

Vocations and Prayer



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**“The Church,
Mother of Vocations”**

53rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations



Editorial

Vocations Today

3

Did the Womb of the Church Become Barren?

Prayer fertilizes the womb of the Church and makes it fruitful.
Fr. Antonio Fiorenza, RCJ

Special Section

53rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations**The Church, Mother of Vocations**

4

Message of Pope Francis for the 53rd World day of Prayer for Vocations
The motherhood of the Church finds its expression in prayer.

Called to Live for God's People

6

A Reflection on Pope Francis' Message for the 53rd WDPV

Those in ordained ministry and consecrated life are messengers of mercy.
Fr. William Reiser, SJ

"Smelling Like the Sheep"

9

Priesthood and Ministry in the Mind & Heart of Pope Francis

Ten main themes emerging from Pope Francis's teaching.
Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB

Interview

Priests are the Primary Vocation Directors in their Parishes

11

A Conversation with Bishop of Belleville, Illinois, Edward K. Braxton

Parish priests are urged to pray and speak about vocations.
Pamela Selbert

Vocations Spotlight

At the Service of the Community

14

The Permanent Diaconate

Deacons are called to be sacramental icons of Christ.
Deacon Guillermo Rodríguez

HĀ

21

The Breath of Life in a Vocation

The only source of the breath of life is Akua (God).
Brother Adam Becerra, FSP

Vocations Director's Corner

23

Are You Looking for Your Vocation?

There is a Secret

Prayer and charity are the way to discern your vocation.
Fr. René Panlasigui, RCJ

Bible

"Go, I send you..."

24

The Symbols of Discipleship in the Gospel

Five symbols to outline the mission of the disciple.
Fr. Giuseppe De Virgilio

Spirituality

The Sacrament of Confession

26

A Privileged Moment to Experience God's Mercy

Every confessor must accept the faithful as the father in the parable of the prodigal son.
Fr. John Bruno, RCJ, VF

Lectio Divina: Luke 15

28

"The parables of the Lost"

We need to know ourselves, to know where we are lost.
Sr. Emily Beata Marsh, FSP

Vocations Witness

Called to be Heroes of Mercy

29

The Ministry of Catholic Sisters During the Civil War

For religious sisters, the Civil War was the turning point for social acceptance.
Sr. Lou Ella Hickman, IWBS

News

USA• **40 Hours Devotion**

31

Adoration for Vocations

• **FOCUS 11 Project**

A "Vocations Field Trip"

Latin America• **Migrantes Hoy**

Migrants Today

Corner Message:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

Inspired by Sr. Maria Rosa Guerrini

Insert:

Holy Hours by Fr. Peter Quinto, RCJ



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Vocations Today

Did the Womb of the Church Become Barren?

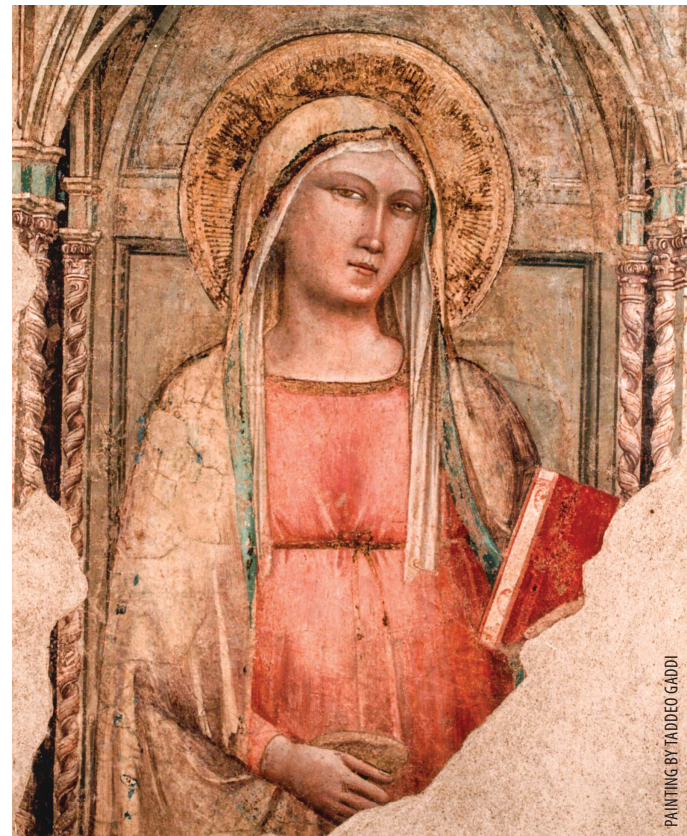
By Fr. ANTONIO FIORENZA, RCJ

The message of the Pope for the 53rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations emphasizes the connection between the Church and vocations. All vocations are born and raised within the Church and exist in her and for her. For this reason, the Church is the Mother of Vocations.

In a recent meeting in the Vatican (February 1, 2016) with about 5,000 men and women members of religious orders and institutes of consecrated life, Pope Francis expressed his concern about the drastic decline of vocations and posed a poignant question: "Why has the womb of consecrated life become so barren?" and then he added: "We must pray. We must pray tirelessly!"

Pope Francis's alarming plea helps us understand the relevance and the original spirit of World Day of Prayer for Vocations. It presupposes a total involvement of the whole Church into one, grand supplication to the Lord of the Harvest for the gift of vocations to priesthood and consecrated life. It is not limited to an occasional supplication such as in the World Day of Prayer for Vocations or other celebrations in the Liturgical Year. On the contrary, prayer for vocations needs to be an integral part of the prayer-life of every Christian community and of the consciousness of every baptized person, who is matured in faith. In fact, vocations to priesthood and consecrated life are essential to the life and the mission of the Church.

I am fully aware that prayer is not the only answer to the vocation problem. This issue is much more complex. It embraces multiple aspects of today's social and ecclesial realities, demanding a careful analysis of the situation, accurately discerning the signs of times, and identifying a personalized pedagogical journey for young people in our communities. This work belongs to the pastoral care for vocations, which drawing its inspiration from the wisdom of the Gospel (see Mt 9: 35-38; Lk: 10: 1-2) is rooted in prayer. "Vocations are from above and a gift from God, without prayer vocations will not come," admonished St. Hannibal Maria Di Francia (1851-1927), prophet of modern pastoral care of vocations.



PAINTING BY TADDEO GADDI

Did the womb of the Church become barren?

Prayer makes the "womb" of the Church fruitful and vocationally fertile.

Prayer uttered with passion and sincerity touches God's heart. It nourishes the hope, heightens the awareness of the importance of vocations, and propels action to promote the rebirth of the desire to work in the Lord's vineyard. Therefore, the prayer of the workers of the Harvest becomes increasingly a declaration of personal willingness: "Here I am Lord, send me!" ■



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The Church, Mother of Vocations

Message of Pope Francis for the 53rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is my great hope that, during the course of this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, all the baptized may experience the joy of belonging to the Church and rediscover that the Christian vocation, just like every particular vocation, is born from within the People of God, and is a gift of divine mercy. The Church is the house of mercy, and it is the “soil” where vocations take root, mature and bear fruit.

For this reason, on the occasion of the 53rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I invite all of you to reflect upon the apostolic community, and to give thanks for the role of the community in each person’s vocational journey. In the Bull of Indiction for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, I recalled the words of the venerable Saint Bede, describing the call of Saint Matthew: “*Miserando atque eligendo*” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 8). The Lord’s merciful action forgives our sins

and opens us to the new life which takes shape in the call to discipleship and mission. Each vocation in the Church has its origin in the compassionate gaze of Jesus. Conversion and vocation are two sides of the same coin, and continually remain interconnected throughout the whole of the missionary disciple’s life.

Blessed Paul VI, in his exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, described various steps in the process of evangelisation. One of these steps is belonging to the Christian community (cf. no. 23), that communion from which we first received the witness of faith and the clear proclamation of the Lord’s mercy. This incorporation into the Christian community brings with it all the richness of ecclesial life, particularly the sacraments. Indeed, the Church is not only a place in which we believe, but it is also an object of our faith; it is for this reason that we profess in the Credo: “I believe in the Church.”

The call of God comes to us by means

of a mediation which is communal. God calls us to become a part of the Church and, after we have reached a certain maturity within it, he bestows on us a specific vocation. The vocational journey is undertaken together with the brothers and sisters whom the Lord has given to us: it is a con-vocation. The ecclesial dynamism of the call is an antidote to indifference and to individualism. It establishes the communion in which indifference is vanquished by love, because it demands that we go beyond ourselves and place our lives at the service of God’s plan, embracing the historical circumstances of his holy people.

On this day dedicated to prayer for vocations, I urge all the faithful to assume their responsibility for the care and discernment of vocations. When the Apostles sought someone to take the place of Judas Iscariot, Saint Peter brought together one hundred and twenty of the brethren (cf. Acts 1:15); and in order to chose seven deacons, a group of disciples

was gathered (cf. 6:2). Saint Paul gave Titus specific criteria for the selection of presbyters (cf. Titus 1:5-9). Still today, the Christian community is always present in the discernment of vocations, in their formation and in their perseverance (cf. Apost. Ex. Evangelii Gaudium, 107).

Vocations are born within the Church. From the moment a vocation begins to become evident, it is necessary to have an adequate “sense” of the Church. No one is called exclusively for a particular region, or for a group or for an ecclesial movement, but rather for the Church and for the world. “A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God’s holy and faithful people for the good of all” (ibid., 130). In responding to God’s call, young people see their own ecclesial horizon expand; they are able to consider various charisms and to undertake a more objective discernment. In this way, the community becomes the home and the family where vocations are born. Candidates gratefully contemplate this mediation of the community as an essential element for their future. They learn to know and to love their brothers and sisters who pursue paths different from their own; and these bonds strengthen in everyone the communion which they share.

Vocations grow within the Church. In the course of formation, candidates for various vocations need to grow in their knowledge of the ecclesial community, overcoming the limited perspectives that we all have at the beginning. To that end, it is helpful to undertake some apostolic experience together with other members of the community, for example: in the company of a good catechist, to communicate the Christian message; together with a religious community, to experience the evangelisation of the peripheries sharing in the life of the cloister, to discover the treasure of contemplation; in contact with missionaries, to know more closely the mission ad gentes; and in the company of diocesan priests, to deepen one’s experience of pastoral life in the parish and in the diocese. For those who are already in formation, the ecclesial community

always remains the fundamental formational environment, towards which one should feel a sense of gratitude.

Vocations are sustained by the Church. After definitive commitment, our vocational journey within the Church does not come to an end, but it continues in our willingness to serve, our perseverance and our ongoing formation. The one who has consecrated his life to the Lord is willing to serve the Church wherever it has need. The mission of Paul and Barnabas is a good example of this readiness to serve the Church. Sent on mission by the Holy Spirit and by the community of Antioch (cf. Acts 13, 1-4), they returned to that same community and described what the Lord had worked through them (cf. 14: 27). Missionaries are accompanied and sustained by the Christian community, which always remains a vital point of reference, just as a visible homeland offers security to all who are on pilgrimage towards eternal life.

Among those involved in pastoral activity, priests are especially important. In their ministry, they fulfill the words of Jesus, who said: “I am the gate of the sheepfold [...] I am the good shepherd” (Jn 10: 7, 11). The pastoral care of vocations is a fundamental part of their ministry. Priests accompany those who are discerning a vocation, as well as those who have already dedicated their lives to the service of God and of the community.

All the faithful are called to appreciate the ecclesial dynamism of vocations, so that communities of faith can become, after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, like a mother’s womb which welcomes the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1: 35-38). The motherhood of the Church finds expression in constant prayer for vocations and in the work of educating and accompanying all those who perceive God’s call. This motherhood is also expressed through a careful selection of candidates for the ordained ministry and for the consecrated life. Finally, the Church is the mother of vocations in her continual support of those who have dedicated their lives to the service of others.

We ask the Lord to grant to all those who are on a vocational journey a deep sense of belonging to the Church; and that the Holy Spirit may strengthen among Pastors, and all of the faithful, a deeper sense of communion, discernment and spiritual fatherhood and motherhood.

From the Vatican, 29 November 2015 ■

Franciscus

*Father of mercy, who gave
your Son for our salvation and
who strengthens us always with
the gifts of your Spirit, grant us
Christian communities which
are alive, fervent and joyous,
which are fountains of fraternal
life, and which nurture in the
young the desire to consecrate
themselves to you and to
the work of evangelisation.
Sustain these communities
in their commitment to
offer appropriate vocational
catechesis and ways of
proceeding towards each
one’s particular consecration.
Grant the wisdom needed for
vocational discernment, so that
in all things the greatness of
your merciful love may shine
forth. May Mary, Mother and
guide of Jesus, intercede for
each Christian community, so
that, made fruitful by the Holy
Spirit, it may be a source of
true vocations for the service
of the holy People of God.*

Called to Live for God's People

A Reflection on Pope Francis' Message for the 53rd WDPV

By Fr. WILLIAM REISER, SJ

In his prepared address to the clergy, religious and seminarians of Uganda last November, Pope Francis wrote: "May we never forget that our 'yes' to Jesus is a 'yes' to his people. Our doors, the doors of our churches, but above all the doors of our hearts, must constantly be open to God's people, our people." And in Kenya the Holy Father told the seminarians, religious and clergy that they should never stop weeping: "When priests and religious no longer weep, something is wrong. We need to weep for our infidelity, to weep for all the pain in our world, to weep for all those people who are cast aside, to weep for the elderly who are abandoned, for children who are killed, for the things we don't understand." For Francis, the connection between Jesus and his people is intimate, profound—a mys-

tery of faith. Living that mystery is what energizes our vocation, even as it often brings us to tears. We carry the world—God's people—inside of us. But what does carrying that world do to us, and what response in us is it likely to elicit?

A lesson from Cana

As I was orienting myself to this year's message, a gospel curiosity caught my attention. Why does the Gospel of John relate, as the first miraculous sign that Jesus works, the scene of the wedding feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-11)? For the Gospel of Matthew, the first miracle Jesus performs is the healing of a leper (Mt 8:1-4); the story comes right after the three chapters that make up Jesus' teaching on the mountain. For the Gospel of Mark, the first miraculous sign is the driving out of a demon (Mk 1:23-27); this story, too, follows a report of Jesus' teaching in a synagogue. The

Gospel of Luke follows Mark: teaching followed by an exorcism. In each of these three gospels, the miraculous sign seems designed to highlight the power in Jesus' words about the reign of God. Demons cry out before it, lepers are cleansed by it, and those living on the periphery find themselves inside Jesus' circle. The miraculous signs punctuate Jesus' announcement that the reign of God has finally arrived. Yet why does John open with a story about the abundant supply of wine at a wedding reception?

We know that Jesus connected with wedding imagery. He says, for example, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast" (Mk 2:19). John the Baptist made a similar connection: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and



Sister Monica Juan treats a leg injury.

"Daughters of Charity Sister" By Vocation Vision Guide (CC BY-ND 2.0)

hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice" (Jn 3:29). We also know that in the Hebrew Scriptures marriage is often used as a metaphor for God's relationship with his people: "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name" (Isa 64:5). Or again: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, / and bring her into the wilderness / and speak tenderly to her. . . And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband'" (Hos 2:14, 16). Marriage has also served as a metaphor for the relationship between God and the individual soul; we see this in numerous commentaries on the Song of Songs.

Perhaps, then, the fact that in John the first epiphany of Jesus' "glory" (2:11)—the first manifestation of what the reign of God is all about—takes place at a wedding celebration ought not to be so surprising after all. The good news is about a new relationship with the divine mystery. It is about knowing and experiencing the Father's love—the One whose compassionate closeness to the human world is simply overwhelming. The abundance of wine becomes the abundance of love; both are intoxicating. No wonder Francis writes that the name of God is mercy.

So, what does carrying the world do to us? What response does it elicit? I believe the answer has to be that carrying the world gradually makes us into messengers of mercy.

Seeing the world with eyes of compassion

In the second paragraph of his message Francis cites a phrase of Saint Bede that describes the calling of Matthew, "misereando atque eligendo," the episcopal motto which Francis adopted when he was in Buenos Aires. Jesus saw Matthew at his tax-collector's table through eyes full of mercy and, through that compassionate gaze, invited him to be a disciple. And Matthew allowed that gaze to penetrate his heart, which explains why he responded so quickly to Jesus' words. But since Jesus does not physically walk among us as he did centuries ago in Galilee, how do Jesus' compassionate gaze and his call to walk with him reach us today? The divine

call, Francis writes, is mediated by the believing community. The invitational word comes from within that community and unfolds alongside the vocational journey of our sisters and brothers. They are people, just like us, who have been called to faith, called to belong to the Church, and then called to a particular way of living out their baptism. Who is it, then, that meets us with the compassionate gaze of God and, through that gaze, communicates to us that we, like Matthew and each of the others, have been called to walk in the company of Jesus? Is it just one face and one voice, or is it many voices and many faces? The honest answer is that it can be a bit of both. We may be inspired and drawn by the faith and witness of a single individual (many vocational stories confirm this), or we may feel ourselves called to let go of everything in order to accompany the poor, the homeless, the marginalized, the forsaken, the spiritually impoverished; it is their voice and face that call out to us and will not leave us alone.

The conviction that it is God who calls us and that we are not simply responding to social and environmental stimuli when we are drawn to the gospel is profoundly important. Who of us would not be moved at the sight of other human beings in desperate need? The divine call is indeed mediated; we live, after all, in a sacramental world, a world in which the eye is forever being teased from what is seen to what is unseen. But underneath the poverty and suffering all around us there is Jesus, the same Jesus who cried to the over-zealous Paul, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4) Or who reminds us, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me" (Mt 25:45).

The structure of the message

This year's message is organized around three simple points: vocations to ordained ministry and the consecrated life are born within the Church; they grow within the Church; and they are sustained by the Church. Some might find a claim in the first point to be a bit challenging. "No one is called exclusively for a particular region, or for a group or for an ecclesial

movement, but rather for the Church and for the world," Francis writes. Our "ecclesial horizon" should expand over time. And yet isn't there something charismatic about a local community identifying and then calling some of its members to particular ministries in light of local needs? In other words, some disciples, in response to the Spirit, will always be on the road, while others, in response to the same Spirit, may reside in the same place for years. I think the key to understanding the Pope's point is remembering how important to him is the Church's presence at the social, economic, and cultural peripheries. The "ecclesial horizon" expands, not as a result of international travel or reading theology texts, but as a result of contact with communities at the edge. This idea becomes especially clear in Francis' second point.

"During the process of formation," Francis writes, "candidates for particular vocations need to know better the ecclesial community." To accomplish this, he suggests, they should have "apostolic experiences" in company with those who are actively at work in the local Church. He lists the sort of opportunities he has in mind: to work alongside a good catechist; to experience what it is like to evangelize at the margins, alongside a religious community; to discover and appreciate the treasure of contemplative life alongside a cloistered community; to have contact with missionaries; to deepen their understanding of pastoral ministry alongside parish clergy. Of course, there are often numerous programs and works in the local Church founded and directed by dedicated men and women who are neither ordained nor under the vows. I think, for example, of Catholic Worker houses, thrift shops, food pantries, Pax Christi groups, and so on. Although we frequently speak of the "universal" Church, the ecclesial reality that most of us know is thoroughly local.

Messengers of mercy

In his address in Uganda, Francis told the clergy, religious and seminarians gathered in St. Mary's Cathedral: "If we are to accompany those who suffer, then like the light passing through the stained glass



Father Guerric DeBora, O.S.B. talks to a visitor outside the Benedictine Archabbey of Saint Meinrad.

windows of this Cathedral, we must let God's power and healing pass through us. We must first let the waves of his mercy flow over us, purify us, and refresh us, so that we can bring that mercy to others, especially to those on the peripheries." But perhaps the mystery of grace at work here—the spiritual insight—is that we become effective messengers of mercy as a result of accompanying those at the margins.

An old axiom many of us heard in school was that no one can give what they do not have. How then could someone help another to know God's merciful love if they have not first experienced themselves as a loved sinner? The point is elementary; but how do we learn the meaning of mercy? Some might answer that it came as a retreat grace, the moment in which they knelt before the crucified Jesus, having reflected long and hard on their personal history of sin and struggle, and then broke down in tears. Yet, like most graces, this grace has most likely been mediated. For the disciples, the mediation was Jesus himself, after Easter. Their second call—the call that came with their experience of the risen Jesus—was when they fully experienced the power of God's love to heal their failures. Mark insinuates this in the words of the messenger: "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him,

just as he told you" (Mk 16:7). And Paul's experience was similar, as we hear when he writes, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me," particularly when he goes to explain: "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor 15:9-9).

For disciples who come on the scene later, the mediation may have been a kind confessor. In the case of Paul, however, the mediation may have been the prayerful example of a dying Stephen and the brethren whom Paul had been persecuting. A great upheaval took place in his soul as the convictions that anchored his zeal came undone. The brethren he was persecuting responded to his violence with a prayer for forgiveness. What grace, what mercy, had those followers of Jesus understood that, up to now, Paul had no idea of? The higher righteousness on which Paul had once prided himself revealed itself as hollow. He did not know God nearly as well as the men and women he was hurting. They became for him the ones who mediated the mercy of God; they were the flesh and blood who drew him to Jesus.

What was it, then, that enabled the followers of Jesus, to forgive one another—and even to love their enemies? The answer that makes the most sense is that they had already experienced divine for-

giveness, mercy and love when they were incorporated into the mystery of Christ. They had become, as a result of the "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins," a different sort of human being. Yet this may be only half of the answer. For the other side of that experience was the memory of what they were before. And that memory of their sinfulness and incompleteness—of deep spiritual longing, even when that longing was blind—allowed them to view the human world with compassion. They carried that world inside, the creation which (as Paul would later say) has been groaning inwardly: "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now" (Rom 8:22). In other words, the world of which we are a part keeps reminding us of its hunger and its pain, even when it does not have words to describe it. Mindfulness of the world makes us weep. And what do those tears elicit, if not profound compassion, the same compassion that led to the Word becoming flesh.

As signs of God's closeness to the world, those in ordained ministry and the consecrated life are, practically by definition, messengers of mercy. If our lives do not give evidence of that, then our vocations have not been fully realized. I think of the words of Ezekiel, "And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh" (Ez 36:26). If we pray that the Lord will give us hearts of mercy, then we need to be open to how this grace is likely to come. After all, it makes little sense to pray for transformation but then avoid the path that Jesus invites us to walk. The route which this grace travels requires us to walk through the world and share its burden, even to the point of tears: its brokenness and alienation, its poverty and non-belief, its sorrows and its desperation, and its blind longing for redemption. ■



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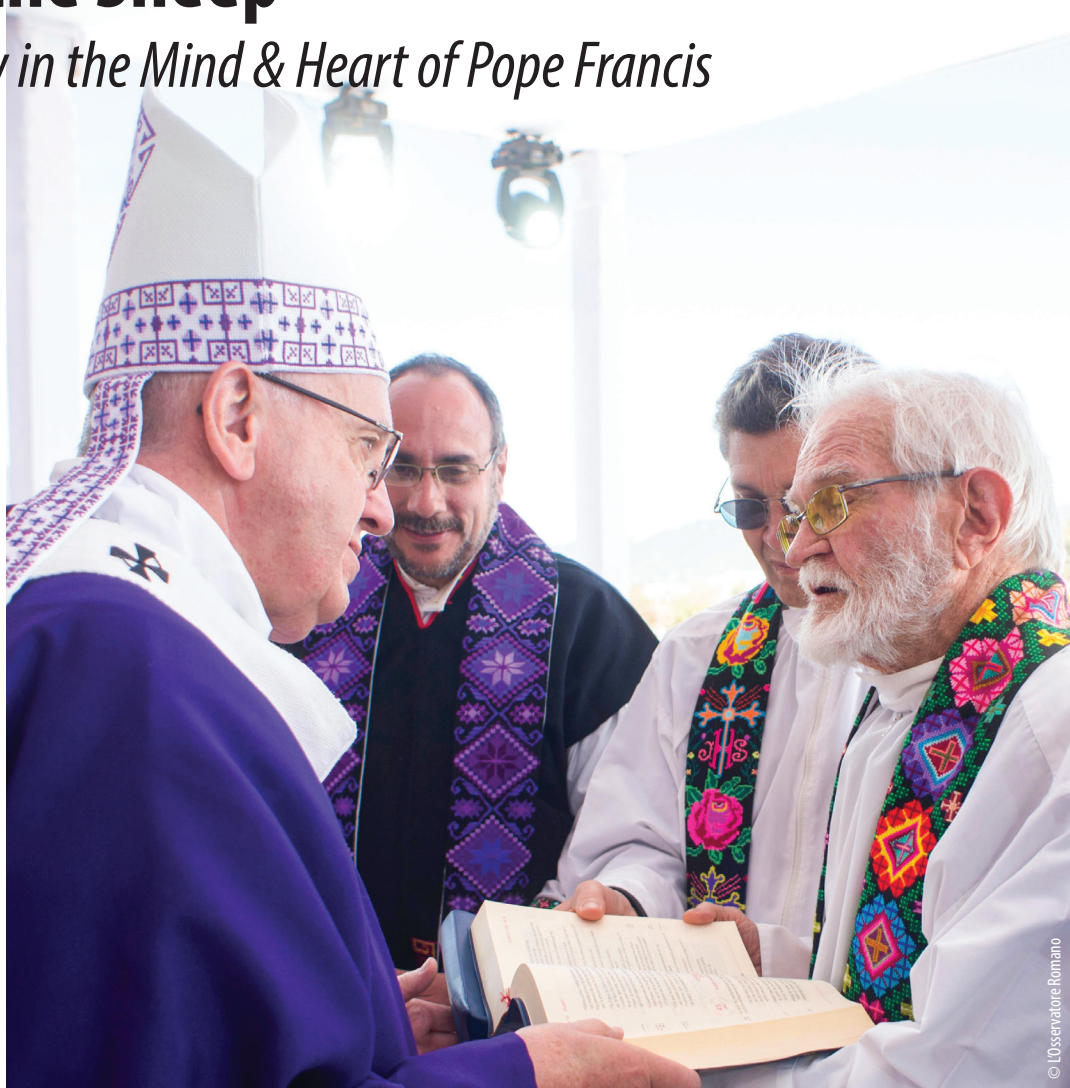
"Smelling Like the Sheep"

Priesthood and Ministry in the Mind & Heart of Pope Francis

By THOMAS ROSICA, CSB

What is Pope Francis' vision for the priesthood? How are priests and future priests to serve their people most faithfully and fruitfully? Here are ten themes which have emerged from both Pope Francis's spoken words and also the witness of his own priestly ministry.

1. The strength of a priest depends on his relationship with Christ. At the heart of any priest's ministry must be a living relationship with Christ, so that the priest sees as Christ sees and loves as he loves. For this to happen, the priest needs to continue to grow in union with Christ through prayer and intimacy.
2. The priest must be close to the people he serves. In his first Chrism Mass homily, Pope Francis famously spoke of how priests must be "shepherds living with the 'smell of the sheep.'" If priests truly are to be pastors rather than administrators they need to "go out to meet the people," especially the lost sheep.
3. A priest's authority must be linked to service, especially to the care and protection of the poorest, weakest, the least important and most easily forgotten. This means that priests have to leave their comfort zone and have "real contact with the poor and the marginalized."
4. The priest must be a minister of mercy. Pope Francis repeatedly tells bishops, priests and those preparing for priesthood: "Be merciful." His motto *Miserando atque eligendo* ("Chosen Through the Eyes of Mercy") highlights that his own vocation was born in an experience of God's mercy,



when as a 16-year-old boy he went to confession on the feast of the St Matthew, the great convert. Pope Francis' reminder in his first Angelus address that God never tires of forgiving us is a clear call to priests never to tire in faithfully dispensing that mercy, both sacramentally and in their daily living.

5. Pope Francis has repeatedly criticized priests who give in to vanity and worldly ambition. During his years in Buenos Aires, Cardinal Bergoglio's example of living in a small apartment was a clear challenge to his fellow priests to examine the sincerity and authenticity of their own spiritual poverty.
6. Priests must be models of integrity. There is no place in the priesthood for a clericalism, any kind of abuse of position or a concern to climb the ecclesial career ladder. Pope Francis reminds us continually that our authority derives not from worldly power but from personal integrity and humility in imitation of Christ. No priest should consider himself exempt from the demands of ordinary accountability.
7. Priests are to be sources of blessing for our people. The anointing which we receive at ordination is not meant just for ourselves – it is to flow through us to those we serve. At his first Chrism Mass in 2013, Francis said: "A good priest can be recognized by the way his

people are anointed... when our people are anointed with the oil of gladness, it is obvious: for example, when they leave Mass looking as if they have heard good news.” This was also very much the theme of his second Chrism Mass homily – the priest is “anointed with the oil of gladness so as to anoint others with the oil of gladness.” In his preaching, in his prayer, through being truly present to his flock in the realities of their everyday lives, the priest is to help them “feel that the fragrance of the Anointed One, Christ, has come to them through the priest.”

8. A priest by his very nature is an evangelizer, one who announces the good news through word and action. One of the greatest obstacles to the work of evangelization has always been routine or habit, which eliminates the freshness and persuasive power of Christian missionary outreach and witness. We can no longer wait for those no longer practicing the faith to return to the Church on their own: we must seek them out. We do not hesitate to reach out by taking to the streets and public squares, by entering supermarkets, banks, schools, universities and colleges and wherever people can be found. Our missionary zeal must carry us “to the ends of the earth.”
9. The Priest is a translator of holiness and bearer of mercy. This holiness is the fire of God’s Word that must be alive and burning within our hearts. Evil is only eradicated by holiness and mercy, not by harshness, violence and retaliation. Holiness and mercy introduce into society seeds that heal and transform. The priest bears holiness and mercy to the world.
10. The Priest is a Bearer of Joy. The joy of the priesthood finds its origin in the heart and mind of Christ. Before taking leave of the Apostles on Holy Thursday Jesus said to them: “I tell you this that my joy may be full!” Certainly this wish is not addressed only to the priest, but is ratified and confirmed in the heart of a priest. The priest experiences Christ when He is received with

faith and served with love, as a fount of inexhaustible and unalterable joy! Why should priests be joyful? Why must we be joyful? Because it is in our DNA as priests to be bearers of joy! Each day we perform miracles of changing bread and wine into our Lord’s body and blood, forgiving sins in his name, and representing him to others.

Finally, Pope Francis has spoken about the forms of weariness of priests. Weariness can be a “gift” or a “temptation”. Francis speaks of three forms of weariness that priests should guard against: first of all, “the weariness of people, the weariness of the crowd”: “the Lord never tired of being with people. On the contrary, he seemed renewed by their presence.” “And how beautiful it is! People love their priests, they want and need their shepherds! The faithful never leave us without something to do, unless we hide in our offices or go out in cars with tinted windows. There is a good and healthy tiredness.” “It is the exhaustion of the priest who wears the smell of the sheep... but also smiles the smile of a father rejoicing in his children or grandchildren. It has nothing to do with those who wear expensive perfume and look at others from afar and from above.

Then there is the “weariness of enemies”: “The devil and his minions never sleep and, since their ears cannot bear to hear the word of God, they work tirelessly to silence that word and to distort it.” “Here we need to implore the grace to learn how to “offset”: to thwart evil without pulling up the good wheat, or presuming to protect like supermen what the Lord alone can protect.”

“And finally, lest you be wearied by this homily itself!” the Pope joked, there is also “weariness of ourselves”. “This may be the most dangerous weariness of all.” “I like to call this kind of weariness “flirting with spiritual worldliness”,” the Pope continued. This is a bad kind of weariness. “Only love gives true rest. What is not loved becomes tiresome, and in time, brings about a harmful weariness.”

Let us take to heart Pope Francis’ stir-

ring words spoken in St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City on the evening of September 24, 2015.

“We can get caught up measuring the value of our apostolic works by the standards of efficiency, good management and outward success which govern the business world. Not that these things are unimportant! We have been entrusted with a great responsibility, and God’s people rightly expect accountability from us. But the true worth of our apostolate is measured by the value it has in God’s eyes. To see and evaluate things from God’s perspective calls for constant conversion in the first days and years of our vocation and, need I say, great humility. The cross shows us a different way of measuring success. Ours is to plant the seeds: God sees to the fruits of our labors. And if at times our efforts and works seem to fail and produce no fruit, we need to remember that we are followers of Jesus... and his life, humanly speaking, ended in failure, the failure of the cross.

Another danger comes when we become jealous of our free time, when we think that surrounding ourselves with worldly comforts will help us serve better. The problem with this reasoning is that it can blunt the power of God’s daily call to conversion, to encounter with him. Slowly but surely, it diminishes our spirit of sacrifice, renunciation and hard work. It also alienates people who suffer material poverty and are forced to make greater sacrifices than ourselves. Rest is needed, as are moments of leisure and self-enrichment, but we need to learn how to rest in a way that deepens our desire to serve with generosity. Closeness to the poor, the refugee, the immigrant, the sick, the exploited, the elderly living alone, prisoners and all God’s other poor, will teach us a different way of resting, one which is more Christian and generous.” ■



FR. THOMAS ROSICA, CSB

A Scripture scholar and lecturer in New Testament, and former Chaplain of the University of Toronto, served as National Director and CEO of World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto.

Priests are the Primary Vocation Directors in their Parishes

A Conversation with Bishop of Belleville, Illinois, Edward K. Braxton

By PAMELA SELBERT

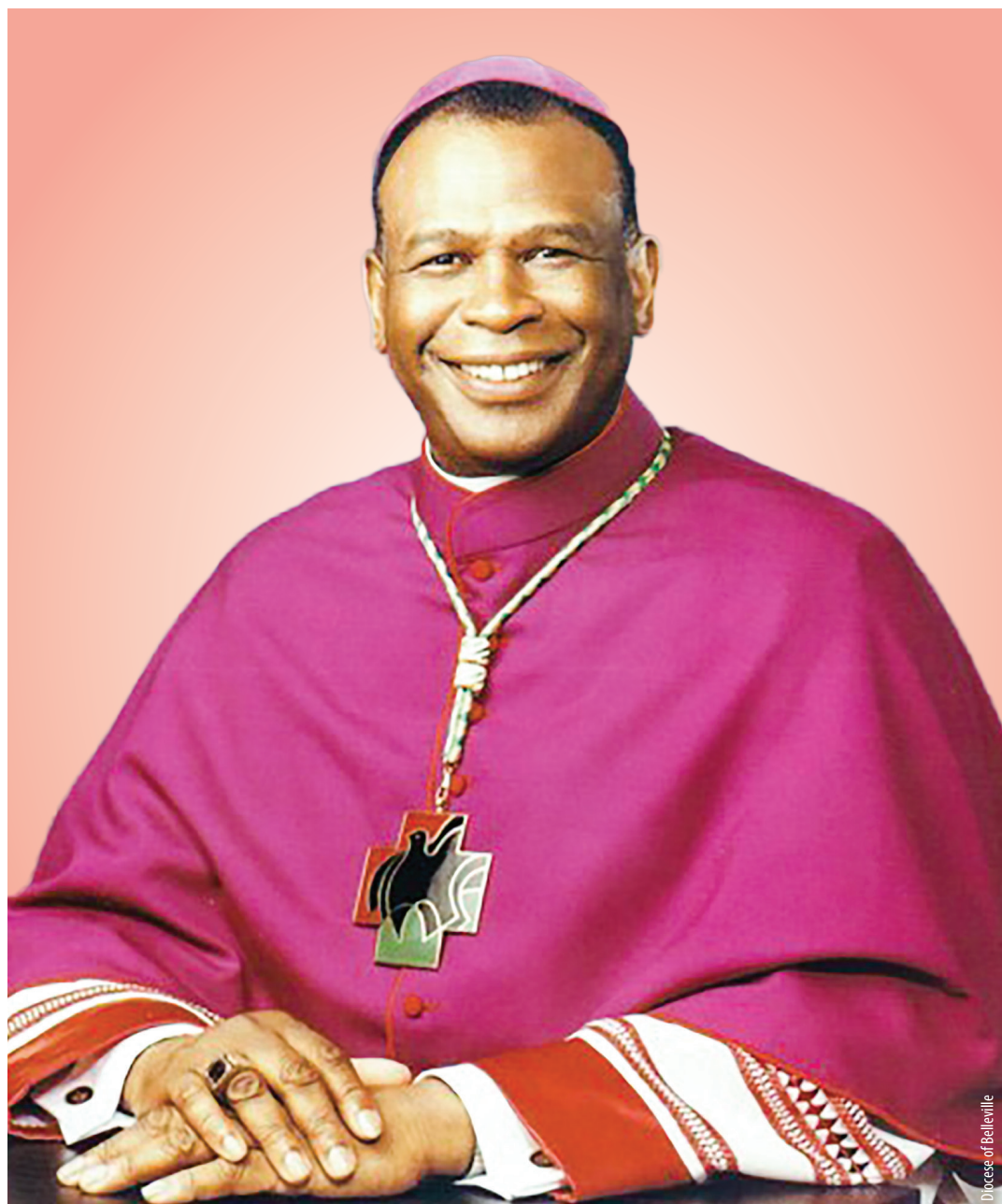
Bishop Edward Kenneth Braxton was born in Chicago on June 28, 1944, the third of five children, to Cullen and Evelyn Braxton. He studied for the priesthood at Quigley Preparatory Seminary, Niles College Seminary and St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in the Archdiocese of Chicago, for which he was ordained a priest in 1970.

His career in the Church has been long and illustrious, and he has served in many capacities. He has been deacon, associate pastor, and pastor at several parishes. A post-graduate student at the University of Louvain in Belgium, he provided parish ministry at American military bases in Germany and at Our Lady of Mercy Parish, the American Parish in Brussels. He was a visiting professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, and Scholar in Residence at the North American College, the U.S. Bishops' seminary in Rome.

In 1985 the future Bishop was invited to give the keynote address at the National Symposium On Black Catholics in New York, and a year later was one of five American priests chosen to represent priests of the United States at the International Symposium on the Priesthood. The symposium, held in Chicago, included priests from fifteen English-speaking countries.

Over his lengthy career Bishop Braxton has preached in many major Catholic and Protestant pulpits, among them the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and the Memorial Church at Harvard University. He is a prolific writer on a wide range of theological and pastoral topics, and his work has appeared in dozens of publications. He is fluent in French, and has a reading knowledge of Spanish and Italian.

In 1995 Pope John Paul II appointed



him Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis, where he served as Vicar General. His many duties included oversight of the ministry of the Permanent Deacons in the diocese (with more than 215 deacons, St. Louis has one of the largest diaconate communities in the country.)

Five years later, he was appointed Second Bishop of Lake Charles, where he

served till 2005, when he was appointed Eighth Bishop of Belleville. He was installed as Bishop in June that year at the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

As Bishop, he places particular emphasis on education and the work for vocations to the priesthood. His Diocesan Prayer for Vocations is prayed throughout the diocese. It was published by THE

PRIEST magazine in May 2011.

Bishop Braxton recently discussed the following vocations-related questions:

Are you seeing increased interest in vocations to the priesthood or religious orders in your diocese?

We've seen a very modest increase in seminarians, mostly young men, in recent months, but no vocations to the convent. Since there is no church without the Eucharist and no Eucharist without priests, I have put a special emphasis on working on vocations to the priesthood. In 128 years, this Diocese of Belleville has never produced a sufficient number of vocations to the diocesan priesthood. For historical reasons, we have a very large number of parishes (115) for a relatively small number of Catholics (90,000) spread out in rural parishes that are very close together. There have always been "fidei domini" missionaries from Poland, China and India. In more recent years, I have brought additional missionaries to serve in our Mission Diocese from Colombia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and the Philippines.

What do you do to encourage vocations?

Every morning during my Holy Hour in the Chapel at my residence, I devote a considerable amount of time to praying for vocations in my diocese. I pray for specific individuals who I have met who seem to have the qualities needed for Christian discipleship. I pray for the priests, deacons, sisters and parish life coordinators, that they may never overlook any opportunity to encourage and nurture vocations.

I pray for all who may be challenged or discouraged in their vocations that they may not allow their unhappiness to overflow into the hearts of others. I pray for myself asking the Holy Spirit to purify my heart so that nothing I do or say will in any way discourage someone from considering ministry and religious life as priest, deacon, sister or brother. I give thanks to God for the fact that I have come to the fundamental realization that

God is not God the way I would be God if I were God.

The Divine Spirit does not automatically "fix the world" in a mechanical way in response to the multiplication of prayers. I also express gratitude for my own vocation to the priesthood and my call to serve the Church in the Episcopacy. During the course of my many years as a priest and bishop, I have experienced a considerable number of profound sorrows that were difficult to endure. However, no matter what sorrows I endured, I have NEVER been sorry that I was a priest.

How does your Office of Vocations work?

In addition to my constant personal efforts (vocation information is on the back of my business cards!), I have a full-time Director of Vocations, Father Nicholas Junker, who regularly visits parishes and schools and hosts vocation awareness and discernment days and retreats. He and the Serra Club often take groups of young men and young girls to visit local seminaries and convents to give them personal contact with religious life and formation. Every parish priest is strongly urged to speak often about the priesthood during visits to the parish school, in Sunday homilies, and in other circumstances.

I have asked every parish to pray my Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood at all the Masses at least one weekend a month. I have sent all of the priests a letter with detailed suggestions about the work they can and should be doing, since they themselves are the primary vocations directors in their parishes.

Many are faithful to these and other incentives. Others are not. Sadly, there are some priests who are not dedicated to working for vocations to the priesthood because of their personal differences with the clear teachings and disciplines of the Church.

How is Pope Francis' leadership affecting interest in vocations?

In this diocese, so far, not at all. It may

well be too soon to measure this. St. John Paul II's great impact on vocations was only apparent well into his long pontificate. In some ways, the Holy Father seems to have stirred up a greater degree of enthusiasm among the laity, who have felt estranged from the Church than among regular church-goers who might have vocations.

I often meet people who say they love the Pope, even though they do not go to church and have no plans to do so. It must be noted that the power of Grace works in every human heart at its own pace. But, really, it is too soon to say what the Pontiff's impact is. In the long run, it may be quite significant.

Do you think the Year of the Divine Mercy, which Pope Francis declared, will encourage people to consider a religious vocation?

So far I have seen no signs of this here. We do intend to put additional emphasis on vocations during the Holy Year.

How will your diocese celebrate this Extraordinary Jubilee and how will you instruct parishioners to prepare for the year?

We will provide activities and resources at the Cathedral, in parishes, and in the Vicariates of the Diocese throughout the year, and by means of readings, prayers and liturgical music, the Church will unfold the great mystery of Christ. ■



PAMELA SELBERT

Is a freelance writer who lives just outside St. Louis. Over the past 30 years, Pamela has had nearly three thousand articles published in more than 75 newspapers and magazines.

A PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

By BISHOP EDWARD K. BRAXTON



Leader: God is good.

Response: All the time!

Leader: All the time.

Response: God is good!

Let us Pray:

Lord, Our God
we know that You are Goodness itself,
for you have given us your Son,
the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Savior.

Through Christ you have given us the Church, and in the Catholic Church you have given us the Life of Grace through Baptism. Throughout history you have called forth ministers of Word and Sacrament to lead, guide, and serve your people as priests. We join with our Bishop in praying for an increase in vocations to the priesthood in our Diocese. We ask you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to stir up in the hearts of teenagers, college students, and adult men in our parishes a desire to serve your Church in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Help them to hear and respond generously to your quiet call deep within their hearts to join with those who through the centuries have built up your Church, the Body of Christ,

through the celebration of the Sacraments. O God of Love and Mercy, we pray that you will inspire our dedicated priests to continue to share the joy and the happiness of their ministry at Your Altar and in the Christian community. Prompt parents, grandparents, and teachers to realize that sometimes you call future priests to your service by a word of encouragement from those who see in them the faith and talents of a good priest.

We pray especially for our seminarians. We ask you to help them to be the best human beings, the best Christians, and the best priests they can be.

Graciously hear our prayer through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of priests, and in the Name of Jesus who is Christ the Lord. **AMEN.**

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At the Service of the Community

The Permanent Diaconate

By DEACON GUILLERMO RODRIGUEZ



A few months ago, after I had finished presiding over the baptism of a few babies in our parish community, a few members of the assembly approached me. It was obvious they had a question for me, but were a little hesitant to ask. One of them finally said “Father, we are a little confused. During your homily you talked about your wife, your children and even your brother-in-law. How is that possible? Are priests now allowed to marry, here in the United States?”

I was a little surprised by the question, for of course, I tend to assume everyone in my parish knows I am not a priest, but a deacon. It turns out these brothers and sisters were visiting our parish from Mexico and in their diocese, they do not have permanent deacons (yet). I was able to chat with them for a little while and they were very gracious with their time and attention as I talked about the permanent diaconate.

Deacons are not priests, but are not lay-people either. Like priests, deacons are ordained ministers of the Catholic Church, but most deacons, especially the permanent deacons, are married, have children, a secular job and a lifestyle that very closely resemble that of laity.

So what gives? Let’s start from the beginning.

A Brief History of the Diaconate in the Catholic Church

There are two paths for a Catholic man to become a deacon. The first one is called the “transitional diaconate” and this is for men who are in preparation to become priests. A few months before their priestly ordination, they are ordained deacons and sent to parishes and other assignments to serve in that capacity.



The Church at the Service of God's Plan

1. WELCOME

Pope Francis, on the occasion of the 53rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, invites all of us to "reflect upon the apostolic community, and to give thanks for the role of the community in each person's personal vocation.... God calls us to become a part of the Church and, after we have reached a certain maturity within it, he bestows on us a specific vocation. The vocational journey is undertaken together with the brothers and sisters whom the Lord has given to us."

Brothers and sisters, as a people called by God to belong to the Church, let us pray that many may go beyond themselves and place their lives at the service of God's plan.

2. EXPOSITION

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.

Another Eucharistic hymn may be sung.

3. ADORATION

Lord Jesus, let our greatest delight be the honor of your mercy, to see you loved, and your praise and glory proclaimed.

R. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless your most holy Name.

- O Christ, let us glorify your goodness and mercy till the last moment of our lives, with every drop of our blood and every beat of our hearts. **R.**
- That we be transformed into a hymn of adoration of you. **R.**
- When I find myself on my deathbed, may the last beat of my heart be a loving hymn glorifying your unfathomable mercy. **R.**

Silent prayer/Song

4. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

With faith and joy, let us give thanks to God for all of His gifts, saying:

R. We praise and thank you, Lord Jesus Christ

- We are all called to be disciples of God, children of the same Father. We give you thanks, Lord Jesus, for bringing us into the great family of God. **R.**
- Through your resurrection we entered new life, the life that we share with you, the life that never ends because it comes from God. **R.**
- To you we come, Lord Jesus, because you came from God and you are God. You came to give life to the world, to our world. **R.**
- You came to overcome death in me, in us, in our homes. **R.**
- You came to bring us the fullness of life, victory over suffering, evil and injustice. **R.**
- We come to you, because you are our neighbor, our guest, our friend, our brother. **R.**

5. LITURGY OF THE WORD

- **1 Kgs 19:16,19-21** "Elisha rose up and followed Elijah."
- **Jer 29:11-14** "I know well the plans I have in mind for you."
- **Rom 8:28** "For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable"
- **1 Cor 1:26-31** "God chose the foolish to shame the wise."
- **Jn 15:16-17** "You didn't choose me, but I chose you."
- **Mt 16:24-27** "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Homily/Meditation/Holy Rosary

6. INTERCESSIONS

In his mercy, God sends the Holy Spirit to shine on us, so that our lives may radiate holiness and faith. Let us raise our voices and say:

R. Show us your mercy, O Lord.

- For the Church: that, strengthened with the bread of the Word of God, she may not fall into the temptation to rely on powers and means foreign to her mission in the world. We pray.
- For all believers who take seriously the call for a new evangelization: that they may grow and mature in faith. We pray.
- For underdeveloped nations, lacking in means to resolve their serious problems: that they may receive the assistance they need from the more developed countries. We pray.
- For all of us gathered here before the Lord in His Most Blessed Sacrament, that we may live our faith in confidence and charity, trust in the Lord's mercy, and witness to Him so as to invite others to seek His Face. We pray.

(Other intentions may be added, especially for the local community)

Let us make our prayers and praise complete by offering the Lord's prayer: **Our Father...**

7. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Lord Jesus Christ, Savior of the world! We humbly beg of you to manifest in your Church the Spirit whom you abundantly bestowed upon your Apostles. Call many to the priesthood and to the religious life. And may zeal for your glory and the salvation of souls inflame those whom you have chosen; may they be saints in your likeness, and may your Spirit strengthen them.

O Jesus, give us priests and religious according to your own Heart! O Mary, Mother of Jesus! Obtain for fervent souls the grace to hear and the courage to follow your divine Son in the path of religious perfection.

8. BENEDICTION

Tantum ergo Sacramentum, venerémur cernui: Et antiquum documentum novo cedat ritui; Præstet fides supplementum sensuum defectui. Genitori Genitôque, laus et iubilatio; Salus, honor, virtus quoque, sit et benedictio; Procedenti ab utrôque compar sit laudatio. Amen.

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, you gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of your suffering and death. May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood help us to experience the salvation you won for us and the peace of the kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **R. Amen.**

9. REPOSITION

Blessed be God, our Father and Creator.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, Son of God and our Brother.

Blessed be his Word that will never fail.

Blessed be his Body given up for us.

Blessed be his Blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Consoler.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Church, Mother of Vocations

1. WELCOME

All the faithful are called to appreciate the ecclesial dynamism of vocations, so that communities of faith can become, after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, like a mother's womb which welcomes the gift of the Holy Spirit. The motherhood of the Church finds expression in constant prayer for vocations and in the work of educating and accompanying all those who perceive God's call. The Church is the mother of vocations in her continual support of those who have dedicated their lives to the service of others.

Brothers and sisters, let us ask the Lord to grant those who are on a vocational journey a deep sense of belonging to the Church, and that the Holy Spirit may strengthen in us a deeper sense of communion, discernment and spiritual fatherhood and motherhood.

(From Pope Francis' Message for the 53rd WDPV)

2. EXPOSITION

O Saving Victim op'ning wide the gate of heaven to all 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; Oh, grant us endless length of days, In our true native land with Thee. Amen.

3. ADORATION

Lord Jesus Christ, pierce our souls with your love so that we may always long for you alone, who are the bread of angels and the fulfillment of the soul's deepest desires.

R. Hear us, O Lord, and we shall praise you for ever.

- May our hearts always hunger and feed upon you so that our souls may be filled with the sweetness of your presence. **R.**
- May our souls thirst for you, who are the source of life, wisdom, knowledge, light and all the riches of God our Father. **R.**
- May we always seek and find you, think upon you, speak to you and do all things for honor and glory of your holy name. **R.**
- Be always our only hope, our peace, our refuge and our help in whom our hearts are rooted so that we may never be separated from you. **R.**

(Saint Bonaventure)

Silent adoration/Song.

4. LITURGY OF THE WORD

- **Ex 3:1-12** *The Call of Moses: "I will be with you"*
- **Is 49:1-7** *"The Lord called me from birth, from my mother's womb he gave me my name."*
- **Rom 10:9-18** *"How can they hear without someone to preach? How can people preach unless they are sent?"*
- **Gal 1:15** *"God, who from my mother's womb, had set me apart and called me through his grace."*
- **Lk 5:1-11** *"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."*
- **Jn 17:11, 17-23** *"As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."*

Homily/Meditation/Holy Rosary

5. INTERCESSIONS

Let us glorify Christ, whom the Father has exalted, giving us all nations as an inheritance. Let us cry out to him:

R. Christ, our life, hear our prayer

- Lord Jesus Christ, you restored the virtue of Hope by your victory over sin and death, make us a people of steadfast love and mercy. To you, we pray.
- Lord Jesus Christ, you sent Mary Magdalene to bring the good news to the Apostles, grant to your priests the ability to listen to the faithful and discover in them your Gospel. To you, we pray.
- Lord Jesus Christ, you entrusted to Peter the care of your sheep, grant to his successor, the Pope, a constant concern for the lost sheep. To you, we pray.
- Lord Jesus Christ, you called your apostles to look for you in Galilee, grant to their successors, the Pope and the bishops, to meet you in each one of your disciples in the world. To you, we pray.

Because we want the light of Christ to shine on everyone, let us pray to the Father that his kingdom comes to us: **Our Father...**

6. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Loving God, you called each of us by name and gave your only Son to redeem us. In your faithfulness, you sent the Holy Spirit to complete the mission of Jesus among us. Open our hearts to your Son. Give us the courage to speak his name to those who are close to us and the generosity to share his love with those who are far away. We pray that every person throughout the world be invited to know and love Jesus as Savior and Redeemer. May they come to know his all-surpassing love. May that love transform every element of our society. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

7. BENEDICTION

Down in adoration falling, Lo! the sacred Host we hail,
Lo! o'er ancient forms departing newer rites of grace prevail;
Faith for all defects supplying, where the feeble senses fail.
To the everlasting Father, and the Son Who reigns on high
With the Holy Spirit proceeding forth from 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, teach us to cherish in our hearts the paschal mystery of your Son by which you redeemed the world. Watch over the gifts of grace your love has given us and bring them to fulfillment in the glory of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

8. 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 full of love.

Blessed be Jesus, present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, our Defender.

Blessed be the Mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin.

Blessed be St. Joseph, chaste and responsible husband.

Blessed be God in the glory of all His Saints.

Come, Holy Spirit

1. WELCOME

Vocations are sustained by the Church. After definitive commitment, our vocational journey within the Church does not come to an end, but it continues in our willingness to serve, our perseverance and our ongoing formation. The one who has consecrated his life to the Lord is willing to serve the Church wherever it has need. Missionaries are accompanied and sustained by the Christian community, which always remains a vital point of reference, just as a visible homeland offers security to all who are on pilgrimage towards eternal life.

Brothers and sisters, let us pray during this holy hour that, sent on mission by the Holy Spirit, many may have the readiness to serve the Church. *(from Pope Francis' Message for the 53rd WDPV)*

2. EXPOSITION

Adoro te devote, latens Deitas, Quae sub his figuris vere latitas: Tibi se cor meum totum subiicit, Quia te contemplanis totum deficit. Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore, Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more, See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.

Iesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio, Oro fiat illud quod tam sitio; Ut te revelata cernens facie, Visu sim beatus tuae gloriae. Amen.

Jesu, whom I look at shrouded here below, I beseech thee send me what I thirst for so, Some day to gaze on thee face to face in light And be blest for ever with thy glory's sight. Amen.

3. ADORATION

Lord Jesus, behold we come. Our hearts are small, but it is all yours.

R. Lord Jesus Christ, you are our life.

- You are a prisoner in our Tabernacles, you the Lord of Lords! And love it is, that holds you here as such! **R.**
- You leave the Tabernacle only to come to us, to unite yourself with the faithful soul and allow your Divine Love to reign within. **R.**
- O King of Love! Come, live and reign in us. We want no other law but the law of your Love! **R.**
- We desire to know nothing, neither of this world nor of what is in it, nor of ourselves; your Love alone shall rule in us eternally. **R.**

Silent adoration/Song

4. LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Jer 1:4-10** "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you."
- Acts 13:1-4** "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them."
- Rom 8:14-17** "You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear."
- Mt 9: 35-38** "The harvest is rich but the laborers are few."
- Lk 1:35-38** "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

Homily/Meditation/Holy Rosary

5. INTERCESSIONS

Let us raise our prayers to God our Father guided by the word of

Jesus, that He may send us His Spirit who makes us ministers of our brothers and sisters, saying:

R. Send us your Spirit, O Lord.

- That the Pope, the Bishops and the whole Church may carry out their evangelizing mission in the midst of the world, let us pray to the Lord. **R.**
- That the Church proclaim with courage the Word of God in every situation, as difficult as it may be, let us pray to the Lord. **R.**
- That lay Christians may become a leaven of evangelical force in the midst of the world, let us pray to the Lord. **R.**
- That God the Father, the Lord of the Harvest, send abundant vocations to His Church for the pastoral service of their brothers and sisters, let us pray to the Lord. **R.**
- That there always be youthful hearts, willing to follow the call of God and give themselves generously for the good of all, let us pray to the Lord. **R.**
- That Christian families may be witnesses of the Gospel and promote religious and priestly vocations, let us pray to the Lord. **R.**

Let us conclude our prayers with the Lord's prayer: **Our Father...**

6. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Lord Jesus Christ, you promised always to give your Church shepherds. In faith, we know your promise cannot fail.

Trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church, we pray you raise up sacred ministers from your holy people, that the sacrifice in which you give your body and blood may be daily renewed in the world until we come to that kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

7. BENEDICTION

"Tantum ergo" or another suitable Eucharistic hymn

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

Let us pray... Lord our God, in this great sacrament, we come into the presence of Jesus Christ, your Son born of the Virgin Mary and crucified for our salvation. May we who declare our faith in this fountain of love and mercy drink from it the water of everlasting life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

8. 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 Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in His angels and in His Saints.

The Holy Rosary and Additional Prayers

After each mystery, the following invocation may be said:

V. Send, O Lord,

R. Holy apostles into your Church.

LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Baptism of our Lord

Let us offer this decade for those who called to the priesthood and religious life, that they may have the courage to accept the mission God has given them

2. The Wedding at Cana

Let us offer this decade for those who doubt they have much to offer, that they may trust in God, like Mary, to bring all things into completion and say yes to His call.

3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom

Let us offer this decade for those called to proclaim the truth of God's love, that they may bear witness to it with their lives.

4. The Transfiguration of the Lord

Let us pray this decade for those who have been called to follow the Lord who was poor, chaste and obedient, that they may imitate Him and be transformed into His faithful servants.

5. The Institution of the Holy Eucharist

Let us offer this decade for those who are called to share in the priesthood of Christ, that they may be sanctified by their celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist.

V. O Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother of Mercy,

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

LITANY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

R. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

- "The Bread that I will give is my flesh for the life world" (Jn 6:51)

R. My Lord and my God!

- "My flesh is food indeed and my Blood is drink indeed" (Jn 6:55) **R.**
- "Take this, all of you and eat it: This is my Body which will be given up for you. This is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant" (Eucharistic Prayer I) **R.**
- "The cup of blessing that we bless ◊ Is it not the sharing of the Blood of Christ? And the bread that we break ◊ Is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. 10:16) **R.**
- "[Heretics] abstain from the Eucharist, because they do not believe that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins and who the Father in his bounty raised up again." (Saint Ignatius of Antioch) **R.**
- "[This Eucharist] has been blessed by the word of prayer instituted by Him, and from it our flesh and blood by assimilation are nourished. This, we are taught, is both the flesh and blood of Jesus incarnate." (Saint Justin Martyr) **R.**
- "The seeming bread is not bread, though sensible to taste, but the Body of Christ; and the seeming wine is not wine, though the taste would have it so, but the Blood of Christ." (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem) **R.**
- "You ought so to partake at the Holy Table as to have no doubt at all concerning the reality of the body and blood of Christ. For what is taken in the mouth is that which is believed by faith, and it is vain for them to respond 'Amen' who dispute against that which

is taken." (Saint Leo the Great) **R.**

- "Sight, touch, taste are each thee deceived; hearing alone safely is believed." (Saint Thomas Aquinas) **R.**

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:

Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:

Graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world:

Have mercy on us, O Lord.

PRAYER FOR VOCATION

1. Father of mercy, who gave your Son for our salvation and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit, grant us Christian communities which are alive, fervent and joyous, which are fonts of fraternal life, and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate themselves to you and to the work of evangelization. Sustain these communities in their commitment to offer appropriate vocational catechesis and ways of proceeding towards each one's particular consecration. Grant them the wisdom needed for vocational discernment, so that in all things the greatness of your merciful love may shine forth. May Mary, Mother and guide of Jesus, intercede for each Christian community, so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit, they may be a source of true vocations for the service of the holy People of God. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Pope Francis, 53rd WDPV)
2. O Holy Spirit, Spirit of wisdom and divine love, impart your knowledge, understanding, and counsel to youth that they may know the vocation wherein they can best serve God. Give them courage and strength to follow God's holy will. Guide their uncertain steps, strengthen their resolutions, shield their chastity, fashion their minds, conquer their hearts, and lead them to the vineyards where they will labor in God's holy service. Amen.
3. Loving God, you speak to us and nourish us through the life of this Church community. In the name of Jesus, we ask you to send your Spirit to us so that men and women among us, young and old, will respond to your call to service and leadership in the Church. We pray especially, in our day, for those who hear your invitation to be a priest, sister, or brother. May those who are opening their hearts and minds to your call be encouraged and strengthened through our enthusiasm in your service. Amen.
4. Lord our God, hear the prayers of your people gathered here before you. By this sacrament of love bring to maturity the seeds you have sown in the field of your Church; may many of your people choose to serve you by devoting themselves to the service of their brothers and sisters. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
5. (For children) Dear God, thank you for loving me and creating me in your image. You called me by name to live as your child when I was baptized. Jesus, you love me so much that you come to me in Holy Communion. Help many people to be good, kind leaders to serve as priests, sisters, and brothers. Help me to always live my life for you. Amen.
6. (For teens) Dear all-loving God, guide me to my vocation. Give me the courage to embrace my calling in obedience and love for you, who know all. My life is yours to mold into something beautiful. Amen.

By Fr. PETER QUINTO, RCJ

The second path is the “permanent diaconate.” Permanent deacons are not following a call to the priesthood, but rather a call to the diaconate itself. The Catholic Church ordains single, widowed and married men as permanent deacons. Once ordained, deacons may never marry, so like transitional deacons, single and widowed permanent deacons make a promise of perpetual celibacy. Married deacons remain fully married after their ordination, but if a deacon’s wife predeceases him, that deacon will not be able to remarry.

There is no real distinction between a transitional and a permanent deacon. Some permanent deacons have eventually discerned and pursued a call to the priesthood. A deacon is a deacon is a deacon.

From the very beginning, the Catholic Church has had deacons. The most common interpretation of the call of the Seven in Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 6, is that they were in fact, the first deacons of the Church.

Although the practice of the transitional diaconate has remained very stable throughout the history of the Church, the ministry of the permanent deacons in the Western (Roman) Church declined during the early middle ages and all but disappeared. By Contrast, the Eastern Churches have always preserved both the transitional and permanent diaconate as a single institution.

In the early XX Century, bishops, priests and theologians, especially from Western Europe explored the possibilities of the re-introduction of the permanent diaconate. As Church recovered from the traumatic experience of World War II, some of the burning questions among the hierarchy of the Church were: “How could we allow this to happen? Why is the message of the Gospel so disconnected from the lives and the consciences of the People of God?”

Part of the answer to those questions was that the life and ministry of the priest was distant and disconnected from the everyday life of the People of God. A bridge needed to be built and the Church

already had the answer for that: the permanent deacon.

The Second Vatican Council opened the possibility of restoring the diaconate as a permanent ministry for the Roman Catholic Church and on June 18th, 1967 (the Feast of Deacon St. Ephrem the Syrian) Pope Bl. Paul VI implemented that restoration with his Apostolic Letter (given Motu Proprio) *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*. The full text can be found at: w2.vatican.va

Deacons, like St. Stephen and the Seven, where there when the Church first grew beyond the numbers the Apostles were able to minister to directly. Deacons, like St. Lawrence, were there in the middle of the darkest time of Roman perse-

‘Deacons are called to be sacramental icons of Christ, the Servant.’

cution. Deacons, like St. Francis of Assisi (yes, he was a deacon!), were there when the Church needed to be rebuilt. As the Church saw the need to reconnect with the modern world to keep bringing the ever-new Good News of Jesus Christ to it, deacons are being called again to fulfill our ministry of service to the Hierarchy of the Church and to the People of God.

The Permanent Diaconate Today

We are still a little over a year away from the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the permanent diaconate. In Church time, 50 years are no more than an instant, and yet, the permanent diaconate has very quickly become a distinctive sign of Christ, the Servant in Particular Churches worldwide, but especially in

Western Europe and North America.

According to “A Portrait of the Permanent Diaconate: A Study for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops 2014-2015”, a study conducted by Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D. and Thomas P. Gaunt, S.J., Ph.D. from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University. Washington, DC, there are over 18,500 permanent deacons in the United States and over 14,500 of them are active in ministry (the rest are retired because of age, illness and other reasons). 93% of them are married, 4% widowed and 3% single (never married). 71% of the permanent deacons are 60 years old or older and less than 6% are under 50 years of age.

The full study can be found here:

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/diaconate/upload/Diaconate-Post-ordination-Report-2015-FINAL.pdf>

Married candidates to the permanent diaconate are required to be between the ages of 35 and 65 at the time of their ordination. Formation programs are varied from diocese to diocese, but in the United States they are all required to follow the guidelines established by the Conference of Bishops in the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States, which can be found here:

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/diaconate/upload/DiaconDirectory.pdf>

The Ministry of the Deacon

The functions of the Deacon have been generally outlined by *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*:

1. To assist the bishop and the priest during liturgical actions.
2. To administer baptism solemnly.
3. To reserve the Eucharist, to distribute it and to impart benediction with the Blessed Sacrament.



4. In the absence of a priest, to assist at and to bless marriages.
5. To administer sacramentals and to officiate at funeral and burial services.
6. To read Sacred Scripture to the faithful and to instruct and exhort the people.
7. To preside at the worship and prayers of the people when a priest is not present.
8. To direct the liturgy of the word, particularly in the absence of a priest.
9. To carry out, in the name of the hierarchy, the duties of charity and of administration as well as works of social assistance.
10. To guide legitimately, in the name of the parish priest and of the bishop, remote Christian communities.
11. To promote and sustain the apostolic activities of the laity.

Each local bishop may adjust these general guidelines according to the needs of the diocese. For example, in some dioceses of the United States, deacons have been appointed as parish administrators when there are not enough priests for all the parishes in the diocese, even if the parish-

es administered by deacons are not particularly “remote” as #10 above mentions.

The life and ministry of the married deacon has particular challenges. The ministry of the deacon is not a paid position. Some deacons are employees of the Church in different capacities and are compensated for their work in those capacities, but a deacon does not receive pay for his ministry as deacon. This means that most deacons have a secular occupation or employment as their source of income for themselves and their families.

Married deacons have to balance their responsibilities as husbands, fathers, employees, employers or independent professionals together with their diaconal ministry.

That said, it has been observed that the days in the lives of permanent deacons are 24 hours long, like everyone else’s.

It would be impossible for the married deacon to balance all of those responsibilities by himself. Even if the deacon’s wife is not ordained, her ministry and the support she gives to her husband are absolutely essential. That is the reason why many formation programs for permanent deacons are including more and more the candidate’s wife in the process. A married man may not even apply to the formation program for the permanent diaconate without the express consent of his wife. The wife’s consent is required once

more for ordination and in many formation programs, at different times along the process.

The Diaconate as Vocation

The diaconate is a vocation, a calling, and as such, it needs to be discerned, cultivated and promoted.

Like all Vocations, this discernment and promotion happens first and foremost in the family life of boys and young men. When families instill in their children a sense of community, of justice and of service, boys grow up with a sense of responsibility that goes beyond their immediate family. This is essential for marriage, the priesthood and also the diaconate.

Deacons are called to be sacramental icons of Christ, the Servant. A role model of service found in a parent, a priest, another deacon, a consecrated sister or brother or a lay person is usually found at the turning point for the discernment of a call to the permanent diaconate.

Although the diaconate is not open to women, there are many women with outstanding diaconal hearts serving in the Church. They contribute to the diaconate with their prayers, but also as teachers, mentors, spiritual directors and of course, as deacon wives. The diaconate would miss a whole lot without their generous contributions.

If you are interested in the permanent diaconate, approach your pastor and ask him about the formation program in your diocese. Prayerfully consider if God is calling you to this ministry, discuss it with your family, your pastor and your parish community and know, we are praying for you... every day. ■



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HĀ



The Breath of Life in a Vocation

By Br. ADAM BECERRA, FSP

I was inspired to title this article “HĀ: The Breath of Life in a Vocation” because I was on a plane travelling back to the beautiful island of Oah’u. In the Hawaiian language, HĀ literally means the “breath of life.” When we greet each other with a warm Aloha, we are exchanging the breath of life (HĀ) from one body (ALO) to another—that is the gift of ALOHA. It is an experience of honoring the breath of life from our ancestors that resides in each of us as a sacred moment to recognize the power that gives us strength, joy, and a reason for living. But where does this breath of life come from? There is only one source: Akua (God).

The Spirit of God Within Us

In my previous article on vocations, I stated that I was convinced that the first step in exploring a vocational path to a religious life is by experiencing our inner freedom and joy. Our inner freedom and joy cause a “jolting” that transpires us to follow our passions and deepen our relationship with God. This “jolting” is attributed to HĀ which is the Spirit of God that brings about life, power, and joy that is exchanged in one another as we experience the presence of God that is in each of us.

Often too many times, we forget that God resides in us or think that we are not worthy enough to reveal God to others. This is a mistake on our part. Yes, we all recognize that there are moments in our lives where we fall flat because of the decisions that we make that separate us from God. However, this does not define who we are nor should cause us to separate ourselves from God any more than the fall. Rather, what defines who we are is how well we get back up after the fall—that is holiness...that is perfection in God’s eyes...that is God’s breath of life giving us power and joy to get back up! In fact, that is the power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as we experience the power and joy of Jesus Christ over and over because we are forgiven.

To Experience and Transmit God’s Breath of Life

In a vocation to Religious life, we are not defined by our falls; we are defined by how well we rise up and continue to transmit God’s breath of life in everything that we do, especially within our ministries. In my own experience as a senior administrator at Chaminade College Preparatory in California, my work requires me to animate others to discern their decision-making processes properly and implement meaningful strategies

that will improve our educational philosophy—all of this is done through the lens of our core values as a Catholic-Marianist institution. God’s breath of life for me is experienced in three virtues which I have learned through our principle characteristics of Marianist Administration: (1) being person-centered; (2) building community; (3) exercising service of authority. Being person-centered requires me to help others grow in their union with Jesus Christ bound by mutual understanding and personal accompaniment. This is framed with an appreciation that persons grow, develop, and change and is marked by mutual respect, patience, openness, trust, cooperation, attentiveness, and collegiality. Building community is not an end in and of itself. Community must be outwardly focused—attentive to and engaging in the quality of our life that has greater impact than our words in order to seek ways to bear living witness to our shared faith. Lastly, exercising service of authority is not about me having the last word—it is about being “Christo-centric” which helps me exercise my service of authority. Seeking to emulate Jesus, I seek to help those accountable to our mission in their human and spiritual development in order to enhance our educational philosophy. I attempt to lead by animation and offering encouragement, stimulation, and direction through word and action.

To Exchange God's Living Breath

I have intended to describe my experience of "HÅ: The Breath of Life in a Vocation" by way of personal example in my ministry. It is the Spirit that helps me to animate our educators to live out our mission and core values by being person-centered, building community, and exercising a service of authority. My vocation as a religious helps me grow into these three virtues in order to exercise this servant leadership style with the hope that educators may experience God in me as I experience God in them. This mutual exchange of God's living breath gives us the passion, energy, and power to fall in love with God over and over again no matter how hard we may fall.

When discerning for a religious vocation, I invite you to think about these three virtues and ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I called to help others grow in relationship with Jesus Christ bound by mutual understanding and personal accompaniment?
- Am I called to build community with others by being attentive and engaging in a quality of life that bears witness to a shared faith?
- Am I called to exercise a service of authority that seeks to emulate Jesus and animates others by offering encouragement, stimulation and direction through word and deed?

Allow God's breath of life to help you discern these virtues as you think about a vocation to religious life that will help people fall in love with Jesus Christ over and over again! ■



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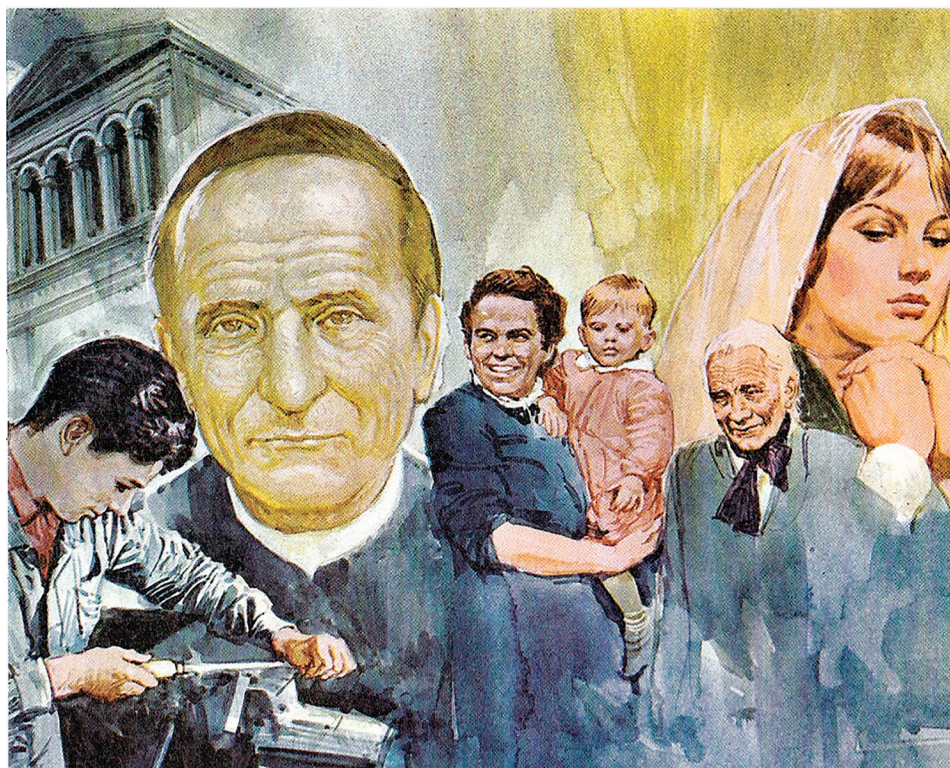
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Are You Looking for Your Vocation?

There is a Secret



By Fr. RENÉ PANLASIGUI, RCJ

Looking for your specific vocation is not as simple as just taking time to reflect. Reflection is important, but I would suggest that it should be done in the context of prayer and of having a conversation with Jesus about your vocation. Spending time with him, especially before the Blessed Sacrament, is a wonderful moment. He will lead you into a deeper friendship. When we become a friend of Jesus, it is easy for him and above all for you to hear clearly his plan and his revelation of his plan for your life. In prayer, you can talk to Jesus; he will explain to you and enlighten your mind, little by little, the reasons why he wants you.

In the Rogationist Fathers' discernment group called SEMEX (Seminary Experience), parish member discerning a vocation come together every third Saturday of the month to discuss about their

vocation. I always invite each discerner to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, to stay with Jesus, and talk to him about his vocation. All of them are also invited to join in our parish Eucharistic adoration for vocations every Thursday. It is in the context of prayer that many times God reveals his call to the person whom he wants.

Another way so you can truly discover your specific vocation, particularly vocation to consecrated life, it is through CHARITY. Yes, if you believe and you feel, God is calling you, you need to test yourself. If God calls you to the priesthood, and religious life, it is a call to SERVICE. So involving yourself to do something for others is the way where Jesus reveals his plan to you. In fact, many consecrated people, bishops, priests, and even lay missionaries, begun to think about following Jesus when they found out they could serve others. How wonderful and meaningful it is to serve God through others!

My Dear Friends, if you want to discern your specific vocation you have to remember two things: PRAYER and CHARITY. This is the way St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, the founder of the Rogationist Fathers and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, showed the Church, and this is how he discovered his vocation: in prayer and in his work of charity among the poor. If many consecrated people open their heart to God's call through prayer and charity, you could also. Give it a try and I assure you, you will be on the right path to discover your vocation! ■



FR. RENÉ PANLASIGUI, RCJ

Is the vocation director of the Rogationist Fathers in the U.S.A. Fr. René holds a degree in Theology from the Lateran University in Rome.

"Go, I send you..."

The Symbols of Discipleship in the Gospel



Painting by Duccio di Buoninsegna

By Fr. GIUSEPPE DE VIRGILIO

In the vocation stories in the Bible, God calls the protagonists to serve a mission, which is expressed by striking symbolic images: the shepherd, the watchman, the builder, the farmer, the fighter, the prophet, the spouse, the king, etc. Abraham is the "wandering Aramean" (Deut 26,5), called by God to leave his country to receive a new land and to have a lineage (Cf. Gen. 12,1-4). Moses, "the exodus hero," is sent to free the people from slavery and lead them to freedom. He receives from God the rod with which to guide his people (cf. Ex 4,1-5). The mission of David, "the great king of Israel," is characterized by the promise of a seed, from which arises the Messiah (cf. 2 Sam 7). In the Gospels they are associated with different symbols to outline the status and mission of the disciple. We mention five:

the fisherman, the sower, the farmer, the shepherd, and the bridegroom.

"Fishers of men" (Lk 5,10)

The first story about following Jesus is found in Mk 1,16-20. The text summarizes in a schematic form the experience of the first four disciples of Jesus, while they are busy in their daily fishing activities. Jesus passes along the shore of the lake and sees Simon and Andrew throwing a net into the sea and invites them: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1,17). The call will also involve the second pair of brothers, James and John, sons of Zebedee (Mk 1,18-20; Lk 5,1-11). The vocational symbol the Lord uses is the image of the 'fisherman,' contextualized in fishing and nets. In this context, the use of a metaphor allows Jesus to create a game of words that emphasizes the transition from their previous work of fishermen to the mission

that they are called to play: to be fishermen in a different sea other than Galilee. The fishery and net images take an eschatological meaning (even so in the biblical tradition: Jer 16,16-18; Am 4,2; Ab 1.14 to 17) in the parable of Mt 13,47-50, which describes how fishermen have the task of collecting all kinds of fish (12,47), while at the end of the world the angels will make the distinction between good and bad fish (12,49).

"He went out to sow" (Mk 4,3)

A second well-known image is taken from the agricultural field: the activities of the sower scattering seeds (Mk 4,1-9; 26-29; 30-32). It is, above all, the parabolic account of Mc 4,3-9 that defines the vocational dynamic enclosed in this agricultural metaphor. In Jesus who sows, the metaphor refers to the disciples who preach the Word following the example of

Jesus. The ecclesial allegorization that follows the parable (cf. Mk 4,13-20) helps us understand even better the purpose of this image. The disciple is not one who teaches selectively as the scribes and Pharisees, but the one who “spreads” the Word all over and scatters it on different soils (road, stones, thorns, fertile soil). He knows that his job is to work so that the Word reaches everyone. This kind of work further returns in the image of the “harvest and the workers,” which Jesus communicates before sending the disciples in mission (Mt 9,35-38). The sending to the mission commanded to the disciples is developed using the image of the harvest that requires hard work because it is “abundant.” The same image of the harvest is taken again in the dialogue of Jesus with his disciples in Jn 4,34-38. The context of John confirms the application of the image of the sower to the ministry of the disciples.

“You too go into my vineyard” (Mt 20,4)

The parable of Mt 20,1-15 includes a further vocational image, which tells of the workers called by the landlord at different times to work in his vineyard. The text of Matthew aims to show how, in the logic of the “Kingdom of Heaven,” the final judgment on the work of the human being is reversed in comparison to the retributive justice model as suggested in the final saying: “The last shall be first, and the first last” (Mt 20,16). We once again face an image that has an Old Testament background and that is used to describe the saving encounter between God and man. In this passage, the vineyard does not represent the people of Israel, but the new reality of evangelization, which the Christian community takes as a priority commitment by. The disciple is called by God to leave his position of inaction, to enter into the dynamic of the Kingdom, and to live their vocation to love.

“Feed my sheep” (Jn 21,16)

A fourth image used by Jesus to call his disciples is that of the shepherd and the flock. The pastoral metaphor, which is well-known in the Old Testament tradition to speak of the relationship between

God and his people (cf. Ps 22; Isaiah 40,11; Ez 34), returns several times in the Gospels, as well as in other New Testament writings (cf. Heb 13,20; 1 Peter 5,4; Rev 7,17). Firstly, it is Jesus who defines him-



self as a “good shepherd” (Jn 10,11) and who describes the altruistic dimension of being a shepherd for the sheep, unlike the mercenary. From this fundamental christological similarity, it is understood the parable of the lost sheep and the shepherd who finds it (Lk 15,4-7); the image of the tired and exhausted people as “sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9,36); and the saying on the shepherd who was beaten and the sheep were scattered (cf. Mt 26,31; cf. Zech 13,7). In particular the similarity returns in the gospel of John in the dialogue between Jesus and Simon Peter after the resurrection (Jn 21,15-18). The Risen Christ asks Simon Peter to love back, giving his life as a “shepherd” of the Church.

“The bridegroom is with them” (Mk 2,19)

Connected to the wedding of the Old Testament symbolism, the metaphor of the “spouse” is applied to the person and mission of Jesus. This bridal metaphor returns in Mt 9,15 (cf. Mc 2,19-20; Lk 5,33-35), where it is Jesus who defines himself as “spouse,” connecting the saving mission with the image of a wedding party. Also in Jn 3,28-30, the Baptist bears witness to the coming of Christ as the eschatological arrival of the “spouse” (cf. Mt 25,1-13), after testifying at the baptism that Jesus is “the Lamb of God” (Jn 1,29). In this perspective, to follow Christ, the Bridegroom, involves vocational logic founded on mar-

riage love. The Church is presented as the “bride of the lamb” (Rev 21,9), betrothed to the only spouse (2 Cor 11,2). The ministerial vocation is generated from the communion of love with God and our brothers

and sisters, which is the “privileged way” of the Church (cf. 1 Cor 13,1-13).

The Gospel in everyday life

Our concise path represents an invitation to deepen the richness of images and biblical symbols that underpin the vocation stories in the Gospels. Our analysis has revealed two important aspects: First, Jesus calls to follow him using the popular images drawn from everyday life: fisherman, sower, farmer, shepherd, bridegroom. This process involves the ability to incarnate the message of salvation in the concrete history of the people and to reveal its comprehensibility. Second, the images and vocational symbols found in the Gospels summarize the richness of the biblical tradition, not only giving a glimpse into the past of Israel (Old Testament), but also actualizing the vocational message in the present, and translating it into “training” of candidates for the ordained ministry and the future of the Church.. ■



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The Sacrament of Confession

*A Privileged Moment
to Experience God's
Mercy*

By Fr. JOHN BRUNO, RCJ, VF

At the beginning of The Year of Mercy, we invited our parishioners for a pilgrimage to the Holy Door in our area and two days before we had invited them to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We decided to preach about Confession during Sunday Mass. I touched on the objection of many, continuously reminded by about twenty protestant churches present in every corner of our town of 25,000 about: "Why do you need to confess to a priest? Confess directly to God!" I reminded our people of the words of Jesus to the Apostles after the Resurrection: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain they are retained" (John 20, 22-23). We confess because Jesus wanted us to do it. Confession is a gift given to the Catholic Church for twenty centuries. It is a new discovery for modern psychology: When you are able to unveil and share with another person a burden from the past, you are relieved of its weight and healed. However, remember: psychologists do not forgive; priests do in the name of God.

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Pope Francis came to our aid when on February 19, 2016 addressed the same objections: "I confess my sins only to God. Yes you can say to God, 'forgive me,' and say your sins, but our sins are also against our brothers, against the Church. This is why it is necessary to ask forgiveness of the Church and of our brothers, in the person of the priest." Then Pope Francis added: "Forgiveness is not a result of our efforts, but a gift. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit who showers us with mercy and grace that pours forth unceasingly from the open heart of Christ crucified and risen."

Embarrassment is good

In our penance service and confessions, some, especially young people, would ask if any priest was hearing confessions with a screen because they were embarrassed. Unfortunately, we had only one of eight stations with a veil and directed people there, even though I would say: "most of the priests do not know you." In his talk on confession, pope Francis also said: "Even embarrassment is good. It is healthy to have a bit of shame...it does us good, because it makes us more humble. Don't be afraid of confession... when one finishes confessing, he leaves (feeling) free, great, beautiful, forgiven, clean, happy." Several young people, who came to confession, were not afraid to share with others: "I feel so good, so free..." When we go to confession, it is a healing of the soul and of the heart that my sins have hurt and scarred.

A good confessor is a good penitent

As a priest, I find celebrating the sacrament of penance is a humbling and satisfying experience. I recall the words of the Holy Father in *Misericordiae Vultus* that to be a good confessor we must be good penitent and always compassionate. "I will never tire of insisting that confessors be authentic signs of the Father's mercy. We do not become good confessors automatically. We become good confessors when, above all, we allow ourselves to be penitents in search of his mercy. Let us never forget that to be confessors means to participate in the very mission of Jesus to be a concrete sign of the constancy of divine

love that pardons and saves. We priests have received the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and we are responsible for this. None of us wields power over this Sacrament; rather, we are faithful servants of God's mercy through it. Every confessor must accept the faithful as the father in the parable of the prodigal son: a



father who runs out to meet his son despite the fact that he has squandered away his inheritance. Confessors are called to embrace the repentant son who comes back home and to express the joy of having him back again. Let us never tire of also going out to the other son who stands outside, incapable of rejoicing, in order to explain to him that his judgment is severe and unjust and meaningless in light of the father's boundless mercy. May confessors not ask useless questions, but like the father in the parable, interrupt the speech prepared ahead of time by the prodigal son, so that confessors will learn to accept the plea for help and mercy pouring from the heart of every penitent. In short, confessors are called to be a sign of the primacy of mercy always, everywhere, and in every situation, no matter what (M.V. 17)." To hear confessions, certainly makes me think about my own sins, the truthfulness and simplicity

of the people and my own need of God's mercy.

Preaching about confession

Our penitential service was a sign of how people understood and celebrated, when reminded, the meaning and fruitfulness of The Holy Year of Mercy. A couple of bigger parishes in the area tried the 24 hours confessions suggested by *Misericordiae Vultus* and were pleasantly surprised by the attendance of penitents. Other parishes and my own parish, when the need and beauty of confessions were not preached, had little attendance. This year more than 400 people participated and eight confessors were available for three hours.

Confessions and pilgrimage

Two days later most of the same people and others participated in the pilgrimage to the Door of Mercy in our local vicariate. One of the beautiful surprises was the singing, often ignored, of the official hymn "Misericordes sicut Pater" in English, Spanish, and Latin. The choir would like to continue to sing the hymn throughout The Year of Mercy. As I spoke at this special Mass about the works of mercy, the Divine Mercy chaplet, and plenary indulgence, people were brought back to an older spirituality, which made them proud to be Catholic and wanting to repeat the experience periodically. How true the words of Pope Francis at the end of the Bull

"In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of casting open the doors of his heart and of repeating that he loves us and wants to share his love with us. The Church feels the urgent need to proclaim God's mercy. Her life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy" (M.V. 25). ■



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Luke 15

The parables of the Lost



these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon” (MV no. 8). Not only does God’s mercy never give up on us, but God’s mercy is joyful in finding us and pardoning us! This is truly the mystery of mercy.

How is this connected to our discernment or our vocation? Being “found” by God is essential in vocational discernment. We need to know ourselves, to know where we are lost. We need to accept the parts of ourselves that are lost, and be willing to let God find us, instead of hiding our imperfections from him. When we are able to freely admit that we are lost, and open our hearts to God’s compassion, mercy, and joy in finding us, we encounter the most precious aspect of God’s love. And it is this love that calls us, this love that leads us to the happiness God desires for us.

Let us, then, follow the advice of St. Paul, who said, “I am content with weaknesses...for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). Let us be content to let God find us when we are lost, confident that he rejoices to show us his merciful love.

Heavenly Father, thank you for revealing the joy that you have in bestowing your mercy on me. I want to welcome it with the same joy. Amen. ■



SR. EMILY BEATA MARSH, FSP

Is a Daughter of St. Paul. She is currently studying theology at The Catholic University of America, as well as serving in the Pauline mission of evangelization in Alexandria, Virginia.

By Sr. Emily Beata Marsh, FSP

The parables in Luke 15 may be among the most famous passages in the Gospels: the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the parable of the lost son (the prodigal son). Each of these three parables uses a different image to illustrate the same point: God the Father goes in search of his lost children.

Interestingly, in the New American Bible Revised Edition, each of these parables is given a heading or title: “The Parable of the Lost Sheep,” “The Parable of the Lost Coin,” and “The Parable of the Lost Son.” Collectively, we could call these “The Parables of the Lost.” In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, it is worth taking time to reflect, in the context of our spiritual life, what it means to be lost, what it means to be found, and what that has to do with discernment.

What does it mean to be lost, spiritually? I’m sure we can all answer that question. We can be lost in prayer, not knowing how to pray, what to say, or how to reach God. We can be lost in relationships—perhaps we’ve hurt someone, or been hurt by someone, or are simply hav-

ing difficulty communicating with someone. We can be lost when it comes to our own self-esteem, putting ourselves down and not believing we are loved as we are.

The parables say very little about how the sheep or the coin became lost. The important part for God is what happens next: after losing one sheep, who would not “leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it?” (Lk 15:4). The woman who loses her coin makes the same tremendous effort: she “light[s] a lamp and sweep[s] the house, searching carefully until she finds it?” (Lk 15:8). The paradox of these “parables of the lost” is that it is only the lost ones who can be found. It is only those who fall who can be picked up, carried, and caressed by the shepherd, the woman, the father.

In his letter opening the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis wrote about these parables, He described the characteristics of God who finds us. “In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy” (MV no. 8). God’s mercy never gives up on us. Further, Pope Francis writes, “In

Called to be Heroes of Mercy

The Ministry of Catholic Sisters during the Civil War



Daughters of Charity (formerly Sisters of Charity) at Satterlee Military Hospital during the Civil War.

By Sr. LOU ELLA HICKMAN, IWBS

"For Mercy has a human heart, Pity a human face." William Blake, the famous English poet wrote these lines in his poem, "The Divine Image." Blake died in 1827 a mere thirty-four years before the outbreak of America's greatest trauma—the Civil War. Within its four-year time frame, some 620,000 men died of which 414,000 succumbed to such diseases as malaria, chicken pox, measles, pneumonia, and smallpox. Then there was gangrene or infection that resulted from both wounds as well as surgery. Blake's words describe well the heroic role Catholic sisters played in tending the wounded and dying of both the North and the South.

Both sides believed the war would be won in short order. However, as the war lengthened and casualties increased in such large numbers, the North and the South scrambled to respond to the battlefield holocausts. In 1861, there was only one Federal military hospital, which was located in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas while the Confederacy medical corps consisted of only 24 officers. By the end of the war in 1865, the North had created some 204 military hospitals and the South 150. When the Satterlee Hospital (Philadelphia) opened in 1862, it would become the largest and best planned with 25 Daughters of Charity as nurses. When the war ended in 1865, that number had increased to 90. Also, almost if all available buildings in towns close to battlefields were often turned into make-

shift hospitals. Even the pews in churches became beds for the wounded or the sick.

To oversee the vast number of volunteers needed to staff the hospitals, President Abraham Lincoln appointed Miss Dorothea Lynde Dix (1802-1887) as Superintendent of U.S. Army Nurses. Sad to say it would be a choice he would bitterly regret. She had poor executive skills even though she was internationally famous for her reform of mental institutions. Within weeks she created so much confusion that the Surgeon-General issued orders forbidding the women Dix provided to march with regiments or even live in the camps. And she was also a staunch anti-Catholic who refused to appoint Catholic women as nurses and she was jealous of the fame the

sisters had achieved. This fame was due to their discipline in following doctor's orders as well as their willingness to do any job asked of them. Not only that, many of the sisters unlike their secular counterparts had medical training. This was due to the fact many religious orders were founded to care for the sick. By 1860, religious communities were in charge of 28 hospitals. In fact, some the Sisters of Mercy received their training from Florence Nightingale. But above all, the military discovered their compassion for the wounded and the dying as well as their dedication. So much so, many doctors, public leaders, and those in command often went out of their way to bypass Dix's authority in order to acquire them. The military would express its gratitude by honoring Sister Mary Collette O'Conner, R.S.M., with the rank of major.

One such dedicated religious was Sister Lucy Dosh, SCN, who died as a result of tending a cholera patient in a prison hospital. A truce was called out of respect for her and an honor guard of both Union and Confederate soldiers carried her casket to a riverboat, which took her body to Kentucky for burial. Union soldiers captured another religious, Sister M. Stephana Ward, R.S.M., when she was discovered caring for Confederates. After she was freed, she managed to return to her Pittsburgh convent. She was so malnourished her own sisters didn't recognize her. After her recuperation, she would continue to serve the wounded at the Stanton Hospital in Washington, D.C. These two religious are examples that the sisters were color-blind to a soldier's uniform or creed.

Another example of dedication came when Sister Otillia Duche, R.S.M. was able to outsmart a military purchasing officer. When her hospital wasn't able to obtain food, she and another sister took it upon themselves to get what they needed.

These three religious were part of some 640 sisters who were involved in military nursing at some point during the Civil War (There were some 3,200 female nurses plus 6,000-7000 women assistants. Due to the high rate of turnover not all of these women served at the same time). These sisters came from 20 religious communities rep-

resenting 12 different orders. There were six communities of the Sisters of Mercy, the Daughters of Charity of Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, two communities of the Dominican Sisters, Sisters of St. Joseph, Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy, the Sisters of Providence, the Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and the Ursuline Nuns (Marvels of Charity: History of American Sisters and Nuns by George C. Stewart, Jr. pp. 194-195).


Yet, for religious sisters and Catholics in general the Civil War was the turning point for social acceptance. In 1860 there were some 4.5 million Catholics, which was one sixth of the total population. This anti-Catholic prejudice had developed due to a rapid growth of the number of Catholics over a period of some twenty years. Many sisters also had the added stigma of being "foreigners." One can only guess to the number of soldiers who returned home with a different attitude thanks to a compassionate encounter with one of the "angels of the battlefield" as they were often called. And some sixty years later in 1924, all of these religious would be honored with a congressional monument erected near St. Matthew Cathedral in Washington, D.C. It was aptly titled: "Nuns of the Battlefield."

Religious sisters would be called upon again during the Spanish-American War to be heroes of mercy. Nor does their legacy end there; yet it remains one that is all but invisible. During WWI, Sister Marguerite Coyne, C.S.J., became creative in order to save two patients—one a baby—when she invented the first infant oxygen tent. About a week ago, I watched a PBS program on the Prohibition and mention was made of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous: Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith. However, no mention was made of Sister Ignatia Gavin, C.S.A. who was in charge of admissions at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio. With Dr. Smith's help, she admitted an alcoholic. Thus in 1939, St. Thomas became the first hospital in the world to treat alcoholism as a medical con-

dition. Sister went on to personally treat thousands of alcoholics. Many people may not know the world renowned Mayo Clinic got its start with the help of the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester. One of those religious, Sister Joseph Dempsey, was Dr. William James Mayo's first surgical assistant and remained so from 1890-1925.

One of the hallmarks of religious life has traditionally been a great sensitivity to the Spirit, that is, a responding to the needs of the times. One of those needs was missionary doctors. Sister Helen Lalinsky, M.M.S. was the first religious to receive an MD degree and she would travel to India and Pakistan as a missionary. Sister Pauline Dean, M.M.M. was a pediatrician and missionary in Nigeria during its civil war in 1961. Sister Victoria Segura, C.B.S. trained as a pathologist and then entered the Sisters of Bon Secours and later become a hospice physician. She is now Medical Director of Bon Secours Richmond and Palliative Medicine in Richmond, Virginia. Perhaps one of the most notable contributions to medicine was the gift the sisters made of themselves in the Nun Study. Beginning in 1986 and lasting for some fifteen years, 678 religious of the School Sisters of Notre Dame were part of a research project that was called innovative by experts in the medical field. Scientist David Snowdon worked with the sisters to help him unravel the devastation caused by Alzheimer's disease. Some of the clues he discovered were as simple as having a positive attitude as well as having an education.

Whether the battlefield was Shiloh, a mission post or Alzheimer's research, religious sisters have been there with compassion. Blake's lines about mercy serve well to describe our legacy. During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, the question remains, "If not you (us), who? If not now, when?" ■



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Latin America

AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE CAMINAN



MIGRANTESHOY

Migrantes Hoy Migrants Today

The USCCB Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church in conjunction with CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Conference) launched the portal Migrantes Hoy or Migrants today (www.migranteshoy.celam.org) to communicate, inform, educate, and offer a religious, social, and cultural accompaniment with and for migrants.

In his message "Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy" for the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis said, "Migration movements are now a structural reality, and our primary issue must be to deal with the present emergency phase by providing programmes which address the causes of migration and the changes it entails, including its effect on the makeup of societies and peoples."



United States

40 Hours Devotion

Adoration for Vocations

The Diocese of Salt Lake City organized a special 40-hour period of prayer to promote vocations to priesthood, diaconate, and religious life. Each mission and parish in the Diocese participated in one Forty Hour Devotion before the Blessed Sacrament last year. All parishioners were encouraged to sign up for one hour of adoration and to pray specifically for vocations. You can learn more about the 40 Hours of Devotion for Vocations at:

www.dioslc.org/vocations/40-hours-of-devotion

FOCUS 11 Project

A "Vocations Field Trip"

Every year the Diocese of St. Petersburg organizes a two-day vocations rally for all six graders. FOCUS 11 Project dates back to 1989 when the Archdiocese of Detroit first introduced this program "based on several studies that showed that most priests and religious first thought about ministry at about age eleven" (USCCB).

FOCUS 11, a vocations awareness program, offers students in six grade the opportunity to think about God's call in their lives be it to the vocation of marriage, single life, priesthood, or religious life. The activities for the day include music, prayer, keynote speakers, a vocation skit, a Serra Club poster contest, vocation activities, and a presentation by Bishop Robert Lynch.

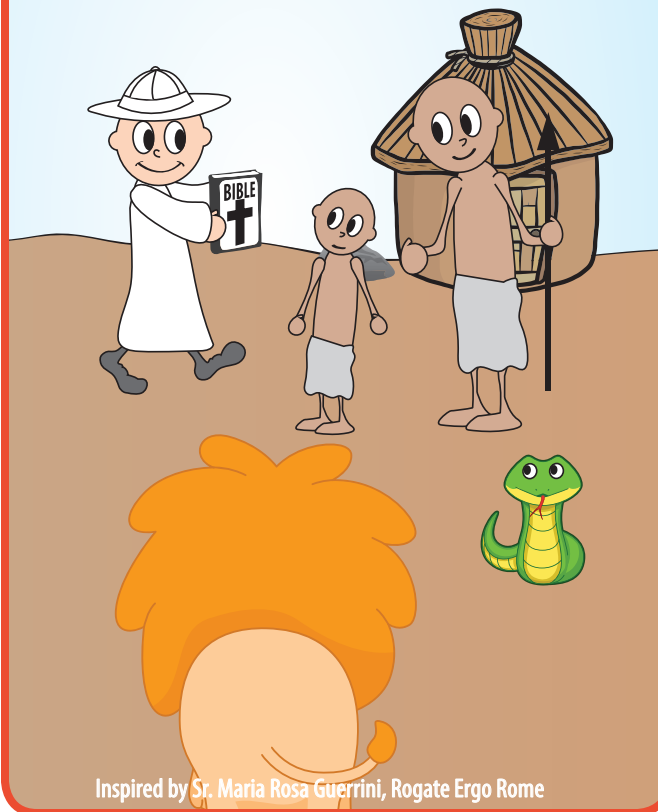
For more information about FOCUS 11, visit the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida, Vocations Office website at:

www.dosp.org/vocations/blog/focus-11-2016

CORNER MESSAGE

**"Go, therefore and make
disciples of all nations."**

(Mt 28,19)



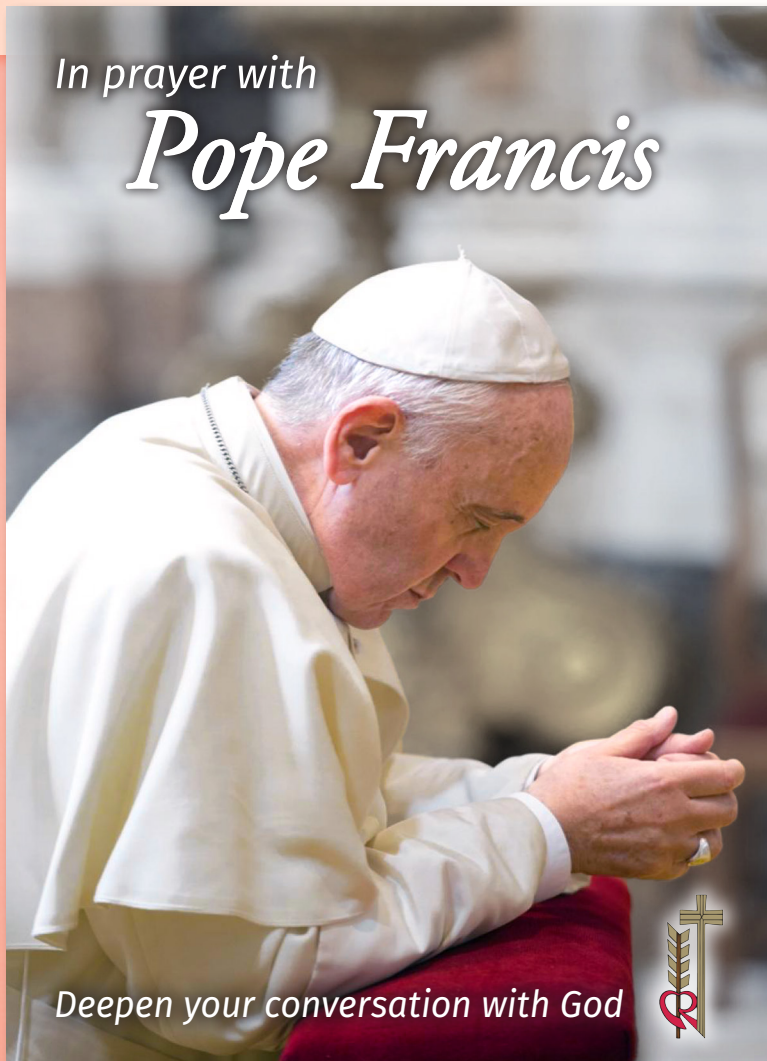
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