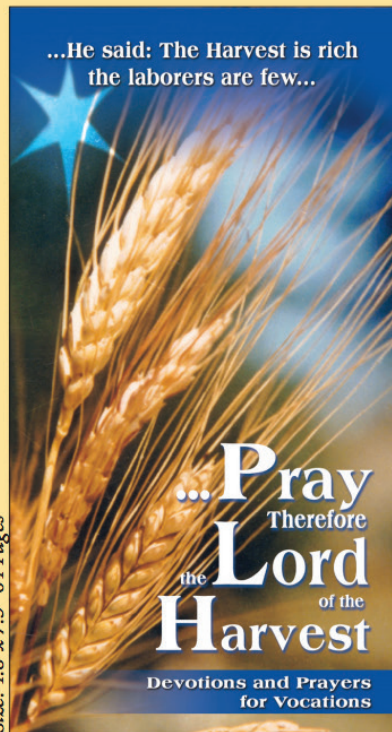
In summary, if an individual, whether young or old, rich or poor, man or woman, working or studying, has a positive or sound mind which comes from above, he/she remains more open to the plan of God and can find out more easily his/her true purpose or mission in life. In other words, a positive attitude helps one to live more intensely one's own faith, to discern more readily the will of God and to live joyfully one's own vocation in the Church and in the world. The education to grow with a positive attitude thus becomes an important challenge for parents, teachers, catechists and pastors. The bible is the best book of instructions to learn why positivity is tantamount to divinity or glory. ■



**MARIO M. DIWA**

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# Adoration

## The Privilege Place of Discernment



By Sr. CLARE MATTHIAS, CFR

**A**doration of the Blessed Sacrament features largely in the discernment of many priests and religious. The four postulants I live with are no exception.

For Veronica, it was during a led time of adoration one evening at her Catholic college that she heard our Lord invite her to be a sister. So astonishing was the idea that Veronica actually fled the chapel in order to flee the summons. The famous poem “Hound of Heaven” comes to mind! She continued to tarry and resist right through the school years’ end until the summer, when she found herself on a pilgrimage to Poland for World Youth Day. In a wall-to-wall crowd of pilgrims she found herself face-to-face with the outgoing and the incoming vocation director of the CFR Sisters. In that moment, she felt the Lord saying to her, “I will pursue you to the ends

of the earth.” Like Francis Thompson’s protagonist, Veronica could not outrun the pursuer of her soul, try as she might.

Sarah entered the convent in September with Veronica. For her, it was during World Youth Day in Madrid (2011) – also during adoration – that she felt an interior call to a deeper, spousal intimacy with Jesus. She was visiting the English-speaking catechetical site where adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was happening. Stationed in the very back of the chapel, Sarah noticed a religious sister way up front near the altar. It seemed to Sarah that she understood in that moment something of the relationship between the sister and the Lord. He was giving Himself to her and she was giving herself to Him. The gift was mutual and it was total; she knew this intuitively; and Sarah sensed that this could be the kind of relationship she was called to – the vocation she was meant for. It is this moment that Sarah points back to as the first whis-

perings of a call.

Christine is a postulant in our community as well. Her story has a similar thread. One day she stopped into a church on her way to work. As she knelt in the empty church alone with the Lord hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, she asked God what His will was for her life. She received an immediate, interior sense that she had a religious vocation. This was something she had never given thought to before -- ever. So startling was this idea that she thought, “Let me try again.” When the answer didn’t change, she got up and left the church, stunned.

Hailey, also a postulant in our community, likewise experienced the call to consecration in her times of adoration. As a cadet at the Army’s military academy at West Point, Hailey discovered Eucharistic adoration happening every Wednesday at the chapel on post. Busy as the schedule of a cadet may be, Hailey made time for ado-



ration. It was there, in the presence of the Lord, that her fears about pursuing her vocation were vanquished and she found the courage to leave the academy and say “Yes” to God’s invitation.

In the interior drama of discernment, you need a place to go and wrestle it out. You need a person to turn to for answers to your questions. If you want to know your parents’ dream for your life, go over to their house, sit down at the kitchen table and over a cup of coffee, ask them. If you want to know what society at large wants you to do with your limited years, turn on the television, surf social media, get a steady diet of the nightly news, and the societal “ideals” will be made quite clear. If you want to know your favorite professor’s opinion on the best way to spend your life, sign up for one of her office hour slots, and she’ll happily advise you. But if it’s God’s will you want to know, if it is your Father in Heaven whom you want to hear out, then go to Him. Go to God present in the Blessed Sacrament and ask Him. Go and listen to Him. Go and sit quietly in His presence letting Him love you, letting Him heal you, letting Him teach you everything you need to know.

It is astonishing to realize that every Catholic church harbors the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. Whether your church has adoration of the Blessed Sacrament or not, Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, is within all the tabernacles of the world. What do you think He’s doing there - locked away for safekeeping like some expensive heirloom? No. He is there for you, for your benefit, not His.

Jesus Christ is in the tabernacle waiting. He is at your disposal. Do you have a good friend that always picks up, who never lets your call go to voicemail because it’s you? That’s Jesus. You know that teacher who always has his office door open so you can pop in with a question? That’s Jesus.

In the discernment process it is common to feel like the waiting is endless; to feel that you are asking all the right questions and getting no clear answers; to feel that God is silent and that the answer to the riddle of your life is eluding you. Spend time alone

with Jesus in the silence of the church.

Time spent in adoration helps you to learn who you are truly, in His eyes. When Saint Francis prayed he could go all night with the simple query, “Who are You oh God and who am I?” This is a good question to bring with you into the adoration chapel. Ever so slowly you too will come to realize, as Saint Francis did, that God is love and you are beloved.

Sure, you came to adoration to get an answer to a question. But God wants to give you so much more. He wants to give you your identity. He wants to draw you into a relationship. He wants to heal you from your wounds. He wants His love to form you and to transform you. And yes, He wants to answer that question about your vocation too. But only after the knowledge of God’s love has seeped deeply into your heart and soul, into your very marrow, will you be ready for the answer.

Once you can say with Saint John “I have come to know and believe in the love God has for me,” there is nothing you wouldn’t do for Him. This is the nature of love. The lover does the will of the beloved.

Once you decide to spend more time in adoration, you may be asking “What exactly does one do for an hour in the quiet presence of the Lord?” Here are some helpful hints:

1. When you enter the chapel, make an act of humility and adoration to Our Lord Jesus Christ. If exposition is happening (i.e. the Host is displayed in the monstrance), genuflect on both knees if you are able. If the Lord is in the tabernacle, but not in the monstrance, it is customary to genuflect on one knee.
2. Start your time of prayer with a clear beginning. The prayer of Saint Francis is a good beginning. You have not come to the chapel to sit and think, but to sit and pray. This time is time spent with Him.

We adore You  
most Holy Lord, Jesus Christ,

here and in all your church  
throughout the world  
and we bless you  
because by your Holy Cross  
you have redeemed the world.

3. Next, let the Holy Spirit lead the prayer. In other words, it’s fine to follow interior promptings and inspirations as you spend this time with the Lord. Perhaps you will pour out your heart as one friend does to another. Perhaps you will pray with the Bible. Perhaps you will sit there in His presence and let Him look at you, while you look at Him. There is no right or wrong way to spend your time with God. ■
4. Make a good ending to your prayer time. Perhaps you will be inclined to make an offering of yourself to God. The Prayer of St. Charles de Foucauld is a wonderful example of such a prayer.

My Father,  
I abandon myself into Your hands;  
do with me what You will.  
Whatever You may do, I thank You;  
I am ready for all, I accept all.  
Let only Your will be done in me,  
and in all Your creatures.  
I wish no more than this, O Lord.  
Into Your hands I commend my soul;  
I offer it to You  
with all the love of my heart,  
for I love You, Lord,  
and so need to give myself,  
to surrender myself into Your hands,  
without reserve,  
and with boundless confidence,  
for You are my Father. Amen.  
-Fr. Charles de Foucauld



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# Exercise is Good, But Don't Exercise Poor Judgment

## You Are Not a Mistake That You Make



Photo by Warren Wong

By DR. BRUCE L. THIESSEN, PH.D.

Exercising poor judgment can range from ordering the wrong item at a restaurant, to making a decision that has devastating and enduring effects on your life, or the lives of others, for an entire lifetime. We've all made relatively inconsequential decisions in which we've exercised poor judgment. Additionally, more people than you or I may realize, have likely also exercised poor judgment that led to disastrous consequences. I see some of those individuals in my practice as a clinical psychologist, on a daily basis. Many inmate/patients of mine experience deep regret, and, often genuine remorse for their actions, yet they continue to pay for poor judgment by the daily reality of having lost their freedom, be it for a few years, many years, or life, without the possibility of parole. Believe it or not, some of these inmate/patients have good hearts, and yes, people with good hearts, can make bad decisions, and they can exer-

cise poor judgment. Sometimes it can happen in one's youth, when the illusion that nothing can stop or harm a person so often serves as a script for behavior that can lead to enduring consequences. Sometimes it happens under the influence of drugs, alcohol, peer pressure, or all of these combined. It could happen under the influence of a mental health disorder, such as Bipolar Disorder. It could simply happen under the influence of human nature. We are, as humans, by nature, prone to making poor judgments.

### You Are Not The Sum Total of Your Failures

Even the Apostle Paul was not immune, as is indicated by the statement, "That which I would not, that do I do (Romans 7:19)." In a sense, we are all imprisoned by our natures as wonderfully created, but, seriously flawed, vessels. We all have a dark side, and none of us are beyond succumbing to its pressure in

ways that could range from problematic to devastating in its destructive capacity.

The trickiest part of rising above our poor judgments is to own them, and to learn from our mistakes, without allowing them to define who we are. You are not a mistake that you made. You are not the sum total of your failures. You are a child of God. Yet, I have witnessed inmate/patients, even those who claim to be washed by the blood of the lamb, who suffer, needlessly from tormenting feelings of guilt and shame. They believe that, inwardly, they are monsters, irredeemable, and hopelessly lost. I get to read their jackets, and by all accounts, some are monsters. But one does not become a monster by being oneself, but by running from oneself. Becoming evil, involves abandoning the person you were meant to be, and that you are created to be. In the process, you become so covered in mud, and you look like mud itself, to others, and perhaps to yourself. So you treat yourself like the mud



you believe yourself to be, and because you are covered in mud, the whole world looks like mud to you.

That kind of mud can't be washed away with water. It is the type of mud that requires the blood to wash it away. It is a spiritual cleansing, based on atonement. It happens when you become a new creature, in Christ. But, unless you believe that you are redeemable, the fact that you are redeemed, will not make a difference at all in the way you see yourself, and in the way you live your life.

## Self-image and "Self-vation"

You don't need to be saved from your self, though your self, is not perfect. Your self is beautiful. You were "fearfully and wonderfully made," in the image of the creator of the universe. Rather, you need to be saved from sacrificing your self, your beautiful self, to your self-destructive impulses, which prompt you to engage in the wrong type of exercise, the exercise of poor judgment. Begin to see yourself as God sees you, as perfect, and

pure, and innocent, and you will avoid making the sorts of self-disaffirming decisions that wreak havoc in your life, and in the lives of those with whom you interact.

One of the signs that theology has become unbalanced is that the human psyche of members of church communities are unbalanced. When theological trends move too far from the notion that we are created in God's image, and when our humanness is defined, exclusively according to our fallen natures, the children of God will begin to break down, psychologically, from a host of psychological disorders, many of which, have their origins in subjective guilt, shame, and the sense of despair that accompanies it.

So mental health practitioners must work, hand in hand, on an interdisciplinary basis, with those persons of the cloth, divinely appointed with the task of shepherding the flock to preserve the truth. The truth, be it psychological or spiritual in nature, and the two dimen-

sions are, by nature, intertwined, will set us free. Once we are free, we must use our freedom to engage in the right forms of exercise, and to avoid exercising poor judgment. You can't control past behavior. You can only learn from it, rise above it, and allow yourself to be redeemed, in order to serve a higher purpose. Now act like you are free, according to a free gift that you cannot possibly earn, be free to follow the advice I also give to myself: Exercise positive mental health and spiritual habits. Don't exercise poor judgment. That won't do. And I won't exercise it, when I exercise with you. ■



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Known by patients as Dr. B.L.T. is a Christ-centered psychologist, and a singer/songwriter. He presently works as a clinical psychologist for the California Department of Corrections.

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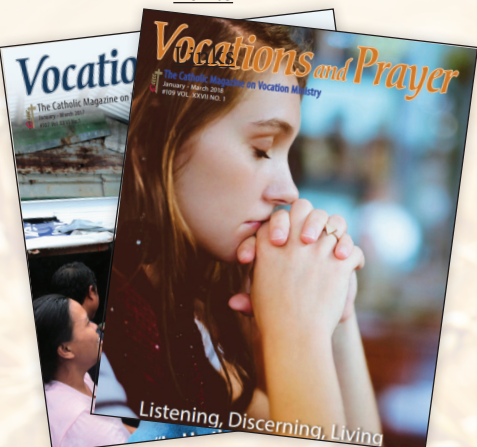
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## USA



## Second Mini Congress for Altar Servers

*"Called to Stay with Him"*

In collaboration with the Association of Altar Servers Parish Coordinators, the Rogate Center, under the leadership of Fr. Rene Panlasigui, RCJ, organized the Second Mini Congress for Altar Servers and Parents last July. Over 600 hundred attendants convened at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church in Reseda, California and participated in workshops and games promoting a culture of vocations among youth.

Bishop Joseph V. Brennan, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, presided over the Eucharistic celebration and encouraged altar servers to do their best in serving the Lord. The theme for this year's congress, "Called to Stay with Him," focused on the altar servers' spiritual growth. Being an altar server leads youth to have a closer encounter with Jesus.



## ITALY



## Third Vatican Conference on Impact Investing

*"Scaling Investment in Service of Integral Human Development"*

The Third Vatican Conference on Impact Investing took place from July 8-11, 2018 in Rome. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and Catholic Relief Services invited Catholic leaders and impact investing experts from around the world to "share and evaluate blended finance models and investable vehicles to address systemic challenges of great importance to both the Catholic Church and the global community: Climate Change, Health, Migrants and Refugees, and Youth Unemployment."

In light of Pope Francis' vision of "putting the economy at the services of peoples," the conference convened prestigious panelists covering topics ranging from "Deploying Capital for Impact at the Base of the Pyramid," "Scaling Health Care Access," "Creating Jobs for Low-Income Youth" to "Migrants and Refugees - Catalyzing Entrepreneurship," "Leveraging Private Capital to Maximize Development," and "Advice and Lessons Learned about Building an Impact Portfolio."

For more information on the Vatican Impact Investing Conference, please visit [www.viiconference.org](http://www.viiconference.org).

## MEXICO



## The Axolotl's Least Expected Saviors

### The Sisters of Immaculate Health

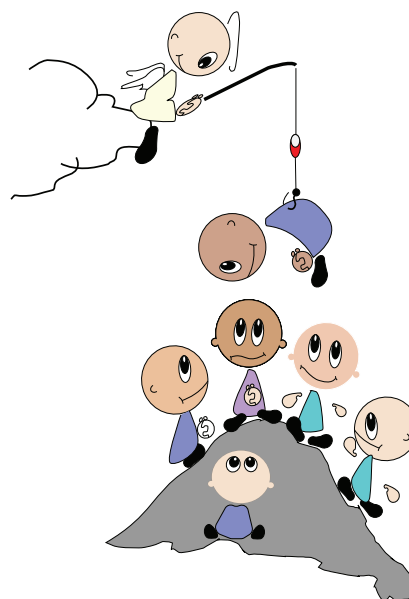
The Sisters of Immaculate Health are bringing from the brinks of extinction the axolotl, an emblematic Mexican salamander whose natural habitat, lake Patzcuaro, is being decimated by environmental pollution. The sisters pioneered a conservation breeding program about thirty years ago.

According to a report by the BBC, in partnership with UK-based Chester Zoo and the Universidad Michoacana, the sisters' years of experience in breeding the axolotl, might eventual help scientists to save this mystic animal capable of regenerating its limbs and brains. The sisters produce a natural cough syrup, which key ingredient is the axolotl, but it has not hurt the species.



## CORNER MESSAGE

## Chosen By God

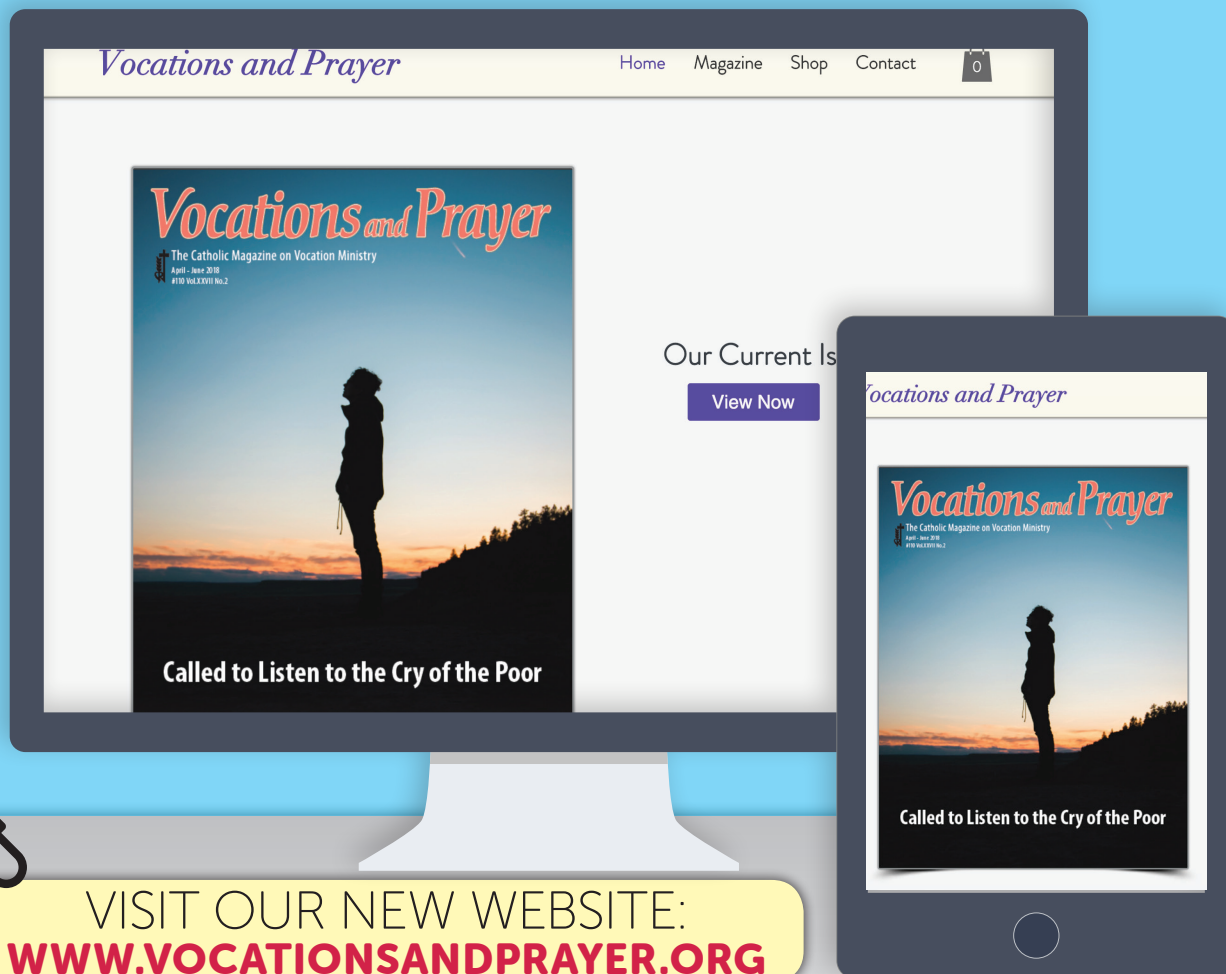


Inspired by Sister Maria Rosa Guerrini



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