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Promoting a Culture of Integration



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Welcoming and Integration Expressions of Christian Love

By Fr. ANTONIO FIORENZA, RCJ

In the recent Los Angeles March for Women, a protestant's sign struck me: "Immigrants Made America Great!" Beyond any political interpretation, this sign made me reflect on the reality of immigration, a world phenomenon. We witness in our time, more than ever, a global migration of people.

Immigration is a hope for many people looking for a way to improve their living conditions; the causes are certainly different, as are many social and political problems that migration raises.

It represents one of the most urgent challenges in today's society. It is also a challenge for the Church, who is called to witness a Gospel message based on reciprocal love, without any distinction of race, culture or religion.

Each challenge that poses unfamiliar problems, also presents new opportunities. Pope Francis, in his message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2017, writes:

"This phenomenon constitutes a sign of the times, a sign which speaks of the providential work of God in history and in the human community, with a view to universal communion. While appreciating the issues, and often the suffering and tragedy of migration, as too the difficulties connected with the demands of offering a dignified welcome to these persons, the Church nevertheless encourages us to recognize God's plan. She invites us to do this precisely amidst this phenomenon, with the certainty that no one is a stranger in the Christian community, which embraces "every nation, tribe, people and tongue" (Rev 7:9).

The most common terms in social and ecclesial language about immigration are welcoming and integration.

Welcoming is first of all an interior disposition, an openness of heart and mind that allow us to view each person as a brother, as a sister, as a child of God: "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me" (Mk9:37; cf. Mt 18:5; Lk 9:48; Jn 13:20). Ultimately, accepting others is a way to meet God.



Integration is a long and slow process of inclusion into a new society and a new culture. It involves the one who welcomes and the one being welcomed; it involves the State, all the various social entities, the communities, the associations, the families and the individual person.

What is the responsibility of the Church, the Christian communities, and the many congregations of religious men and women with migrants and refugees? First of all, to welcome them with hospitality and assistance without discrimination of any kind; then to help them integrate into society and their communities of faith.

The Church above all is called to promote with all its resources a culture of Welcoming and Integration to face a narrow mentality that is born from xenophobia and that spreads a fear of the "foreigner." The Church promotes the culture of Welcoming and Integration in obedience to the command of Jesus: "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). In doing so she also fulfills her original vocation, to be of service to men and women of every race and culture.

The institutes of consecrated life have always been at the forefront in sharing the mission of the Church. Today in serving the migrants, displaced and refugees, consecrated men and women find new expressions for their apostolate, capable of renewing fidelity to their founding charisma and inspiring new vocations. ■



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An illustration featuring several hands of different colors (pink, teal, purple, orange, yellow, blue, and light green) reaching towards the center of the page. The hands are arranged in a circular pattern, symbolizing unity and diversity. The background is white, and the text is centered within the circle formed by the hands.

Finding Unity in the Midst of Diversity

Promoting a Culture of Integration

By Fr. WILLIAM REISER, SJ

The Church has wrestled with the challenge posed by diversity practically from the first Pentecost. All may have received the same Spirit, but the idyllic picture that Luke gives us in Acts 2:42-47 did not last. Not only were there differences of personality among the first disciples and companions of Jesus, but as the apostles preached and believers coalesced into communities and house churches, differences became more pronounced. Paul had issues with several of the so-called “pillar apostles” (notably Peter and James), while some of the communities he worked so hard to form found themselves divided from within. Sometimes it was a matter of social class; we catch a glimpse of this when Paul reprimands the Corinthian community over their scandalous way of celebrating the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:17-22). At other times it was a matter of getting Jews and Gentiles to accept one another, or of dealing with converts who had yet to fully detach themselves from pagan ways of thinking or acting. The story of Philemon and his runaway slave furnishes us with yet another insight into the dynamics of social difference and Paul’s appeal to the unifying mystery of baptism.

Differences with respect to social and economic privilege are mirrored back to us through many passages in the Gospel of Luke. The evangelist is encouraging those who are privileged to reach out to the ones who never get invited to banquets and feasts, and to do so not just once or twice (Luke 14:12-14). Jesus wants his followers actually to receive one another—rich and poor alike—as family. And in that regard, ethnic identity is not to be a boundary line, for this new family is even going to include Samaritans and those who live at the farthest corners of the earth (Acts 1:8).

A Church challenged by diversity

Diversity, with its corresponding challenge of how to integrate, played itself out even further over time as the Church embraced peoples of so many different languages, customs, sacred narratives, tradi-

tions, and skin colors. While it would be reassuring to say that the Church’s embrace has always been a warm one, the historical reality has, sadly, often been painful. Efforts of the part of some missionaries to welcome and adapt met with strong resistance on the part of other missionaries who were unable to distinguish Christian faith and practice from the cultural context in which they themselves had been brought up. In Latin America the arrival of the conquistadores and the missionaries who accompanied them frequently meant rooting out nearly everything indigenous that seemed to be discordant with Western culture. Cultural and religious elements that struck the missionaries as strange were categorized as pagan and idolatrous; such elements thus needed to

*“Only the humble
are really free.”*

be stamped out. Another example was the 17th and 18th-century Chinese Rites controversy, when once again a narrow European theological perspective (combined with a dash of economic interests and religious rivalry) triumphed over advancing the gospel.

The history of inculturation and integration has not been smooth. How do we welcome and integrate those who are different without forcing them to become just like us? That is the challenge. But differences go beyond culture, language, modes of dress, and modes of thinking. The Church cannot realistically seek out and invite to its doors those living at the social margins (and who are therefore quite different from us) without being aware that,

once inside, the presence of the poor and the marginalized is going to affect us profoundly.

Only the humble are free

Vocational awareness calls for a high degree of humility. Most of us usually don’t have that as we start out in the seminary or religious life; but months and years of formation, together with our efforts to be both prayerful and close to God’s people, make us realize that we are (as Pope Francis’ episcopal motto reminds us) both sinful and chosen. And one of humility’s fruits is patience with others and with oneself. Yet what holds true for individual religious and priests also holds true for the communities and congregations to which we belong—and for the Church itself: humility is indispensable. Only the humble are really free.

In the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius makes note of three degrees of humility (they could just as easily be called the three degrees of freedom). The first two degrees are variations on a simple religious theme that applies to all human beings, namely, that in word, thought, and practice, that in the whole orientation of our lives, we are living this truth: we are creatures and we owe our existence to God the Creator and Lord. But the third degree of humility—a grace to be desired, if God calls us to it—has particular relevance for religious communities as well as the Church. Ignatius writes: “The third kind of humility is the most perfect humility. It is present when my disposition is as follows. Given that the first and second kinds of humility are included, and supposing equal praise and glory of the Divine Majesty, then, in order to imitate Christ our Lord and to be actually more like him, I want and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth, and humiliations with Christ humiliated rather than fame, and I desire more to be thought worthless and a fool for Christ, who first was taken to be such, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world.”

As hard as it is, this evangelical humility is the only solid foundation on which to build a culture of integration and inclusion.



Letting go of culturally conditioned assumptions, recognizing and breaking through prejudice and stereotypes, the freedom to move not simply beyond our comfort zones but actually to feel comfortable among those at the periphery and to welcome difference: all of this depends upon how much we long “to imitate Christ our Lord and to be actually more like him.” We are constantly surrounded by people who are different; but how often does their difference actually penetrate the fences that we built to keep others at a safe distance from our affections, that is, from touching our hearts? “Make friends,” I advise my students, “with people who are different.” Do I have any friends who were ever in prison? Or who are undocumented? Or who have had to depend upon welfare? Do I have friends whose skin color is different from mine? What about someone in recovery who wrestles each day with the call to be sober? If not, then what is standing in the way of my making such friendships?

The humility we contemplate in the example of Jesus is the freedom he has to be with people, especially people who live and die at the roadsides of the world—the Bartimauses and Lazaruses of our time. There is no more powerful image in the gospels of Jesus’ oneness with those at the

bottom than the cross. The point, however, is not so much the cross itself as the desire to accompany his people that brought Jesus to the cross and the freedom that enabled him to accompany them to the end. Above all, Jesus’ people are the poor and humiliated, the ones who are treated as worthless and of little account in the reckoning of the wise and the prudent. And they sought him out.

Not walls, but bridges

Being open and respectful of others is undoubtedly an important civic virtue. Welcoming the stranger and those fleeing violence and persecution is not merely good social etiquette, but a value—a virtue—enshrined in the Statue of Liberty, a value whose humanistic roots are ultimately religious. Its famous inscription reads: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.” Yet, as we have seen, the rich sentiment expressed here can be easily forgotten or tossed aside. “A person who thinks about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian,” Pope Francis remarked as he was returning to Rome from Mexico. “This is not the gospel.”

The Church is a light—a flesh-and-blood sign—that bears witness to the gospel way of looking at the world. It is first and foremost a community in which faith is more important than bloodlines. We take Jesus’ words literally: “And looking at those who sat around him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’” (Mark 3:34-35) In the Church, ethnicity, language, race and social class are not boundaries that exclude but traits of the one human family which need to be acknowledged and esteemed. Such, of course, is the Christian ideal; and with this ideal in mind the Church, too, must constantly examine its conscience. Are our doors as open as the Good Shepherd wants them to be? Does the believing community give witness to a culture of integration?

Then, within the Church, what about religious communities? The wisdom of religious congregations can be helpful as we think about integration and inclusiveness. Throughout their history these communities have functioned as laboratories where women and men from different cultural backgrounds and social worlds learned the ways of the Spirit. Religious houses are places where people from different social classes and language groups,

racess and skin colors—all of them God-seekers—are looking for God together. More than any work or mission they undertake, the colossal bond that unites religious communities is their shared search for God. This bond makes it possible to look beyond the many limitations and shortcomings each of us carries. To be sure, not everyone in the world is going to join the Church, let alone enter a religious community. Nevertheless, the witness which the Church and our communities give—their light—should be a compelling sign of (in the words of Vatican II) “a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (Lumen Gentium, #1).

Coming together is not so easy

Inculturation and integration create a small dilemma. When cultures meet, they also exchange. What emerges is a bit of both, but some things are also lost or transformed as cultures interface. Some people learn to live with, even eventually to welcome the subsequent integration, while others are fearful and resist it. One example that comes to mind is the Latino experience; children whose parents come from Central or South grow up in two cultures. And the same thing happens to families arriving in the United States from the Middle East or Asia.

Yet in one way or another, none of us escapes the process of globalization that is unfolding all over the planet. Just as climate change has led to water scarcity in the Andes, so too globalization has led to the erosion of the distinctive indigenous culture in the Andean world; some indigenous cultures there will most likely disappear entirely. Such examples can be multiplied. Yet perhaps a worse danger in all of this is not what results when cultures meet—when the countryside meets the city, for example, or when people formed by different national histories and religious traditions share the same neighborhood. The real menace comes from one particular culture, namely, the culture of consumerism, because the culture of consumerism is a deadly enemy of the common good. Consumerism does not contribute; it only knows how to eat.

Many religious institutes are international, drawing members from a wide variety of nations and cultures. As a result, these communities and their houses of formation often experience the tension and challenge that arise when religious from different cultures, languages, and local histories live together. The same thing can happen in seminaries where students come from a variety of nations and language groups. But the tension may pivot on more than a determination about which language will be spoken in the community or what sort of food will appear in the dining room. There can be sharp differences with respect to our politics and national loyalties. Or there may be serious differences with respect to our theology and pastoral practice—differences that demand thorough familiarity with the practice of discernment (as Pope Francis has been pleading). Such are a few of the challenges. Negotiating them is not easy and might not even be possible, unless the community from the start lives and fosters a culture of integration. Which brings us back to humility.

Breaking an illusion

Towards the end of his remarks at the Convention on Vocational Pastoral Ministry in October 2016, Pope Francis said, “Jesus’ desire to encourage people to journey, to move them from their deadly apathy, breaks the illusion that it is possible to live happily while remaining comfortably seated among one’s own securities.” The journey that Jesus encourages us to set out on, however, means walking a road along which we will not be in control; otherwise the apathy of which the Pope speaks would follow us at every turn—and it is deadly because it suffocates our spiritual breath, the soul’s ability to recognize who are brothers and sisters really are. One sure way of realizing that we are not in control is when we find ourselves face to face with people who are different from us, with no way to detour around them. Their presence penetrates our securities and defenses, and forces us to make a choice. Do we allow them into our lives, or do we push them away? Even in religious life, even as pastors entrusted with the care of souls, integrating those who are different into

our communities can challenge the securities on which we have come to depend.

“In order to imitate Christ our Lord and to be actually more like him”: here is where we need to start. This is why, on the journey toward inclusion, Jesus has to take the lead. A culture of integration is a mindset; it does not remove differences and it does not require a breathless, stultifying uniformity. But a culture of integration does require a great deal of interior freedom, in the exact way that Jesus was free.

The massive migrations caused by the deadly conflict in the Middle East have brought out the best and the worst of the lands to which the refugees have fled. So too with the border crossings into North America. On a much smaller scale, however, there are other examples of crossing over. I think of Dismas House, L’Arche communities, and Catholic Worker houses, not to mention the hospitality traditionally associated with religious communities. The presence of refugees and exiles among us forces us to face “the illusion that it is possible to live happily while remaining comfortably seated among [our] own securities.” And the existence of the communities and houses of men and women drawn from the margins points to the hope which we share that a culture of integration is truly possible. Yet more is demanded from those of us whose privilege protects us from being in the shoes of the migrant, or the ex-prisoner, or the disabled, or the homeless and tempest-tossed. Still, we cannot respond to the challenges of our times as the gospel calls us to, if we are not inwardly free: free to the point that we desire to imitate Christ our Lord and to be actually more like him. Our best resource to help in promoting and cultivating a culture of integration is, as always, the gospel itself. ■



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Migrants and Refugees and the Mission of the Church Today

Practical Suggestions for a Multicultural Parish Community

By Fr. RANIERO ALESSANDRINI, CS

The phenomenon of migration is as old as the very history of humanity. Since before the written word, human experience has witnessed the steady flow of individuals and groups who have felt need, for whatever reason, to abandon their homeland and seek new ground. Motivated by either pure adventure,

threats, or simply by the hope of finding a better environment, we can safely say that all nations are the outgrowth of different migration movements and civilizations. Various economic, political, social, religious and cultural factors embody this phenomenon of migration in its causes and consequences.

Today humanity faces a cultural and re-

ligious pluralism unheard of in previous centuries. Technological progress in the field of mass communication and social media has led the world to experience a unique openness towards other cultures and religious traditions no longer considered foreign as people come together and intermingle. Among the consequences of this significant social phenomenon is the presence of about two hundred and fifty



immigrants spread all over the different parts of the world.

There are several causes for the waves of numberless migrants rushing into many nations particularly in Europe: poverty triggered by natural disasters, unbalanced economic and political situations caused by globalization, life-threatening movements instigated by charismatic religious and political extremists.

Multicultural Parishes

With people of different cultures, values, and models of life, the pastoral structure of the majority of parishes have changed dramatically the last thirty years. From national and mono-cultural faith communities we now witness multi-cultural and territorial parishes, giving pastoral attention to specific ethnic groups. Consequently, to build an authentically Catholic Church, each faith community is called to integrate the specific and unique reality of the groups that compose it. The parish represents a space in which a true pedagogy of meeting with people of various religious and cultures can be realized.

Today, leaders of parishes need to understand the components of cultures present in their community in order to facilitate the dialogue among them. A culture, distinctly assimilated and lived by each individual, is a phenomenon that characterizes nations and communities with a distinct worldview and way of life. Culture exemplifies the cumulative and shared experiences of a community, which are transmitted from one generation to another. The experiences have been stored and preserved in language, customs, traditions and myth. Culture is always marked by stable and enduring elements, as well as by changing and contingent features: it is a living system.

Community leaders need to be aware that it is the right of every person to culture itself: to take away a person's culture is to deny an important aspect of who we are. Furthermore each person has the right to development in culture. Culture becomes an important vehicle for development of the person at all levels, includ-

ing the spiritual. It is precisely this positive valuing of culture that provides (as we will see) the theological basis for any reflection on many cultures in the Church.

Community leaders need to address, understand, and facilitate the needed dialogue between cultures. As we have mentioned, the world has been called a global village: there is a plurality of world views, cultures, religion and ways of organization. In order to understand cultures with their basic and varied components, it is essential to accept the challenge of comparing them with ours. Migration exposes us to this challenge. On the one hand, this plurality could become enrichment; on the other, it is often perceived as an obstacle leading to intolerance and suppression especially of the minority and the weak. A serene and objective en-

"To take away a person's culture is to deny an important aspect of who we are."

counter with other cultures requires the awareness of our own culture and the appreciation of its historic and social make up. At the same time this encounter, this dialogue, will make us mindful of the limits of our culture, of each culture, and consequently safeguard from conceited isolation. A deeper reflection favored by such encounter will disclose components familiar in all cultures, a providential factor that facilitates mutual acceptance and enrichment. Cultural diversity should be understood within the broader spectrum of the unity of the human race. In fact, only an overall vision of both the elements of unity and the elements of diversity makes it possible for us understand

and interpret the full truth of every human culture.

Practical and Challenging Suggestions

After these theoretical reflections, the following practical and challenging suggestions will help realize the harmony and cooperation within a multicultural parish community.

The inclusion of cultural signs, symbols, music and languages of immigrants and other ethnic communities into the worship services is one of the most profound and lasting ways of welcoming diverse people into the Church. Nonetheless, we must be aware that integration cannot be rushed: patience is necessary for the fragility, at times, of the immigrant group in finding its own voice and space. Most migrants want to assimilate into the community they have entered: but they frequently want to do it at their own pace and in their own way, instead of one-way assimilation, always aware the new mode of life will be distinct from the cultural tradition they left.

Pastors and leaders motivated to serve may lack the language and the experience or models to reach out to newcomers. A "welcoming committee" becomes their right hand. Through it they learn the changing demographics of the parish, the cultural background and circumstances of arrival of newcomers, their names, their social and economic needs. The committee will facilitate the matching of "partner family" as to orient the newcomers to parish life and ease the transition. A "welcoming packet" could include general information about the parish (parish events, mass schedule, and sacraments...), the community and social assistance (immigration services, medical emergency...).

The empowering of lay ministry leadership is important for all parish community: with the lack of ethnic priests in a multicultural setting, lay leaders need more sway and authority that is usually given to non-pastors. Even more so it is essential for the training and empower-



ing of immigrant lay ministers. Shared retreats and neutral facilitator may help groups mingle and decide together.

A concise packet of reflections and suggestions is needed to address the multicultural celebrations that are so significant in the process of integrating all faithful of a parish.

Although it is still important and necessary for newcomers to have opportunities to worship primarily in their own native language, increased opportunities for multicultural liturgies and prayer-services should be encouraged: these kinds of celebrations increase multicultural understanding and promote unity in the parish community. And even when language is lost, unique cultural templates remain from the original culture about religion, authority, kinships, hospitality, and gender relations: all these are integral components for all celebrations.

Help parishioners understand and appreciate the way God manifests His presence in a multi-cultural celebration, modeling an attitude of listening, patience and sacrifice. It is the task of the pastoral team to bring the faithful together and help them focus on what will be gained in celebrating

their faith with other cultural groups.

Evaluate and understand the parish setting when planning liturgies. Know from which cultural group parishioners come from (are they bilingual?)

Attempts should be made to have common liturgies, but not too often, maybe four to six times a year (Epiphany, Holy Thursday, Pentecost, parish Feast Day...) Care should be taken not to deprive the immigrants of their most precious and typical liturgies, such as those celebrated at Christmas and Holy Week: these liturgies have the most resonance with immigrant cultures.

Detailed guidelines for multilingual Mass celebrations could be found in "Guidelines for Multicultural Masses from the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commission of the USA in collaboration with the Instituto de Liturgia Hispana.

Multicultural communities as inspiration of vocations

Saint John Bosco, very much dedicated to Italian youth, was convinced that at least 80% of young people experience an

inner call to priestly and religious consecration one time or another. This inner call is motivated and encouraged by the culture, the values and ethics lived in the family and social environment. This also is true today. Young people experience a dynamic longing for ideals, for everything that excels, that is authentic. Physical and emotional power of their sexuality energizes them constantly towards generous commitment. They strive for equality and justice that could be found at times disheartening, confronted with a seemingly invincible presence of evil in all fields of human endeavors, particularly in the struggle that migration exerts on them.

A coordinated and faith filled effort of both the leaders and the families of a multicultural community is an inspiration and a strong support to the youth's acceptance of a joyful priestly and religious consecration of service. Well organized effort of the leadership in generating an authentic united faith community inspires young men and women of the welcoming community, provided that they are esteemed and empowered to be partners in all the pastoral challenges. They become a providential inspiration to the immigrant youth. There are families where parents are trying to preserve religious and social expressions of their native culture and frequently clash with their teenage children who want to identify with the environment of the welcoming country. Because of unresolved issues of communication, authority, discipline, and shared responsibility, these teens suffer identity complex over and above the usual generation gap. Welcomed in the religious and social endeavors of the parish youth they will clarify their place in the community, and see more clearly the possibility of a generous and joyful service in priestly and religious consecration. ■



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Called to the Margins?

Help in Finding Your Place Ministering Among the Undeserved

By Sr. Lou Ella Hickman, IWBS

Her face became world famous because she brought dignity to the dying and hope to lepers for almost fifty years. Thousands of men and women followed in her footsteps of ministering to the poorest of the poor. There are days when you wonder, Could I do the same? Am I being called like Mother Teresa of Calcutta? Maybe not, comes with mixed feelings. If the question often tugs at your heart, perhaps it needs to be tweaked a bit. That is, maybe God is calling you to minister to the underserved rather than the poorest of the poor.

A number of religious communities, both men and women, focus much of all of their time and energy in areas of social justice such as women and children's issues, the homeless as well as one of the newer ministries of anti-human trafficking. A helpful place to start looking for potential vocational opportunities would be VocationMatch.com®. However, what if you are at a loss as what to type in? Not to worry, I have provided a resource list below to spring board your search whether it is VocationMatch.com® or just checking out various websites. Before you begin your search, breathe a short prayer; know God is seeking you out as well.

Men's Religious Communities

- **Josephites:** founded to minister to African Americans
- **Spiritians:** ministry to refugees also "go to places for which the Church has difficulty finding workers"
- **Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers:** overseas missions
- **Somascan Fathers and Brothers:** ministry includes

treatment and rehabilitation centers for drug addicts, group homes, shelters

- **Franciscan Friars, the Holy Name Province:** direct ministry to the poor, homeless, immigrants, GLBT community, chaplaincies: fire department, military, ecumenical work
- **Franciscan Friars, the Assumption of the BVM Province:** ministry to Latino, African-Americans, urban and rural ministries
- **Franciscan Friars, the Immaculate Conception Province:** ministries to prisoners, drug addicts, alcoholics, inner cities projects
- **Franciscan Friars of the Renewal:** pro-life outreach, direct ministry to the homeless, live among the poor, staff St. Anthony Shelter for homeless men
- **Franciscan Friars, St. Barbara Province:** social work, Native American ministry, social justice
- **Franciscan Friars, Province of the Sacred Heart:** ministry to Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, social justice, prison chaplains
- **Friars of the Sick Poor of Los Angeles:** ministry to the



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sick-poor and the marginalized

- **Alexian Brothers:** health ministry to those who need it most
- **Glenmary Home Missions:** ministry to the unchurched and the poor in the rural areas of the South, the Southwest and Appalachia
- **Brothers of Charity:** special education, social work, foreign missions
- **Society of the Divine Word:** fastest growing religious community due in part to its emphasis on equality social justice (a side note: SVDs were the first to open a seminary for African-Americans in the United States in 1920)
- **Little Brothers of Jesus (Charles de Foucauld):** option for the poor, members live among them
- **Oblates of St. Francis de Sales:** missions, armed forces chaplaincies, elderly, handicapped, hearing impaired chaplaincies
- **Dominican Missionaries for the Deaf Apostolate:** founded to minister to the deaf and hearing impaired
- **Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis:** care and education of neglected youth
- **Franciscan Brothers of Peace:** pro-life, the poor and the homeless
- **Servants of Charity:** adult and children with developmental disabilities, mental disabilities, troubled youth and the elderly in need
- **Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Priests and Brothers):** inner city ministry, immigrants and Native American ministries
- **Claretian Missionaries (Priests**

and Brothers): immigrants and high-poverty areas

- **Atonement Friars (Franciscan):** ecumenical centers, 1 shelter for homeless/needy men, 1 alcohol and drug rehabilitation center
- **Vincentian Priests and Brothers:** “Let’s give ourselves to the God, then, once and for all, let’s go to the assistance of the poor . . . who are waiting for us.” St. Vincent de Paul. Evangelization and service to the poor

Women’s communities

- **Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet:** Ministries include educating the deaf
- **Little Sisters of the Gospel—Charles de Foucauld:** Like their male counterparts—The Little Brothers of Jesus they were founded with the option for the poor
- **Little Sisters of the Poor:** ministry to the needy elderly
- **Good Shephard Sisters:** Active (apostolic) and contemplative, social service ministries to the marginalized; created The National Advocacy Center to be their voice on Capitol Hill, ministry to those caught in human trafficking
- **Franciscan Sisters of Mary:** specialized ministries to marginalized—Almost Home, A Woman’s Place, Holy Family Birthing Services along with ecology and justice ministry
- **Salvatorians:** anti-human trafficking efforts
- **Maryknoll Sisters:** overseas missions
- **Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament:** founded to

minister to Native Americans and African-Americans

- **Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, Florida:** ministry to AIDS patients, persons with disabilities
- **Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo (Scalabrinians):** migrants and refugees
- **Claretian Sisters:** ministry to migrants and social services
- **Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne:** ministry to the poor with incurable cancer
- **Sisters of the Living Word:** outreach to victims of violence, immigrants, the homeless, unemployed
- **Sisters of Charity of Nazareth:** advocacy for the abused, homeless, abused, the addicted; “committed to break the cycle of poverty”
- **Benedictine Sisters, St. Scholastica Convent, Chicago:** social service to the homeless, the mentally ill and elderly
- **Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg:** Appalachian, Native American, African-American, Hispanic ministries
- **Glenmary Sisters:** see Glenmary Home Missions
- **Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood:** ministry to those who are mentally or physically challenged
- **Dominican Sisters of Peace:** hospice, prison ministry, advocate for the homeless
- **Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt:** outreach to homeless and those with AIDS

- **Religious Sisters of Charity:** special outreach to the marginalized
- **Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary:** homes for persons with disabilities, outreach to the poor, immigrants, homeless women with children
- **Ursuline Sisters of Youngstown:** ministry to those with AIDS and to single parents
- **Vocationist Sisters:** special emphasis on work with the poor
- **Eudist Servants of the Eleventh Hour:** the imprisoned, the poor, the forgotten
- **Daughters of St. Paul:** media (includes film) education, book publishing, music, evangelization through Media
- **Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal:** evangelization, the poor and the homeless

Want to know more? Search for “The Places They’ll Go. Nuns Working on the Margins” on the Internet.

Contemplative

- **Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters:** main ministry is to pray for priests

Contemplative Margins

“More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” Is your heart big enough to embrace the entire world with your prayer? Consider a life of prayer for those who live on the margins and for those who minister to them.

Men

- **Trappists**
- **Carthusians**
- **Camaldolese Monks**

- **Carmelites (O.C.D. and O. Carm.)**
- **Brigittine Monks**
- **Missionaries of Charity—Brothers Contemplative**

Women

- **Augustinians**
- **Benedictines**
- **Carmelites (O.C.D.)**
- **Cistercian Nuns**
- **Dominican Nuns**
- **Passionist Nuns**
- **Poor Clares**
- **Trappistines**

His Holiness Pope Francis issued the vocational and spiritual challenge when he said, “We must get out of ourselves and go toward the periphery.”

Please note: Several of the above communities have other ministries as well as the ones listed. More information can be found in “A Guide to Religious Ministries for Catholic Men and Women,” ©2015. You can pick one up at your diocese’s vocation office or you can order one from info@religiousministries.com. ■



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Prayer for Vocations to the Margins

*Father of all, Your Son,
Jesus, came not for the
healthy but for the sick.
Inspire a great number
of men and women to
minister to those who are
the most forgotten and most
overlooked in our world.
Sustain those who work
among the marginalized.
Guide those who have
power and influence to
use their resources to
uplift and protect the
throwaways of our society.
And give us all the grace
to respond to our neighbor
of the moment. Amen*

Young People Working for a Better World

A Conversation with Bishop Peter Forsyth Christensen, Bishop of Boise

By PAMELA SELBERT

On December 17, 2014, Peter Forsyth Christensen, formerly Bishop of Superior, Wisconsin, was installed as the eighth Bishop of the Diocese of Boise, a larger diocese that encompasses the entire state of Idaho. It was another major milestone in a journey that had begun nearly sixty-two years earlier -- when on Christmas Eve 1952, he was born the fourth of eight children to Robert and Ann Christensen in Pasadena, California.

Christensen studied at the College of the Redwoods in Eureka, California, and at the University of Montana in Missoula, then in 1975, he moved to Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota to study at the University of St. Thomas. He graduated with a degree in art history, and worked as a graphic designer for a magazine before answering a call to the priesthood and entering St. Paul Seminary for graduate studies. He earned a Master of Divinity degree, and on May 25, 1985 was ordained a priest by Archbishop John Roach.

Fr. Christensen served as assistant pastor at St. Olaf Parish in Minneapolis for the next four years. Then from 1989 till 1992, he was spiritual director/counselor at St. John Vianney Seminary, before becoming rector of the seminary, a post he held till 1999. Next he was pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Parish in St. Paul until 2007, when Pope Benedict XVI appointed him Bishop of Superior, Wisconsin.

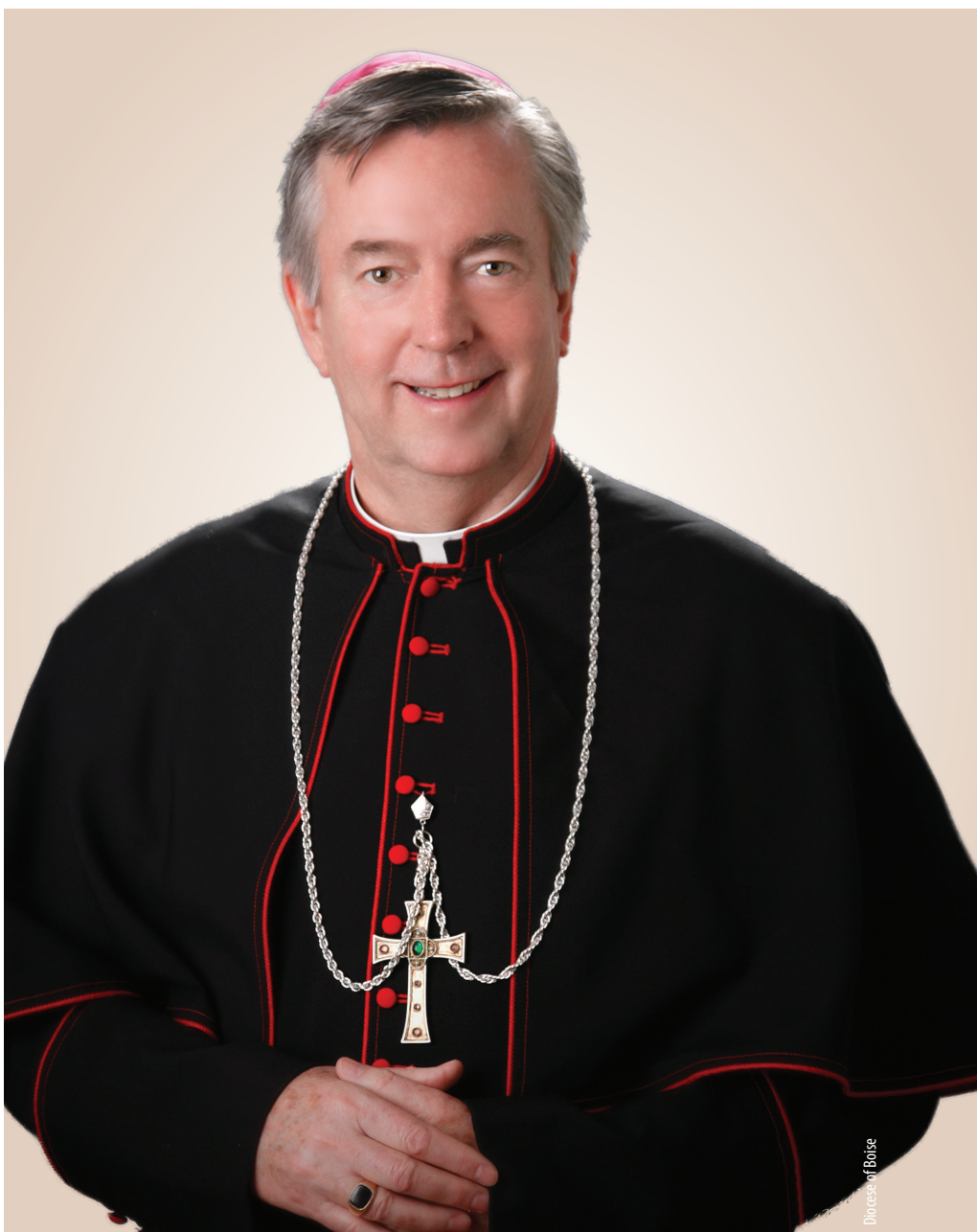
Bishop Christensen says he had not sought the episcopal office, and after receiving the unexpected notice on June 28 from Archbishop Pietro Sambi, he was so overcome he “sobbed for about fifteen minutes.” He was ordained a bishop on September 14 the same year.

While in the office, in 2012, he along with other Wisconsin bishops issued a

warning against Physician (or Provider) Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment, believing it would have “grave implications” for the dignity of human life. As newly appointed Bishop to the Diocese of Boise -- which includes 176,000 Catholics, fifty-five parishes and one hundred ten churches, missions and chapels -- Bishop Christensen, who succeeded retiring Bishop

Michael Driscoll, asked for prayers that he “would be granted an understanding heart, open to God’s will” for his new local church.

Bishop Christensen currently serves on several committees and subcommittees for the U.S. C.C.B. including Catholic Education and The Church in Africa.



Diocese of Boise

Called to be Merciful

1. INTRODUCTION

From the Apostolic Letter *“Misericordia et misera”*: “Mercy and misery is a phrase used by Saint Augustine in recounting the story of Jesus’ meeting with the woman taken in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11). It would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful or apt way of expressing the mystery of God’s love when it touches the sinner: ‘the two of them alone remained: mercy with misery’. What great mercy and divine justice shine forth in this narrative! Its teaching serves not only to throw light on the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, but also to point out the path that we are called to follow in the future.”

Brothers and sisters: let us offer this holy hour for all families. May every Christian family be a place where mercy is given and received.

2. EXPOSITION (*O Salutaris Hostia*-St. Thomas Aquinas)

O Saving Victim op’ning wide / the gate of heav’n to all below.
Our foes press on from ev’ry 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.

Another Eucharistic hymn may be sung.

3. ADORATION

V. O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine,

R. All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.

Lord Jesus, in your presence we want to sing and bless your name.
Heaven and earth rejoice in your birth: You are the God-made-man, Emmanuel, God-with-us.

R. We praise and adore you, Lord Jesus.

In Bethlehem Mary and Joseph placed you in a crib and the shepherds came to adore you. Today the Church exposes your consecrated Body that we may contemplate you full of love.

R. We praise and adore you, Lord Jesus.

May you be received by us, Lord Jesus! May our hearts be your dwelling place. You have become one of us!

R. We praise and adore you, Lord Jesus.

4. HYMN

O come, all ye faithful joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem; Come and behold him born the King of angels; **O come let us adore him (3x) Christ the Lord.** Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation. Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above; Glory to God, glory in the highest: **O come, let us adore him (3x) Christ the Lord.**

Another hymn be sung.

5. LITURGY OF THE WORD

Choose one or more readings from the list at the end of this insert. A homily, a short period of silence or personal meditation, or the recitation of the Holy Rosary may follow.

6. INTERCESSIONS

Let us praise the Word of God, for he has come to cast our sins into the sea. Strengthened by this knowledge, let us pray to him, saying:

R. Lord, show us your mercy and compassion.

- That through the Church’s preaching and example, those who know God only by the light of human reason may be enriched

by the light of the Gospel as well, we pray to the Lord.

- That those in authority throughout the world may promote life, peace and justice, and work together for the common good, we pray to the Lord.
- That we may see more clearly that peace comes not through violence, bitterness and hatred but through love, forgiveness and reconciliation, we pray to the Lord.
- That as Joseph and Mary welcomed the gift of the Child Jesus, all mothers and fathers will prayerfully foster each of their children’s vocations in Christ, we pray to the Lord.
- That all baptized Catholics will recognize their responsibility to discover their vocation in Christ and follow Him, especially those chosen for the unique calling to the priesthood or consecrated life, we pray to the Lord.

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

7. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Father, we are your people, the work of your hands. So precious are we in your sight that you sent your Son, Jesus. He calls us to heal the broken-hearted, to dry the tears of those who mourn, to give hope to those who despair, and to rejoice in your steadfast love. We, the baptized, realize our call to serve. Help us to know how. Call forth from among us priests, sisters, brothers and lay ministers. With our hearts you continue to love your people. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

8. BENEDICTION (*Tantum ergo* - St. Thomas Aquinas)

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

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

V. 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. R. Amen.

9. 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 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 Saint Joseph, chaste and responsible husband.

Blessed be God in the glory of all His Saints.

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

Called to follow Jesus

1. INTRODUCTION

From the Apostolic Letter "Misericordia et misera": "In a culture often dominated by technology, sadness and loneliness appear to be on the rise, not least among young people. The future seems prey to an uncertainty that does not make for stability. This often gives rise to depression, sadness and boredom, which can gradually lead to despair. We need witnesses to hope and true joy if we are to dispel the illusions that promise quick and easy happiness through artificial paradises. The profound sense of emptiness felt by so many people can be overcome by the hope we bear in our hearts and by the joy that it gives. We need to acknowledge the joy that rises up in a heart touched by mercy. Let us keep in mind, then, the words of the Apostle: 'Rejoice in the Lord always' (Phil 4:4)."

Brother and sisters, let us offer this holy hour especially for the youth: that they may respond generously to God's call to follow Jesus in their lives.

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.

3. ADORATION

We rejoice in your wonderful works, O Lord, for you have given us hope through your birth. We all cry out with great joy:

R. Glory to God in the highest

- With the angels and patriarchs and prophets, we praise you Lord. R.
- With Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, our whole being proclaims your greatness, Lord. R.
- With the apostles and evangelists, we give you thanks, Lord. R.
- With all the holy martyrs, we offer our bodies to you as consecrated victims. R.
- With all your holy witnesses in the Church, we dedicate our lives to you in deepest faith. R.

4. HYMN

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne. Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own. Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee, and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Crown him the Virgin's Son, the God incarnate born, whose arm those crimson trophies won which now His brow adorn; fruit of the mystic rose, as of that rose the stem; the root whence mercy ever flows, the Babe of Bethlehem.

Crown him the Lord of lords, who over all doth reign, who once on earth, the incarnate Word, for ransomed sinners slain, now lives in realms of light, where saints with angels sing their songs before him day and night, their God, Redeemer, King.

Another hymn may be sung.

5. LITURGY OF THE WORD

Choose one or more readings from the list at the end of this insert. A homily, a short period of silence or personal meditation, or the recitation of the Holy Rosary may follow.

6. INTERCESSIONS

The world was created by the Word of God, re-created by his

redemption, and it is continually renewed by his love. Rejoicing in him we call out:

R. Renew the wonders of your love, Lord.

- May the Church, built upon a rock, be strengthened with solid and lasting faith. We pray:
- May world leaders not give attention only to the needs of their own nation, but have the respect and deep concern for all peoples. We pray.
- May all who love and pursue justice, work together without deceit to build a world of true peace. We pray:
- May our young people be concerned with remaining blameless in God's sight, and may they generously follow His call. We pray:
- May we be humble of heart and serve one another out of reverence for Christ. We pray.

With longing for the coming of God's kingdom let us offer our prayer to the Father: **Our Father...**

7. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Father, hear the prayers of your people, and 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. Raise up worthy ministers for your altars and ardent but gentle servants of the Gospel. May those who follow in the footsteps of Christ your Son grow, and provide by their way of life a convincing sign of your kingdom for the Church and the whole world. May all the ministers of your Church increase in numbers, and persevering in their prayer, perform their ministry with gentleness and concern for others. Father, keep them all faithful to the call of the Gospel that the world may see in them the living image of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

8. BENEDICTION

Tantum ergo Sacramentum, veneremur 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 utroque compar sit laudatio. Amen.

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

V. Let us pray.

Lord our God, you have given us the true Bread from Heaven. In the strength of this food may we live always by your life and rise in glory on the last day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

9. REPOSITION

Thank you, God the Father / for loving us so much.

Thank you for giving us your only Son.

Thank you for giving us eternal life in him.

Thank you, God the Son, Lord Jesus Christ, / for your death and resurrection.

Thank you for your Word, good news for the world.

Thank you for your Body, the Bread of eternal life.

Thank you for your Blood, the Chalice of salvation.

Thank you, God the Holy Spirit, / for being our Advocate.

Thank you for filling us with your grace.

Thank you for uniting us in love.

Called to carry the Cross

1. INTRODUCTION

From the Holy Father's message for the World Youth Day 2016:

"The Word of God teaches us that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35). That is why the fifth Beatitude declares that the merciful are blessed. We know that the Lord loved us first. But we will be truly blessed and happy only when we enter into the divine "logic" of gift and gracious love, when we discover that God has loved us infinitely in order to make us capable of loving like Him, without measure."

Brothers and sisters, let us offer this holy hour for ourselves, that we may be generous and cheerful givers.

2. EXPOSITION

In His temple now behold Him, see the long-expected Lord; Ancient prophets had foretold Him, God has now fulfilled His word. Now to praise Him, His redeemed shall break forth with one accord. Prince and Author of salvation, be Thy boundless love our theme! Jesus, praise to Thee be given by the world Thou didst redeem. With the Father and the Spirit, Lord of majesty supreme! Amen.

3. ADORATION

V. O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine,

R. All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.

Christ our Lord, you came among us as the light of the world, that we might walk in your light, and not in the darkness of death. We praise you and we cry out to you:

R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

- You feed us at the banquet of the Eucharist with all the gifts of your paschal sacrifice.
- You wash us clean by your gift of salvation.
- You humbled yourself by being obedient even to accepting death, death on a cross.
- You made captive our captivity.

4. HYMN

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believed! When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we'd first begun.

Another hymn may be sung.

5. LITURGY OF THE WORD

Choose one or more readings from the list at the end of this insert. A homily, a short period of silence or personal meditation, or the recitation of the Holy Rosary may follow.

6. INTERCESSIONS

We thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for you brought us life by your death on the cross. With our whole heart we ask you:

R. By your death raise us to life.

- May we receive your gifts with gratitude, and give them back to you through our works of mercy. Lord Jesus...
- May we deny ourselves and not deny those in need. Lord Jesus...

- May we be strong in temptation, patient in trial, and grateful in prosperity. Lord Jesus...
- Through our Blessed Mother's intercession, may all those being called to holiness as priests, deacons and in the consecrated life, find joy and faithfulness in their vocations, Lord Jesus...
- May those who have died in your peace give you everlasting glory in heaven, where we, too, hope to praise you for ever. Lord Jesus...

Remember us, Lord, when you come into your Kingdom and teach us how to pray: **Our Father...**

7. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Heavenly Father, we pray that you will continue to give us the graces we need, to learn to see you and love you in all peoples; our families, friends, even our foes. We pray too that you will give us the wisdom to choose you in all our decisions; whether they are small or big, because nothing is too small or too big for the constant love and care you show us daily. We pray that you will continue to urge us to persevere when we feel like giving up loving or caring for someone, especially when we are tested painfully and challenged constantly; of praising you without taking you for granted; of reverencing you without allowing things to replace you; of serving you without counting the cost. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

8. BENEDICTION (*Tantum ergo* - St. Thomas Aquinas)

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

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

V. 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. Amen.

9. REPOSITION

Blessed be God.

Blessed be his Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be his most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints.

Holy Hour Supplemental Materials

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READING

- **Isaiah 42:6-7** - "I have called you...I have grasped you by the hand...To open the eyes of the blind"
- **Jeremiah 29:11-14** - "I know well the plans I have in mind for you"
- **Hosea 2:21-22** - "I will espouse you in fidelity..."
- **Matthew 9:35-38** - The harvest is rich but the laborers are few
- grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure he has received
- **Mark 1:16-20** - The Call of the first disciples
- **Mark 10:17-27** - Go and sell everything you own and follow me
- **Luke 1:26-56** - The Annunciation: Mary's call
- **Luke 14:25-33** - Any who do not carry their cross and come after me cannot be my disciple
- **John 1:35-51** - The call of the first disciples: "Come and see"
- **John 15:9-17** - You did not choose me; no, I chose you
- **Romans 8:28** - "all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose"
- **1 Corinthians 1:26-31** - "Not many of you were wise...Rather God chose the foolish..."
- **Galatians 1:15** - "God, who from my mother's womb, had set me apart and called me through his grace"
- **Ephesians 1:3-14** - "To be holy and spotless and to live through love in His presence"

JOYFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Annunciation of God's Plan to Mary (Humility)

We pray that, like Mary, we may learn humility and say yes to God's plan for our lives.

2. The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (Charity)

We pray that, like Mary, we may grow in charity and be motivated to go out and do God's will.

3. The Nativity (Love of God)

We pray that, like Mary, we may love God enough to allow Him to be born in our hearts.

4. The Presentation of the baby Jesus at the temple (Spirit of Sacrifice)

We pray that, like Jesus, we may want to serve others rather than be served.

5. The Finding of the twelve-year-old in the temple (Zeal)

We pray that, like Jesus, we may be filled with zeal to follow the path God sets before us.

SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

1. Agony in the garden at Gethsemane (Repentance)

We pray that we may realize just how much our sins hurt Jesus and feel true sorrow for them.

2. Scourging of Jesus at the pillar (Mortification)

We pray for strength to imitate Jesus by offering our sufferings for the benefit of others.

3. Crowning with thorns (Moral Courage)

We pray that we may not be afraid to be visible and public witnesses of our faith.

4. Carrying of the Cross to Calvary (Patience)

We pray for patience, that we take up our crosses as Jesus commanded and not hide from life's challenges. may come to know Mary as their mother and honor and revere her, gladdening the heart of her Son.

5. The Crucifixion (Final Perseverance)

We pray that the Lord save us from the temptation of taking a seemingly easier path in life that doesn't bring us closer to God's grace.

LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Baptism of the Lord (Call to Conversion)

We pray for conversion, that we feel genuine sorrow for the sins we have committed and resolve to not commit them in the future.

2. The Wedding at Cana (Obedience)

We pray for obedience and increased motivation for those who hear God's call but are afraid to act on it.

3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom (The Good News)

We pray that we may understand that all of life's challenges are temporary and we will find healing peace in God's heavenly kingdom.

4. The Transfiguration (Faith)

We pray for increased faith in God's plan for us even when confronted with difficulties and disappointments.

5. The Institution of the Eucharist (Spiritual Nourishment)

We pray that we may look to the Eucharist for spiritual strength to endure life's challenges.

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

1. Gracious God, thank you for calling us at Baptism to be your people. In response to your call we again say, "Yes." Keep us faithful to your mission and our vocation. Bless with a renewed spirit of zeal and enthusiasm all who dedicate their lives in service to your people. Inspire more women and men of faith and compassion to serve as lay ministers and deacons sisters, brothers and priests. Fill them with your Spirit of Wisdom to proclaim the Good News and to witness your presence among us. Amen.
2. Lord Jesus, we ask you to send more servants to your people. Choose from our parishes, from our homes, from our schools and colleges, an abundant harvest of apostles for your Kingdom: priests, sisters, brothers, deacons and lay ministers.
We pray that those you call may never lose awareness of the dignity and need of their vocation. O Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, teach to all those the Master calls to say a joyful "yes" as you did at the Annunciation. Amen.
3. God, the source of creation and love, you invite each of us to serve you through the life which is your gift. May your grace encourage men and women to heights of holiness through service to the Church as priests, sisters, brothers, and lay ministers. Make me an instrument to encourage others to give of themselves and challenge me to do the same. Amen.

By Fr. PETER QUINTO, RCJ

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

Yes, we have five young men entering the seminary and three or four young women who have chosen a religious vocation.

To what do you attribute their interest in a vocation?

I think there are several things, mainly that the faith of people of faith is getting stronger. People are talking more freely (about their faith), practicing it at home, and it's no longer the foreign topic it used to be. The world is becoming more confusing, dark, and people are searching for light. With all the issues of today, the crime, ethical problems and others, these young people are realizing the world needs help -- and they want to be that help.

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

I check to see who has the necessary level of faith and leadership abilities and ask questions. Sometimes at confirmation someone stands out. I ask them -- and nine out of ten say they have thought about a religious vocation.

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

They spend time with the person, hear what their interests are, their level of engagement to faith, to service, and ask what they need to be propelled to discern the call.

What is the role of parents and family?

Parents' support is important, but not absolutely necessary. And though it helps to have family support, we don't want the family to be so present that they push the young person into a vocation they might

not believe is in God's plan for them.

How does your Office of Vocations work?

A priest responds to the first call. If a person is interested, they call our Vocations Director. Once they are finished discerning, another priest takes over to track their education process. We also have two priests who act as conduits: if they see a young man or woman is interested in a religious vocation, that person is relayed to our office. We have a large youth gathering every February, a conference which about 1800 young people, mostly High School students, attend. There is an altar call for anyone considering a vocation to the priesthood or religious, and usually about sixty young men and sixty young women come forward.

Is there prayer for vocations throughout the parishes?

Yes (laughs), but I don't know if they all use the prayers. However, I travel a lot between parishes and often hear prayer for intercession.

How is Pope Francis' leadership affecting interest in vocations?

He is definitely having a big effect on faith. What he's saying is nothing new, but he is saying it in a way that people are listening. He speaks the common person's language. He is taking the Lord's command -- as did St. Peter -- to cast the net to the starboard side of the boat. The "fish are gathering" -- and he wants to help bring in the nets.

How did you celebrate the Jubilee of Mercy?

We set up six Holy Doors throughout the diocese, to symbolize God's mercy and let people know that forgiveness and reconciliation are available to all. We've had talks on the topic, which isn't just about giving mercy, but also receiving. It's important to be open to mercy with a

conscious awareness.

Did you take part in the last World Youth Day?

I went to Poland and was there for four days, but then had to come home to attend to a problem in the diocese the day before the week started. We took twenty-three young people and joined the Diocese of New Ulm, Minnesota, which had brought sixteen young people. There were forty of us, and we were able to visit several pilgrimage sites. We could feel some of God's "little miracles" beginning to happen, things we might consider "coincidences," such as the unlikely encounter of one of our priests, Father Justin Brady of Sun Valley, Idaho, with a young woman from our diocese who had recently become a religious and "happened" to be there. English poet/philosopher G.K. Chesterton said, "coincidences are God's way of remaining anonymous." We felt a sense of the "thin place," where the veil between heaven and earth is translucent.

Do you have any comments about Mother Teresa who was canonized last September?

Oh, yes. God packed a lot into a very little woman. I met her once. She was such a little bird, hunched over -- but when she spoke; her words went right to your heart. The love she could bring on people by speaking!

I think of a photo taken some time in the 1980's of her walking with Pope John Paul II. It was beautiful. They were holding hands, not in a clutched way, but in a way that showed they were working as one for God. She had the heart of the church in her long service. ■



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.

Animated to Serve

The Charism of a Religious Vocation



Photos by Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston (CC BY-ND 2.0)

By Br. Adam Becerra, FSP

Funerals are not easy to attend, let alone presiding over them. In the winter of 2016, two religious brothers from the Marianist order passed away. The loss of these brothers who served Fr. Chaminade's charism for more than 30 years as a professed charism came to an end. But did it, really?

If a founder's charism is to be lived out, then those who are in a professed religious order must animate others in order to perpetuate the living dynamism that encompasses the charism. At these two funerals, I listened to story after story of how these two religious men assisted Mary in forming others for the mission of Christ—the mission of compassion, hope, love, faith, service, and justice. It was an incredible sight to experience the love that poured out from people who esteemed these two brothers and who were witnesses to their missionary work, as Fr.

Chaminade reminded them in their Rule of Life.

I have learned throughout my time as a vowed religious that when someone discerns a vocation to religious life, God becomes “all in all.” God is everything and no matter how difficult a situation may be, God can never be compromised. It is for this reason that being called to religious life is a call to service- Animated to Serve. I am not talking about a type of service that makes us feel good out of compassion for those in need. Being animated to serve is about responding to the movement of the Holy Spirit who illumines our world around us to listen, discern, pray, and act.

When I professed my vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and self-sufficiency, I consecrated myself to God as an outward sign of my service to the Church and my love for God who created me and prepared me to serve. As I grew up and matured, I had to discern for myself the intense feeling that urged me to serve God's people.

This sense of urgency was animated by the Holy Spirit who helped me realize the work that God was doing in me. Without this realization, I couldn't have understood the call of God in my life.

In my place of ministry at Chaminade College Preparatory, I have the privilege of working with students in my position as Director of Mission Integration and Ministry. A particular group that I love working with the most is our music ministry team. Going out to recruit the best musicians and singers takes a lot of work. It requires energy, a musical background, and the ability to lead others in song. When meeting with different students who encompass these characteristics, I feel a sense of urgency that helps me select the best group of students to participate in this music ministry team. The sense of urgency continues when I pray upon the music selections that will help our student body enter into worship. Finally, the sense of urgency is witnessed and experienced as I work with our music ministry team

who freely uses their gifts to produce the best music as they put their hearts, mind, and soul into their voices and instruments. Who or what is the sense of urgency? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit animates my call to serve as I respond with passion to create the best music ministry team and help our student body worship and experience God. Being animated to serve requires a realization of the sense of urgency of the Holy Spirit at work.

Enrique Nardoni, a charism scholar, wrote an article titled The Concept of Charism in Paul. In this article, he writes that charism is “a free spiritual gift activated by the initiative of the Spirit.” This activation is the sense of urgency that comes from the charism of a religious orders’ founder. It aids the founder to gift the Church with a particular way of life. In response to this way of life, others are stimulated to follow the steps of their founder for the common good of the Church. The example that I have used from my ministry at Chaminade College Preparatory demonstrates how the Spirit activated my call to serve and respond to that agency by providing our Chaminade community with a music ministry team that glorifies God “all in all.”

I wish to conclude with this thought: if you are discerning a call to religious life, don’t be afraid of allowing the Holy Spirit to initiate movement in your life that is going to require listening, discernment, prayer, and action. When this dynamic is experienced, you will come to realize that you are being animated to serve in a way that builds up the Church in a passionate way. Allow God to show you a path of poverty, chastity, and obedience as you discern a community that is right for you and gifts the Church with a particular way of life! ■



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Helping a Vocation Journey

Prayer is the Secret

By REV. DAVID A. SCHUNK

This past August, millions of people around the world watched athletes compete in the Olympic Games. As Americans, we watched on television and rooted for many fine athletes who competed with the Stars and Stripes sewn onto their uniform. When they had a difficult match, we suffered with their loss. When they stood on the medal platform as our flag was raised, many times it felt like the entire country was sharing in their triumph. The Olympics seem to be an example of how we, as a nation, are able to support people with some type of distant patriotic energy that can help to drive athletes to excellence.

For many men and women who are thinking about a vocation to the religious life, the permanent diaconate, or the priesthood, discernment can sometimes seem like a lonely journey. There are discernment groups where people get together to talk about a vocation, and priests and religious sisters and brothers often meet with discerners. But a lot of what happens in discernment is a person's conversation with God that happens in solitude. Much like an Olympic athlete who finds herself or himself facing a competitor alone in the arena, the discerner spends a lot of time alone on their journey.

As members of the Christian faithful, we cannot call forth vocations on our own. What I mean is, we cannot walk up to a young man and say, "You are to be a priest." That would be taking God out of the equation. Rather, if we think the young man might be a good priest we might suggest it to him by saying, "Have you ever thought that God is calling you to be a priest?" Or, we can pray to God and ask him to enkindle in the hearts of our youth the fire of the Spirit so they will hear him call them.



With our prayers, we can also support those who are discerning vocations or who are in formation. Just like athletes, we may not be in arena or on their field with them, but we can encourage, pray, (and root) from a distance, asking the Lord to give them his wisdom and courage so that they may know of his consolation and presence. As a priest, I am always humbled when people tell me how much they pray for me and for all of our deacons, priests, and nuns. Just knowing that I have their support truly gives me a boost. And that does not even take into account the grace that I receive from God as a result of their prayers.

It was the same when I was a seminarian, studying to be a priest. Every now and then, I would receive a card from a friend or family member. It might be for my birthday or another holiday but in addition to the holiday greetings, often the person wrote a brief note encouraging me during my formation. It was knowing that people were praying for me that picked me up on days when I was struggling. Of course, there was occasionally a little extra 'something' in the card that also gave me a lift, but that did not last as long as the prayers.

Many people pray for vocations on a regular basis and some do daily. It would

be wonderful if every Catholic would say a prayer for vocations, even if very brief, on a daily basis. What can also bear fruit though, is to let our discerners know we are praying for them. When we meet a novice or discernor or seminarian, tell that person you have been praying for them. Or find out their name and pray for the person by name on a regular basis. Further, there might be someone from your parish community who is in formation or discerning a vocation to religious life, the permanent diaconate, or the priesthood. You could write a brief note letting the person know you are praying for the person as he or she discerns God's will for their life. In this way, you will be participating in their vocation journey. And when the person takes her vows or he stands at the altar, we would know that we have been a part of their journey and just like winning an Olympic medal, it will be the entire Church who shares in the joyous moment. ■

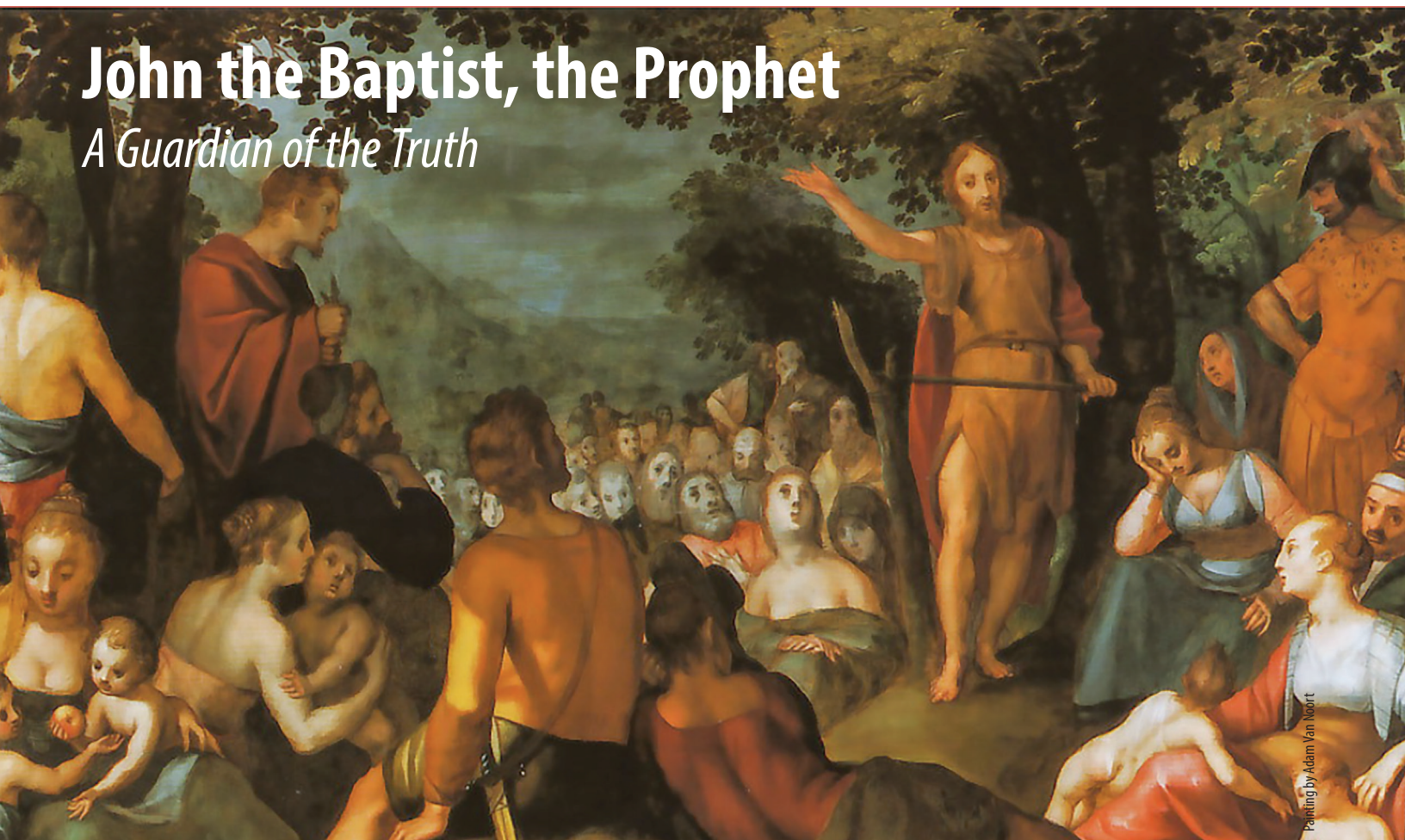


REV. DAVID A. SCHUNK

Is the Director of Vocations for the Archdiocese of San Francisco. He attended St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, CA and the Pontifical North American College in Rome and was ordained a priest in 2010.

John the Baptist, the Prophet

A Guardian of the Truth



By FR. GIUSEPPE DE VIRGILIO, PH.D.

Witness of the light

The extraordinary figure of John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, dominates the Gospel accounts and marks the passage from the expectation of the Messianic age to its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus (cf. Lk 16:16). The author of the Fourth Gospel describes John as “witness of the light” (Jn 1:7-8). This definition alludes to the prophetic role that he has exercised throughout his ministry. If the “light” coming into the world is Jesus Christ, John is presented as “one who bears witness” to the light, recognizing Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). It is known that St. Augustine offers a comparison between Christ and the Baptist: Jesus is the “light,” John, the “lamp”; Jesus is the “Word,” John, the “voice”; Jesus is the “bridegroom,” John is the “friend of the bridegroom.” Being

witness to the light means to preach the truth at the cost of one’s life. The truth is Jesus Christ, who comes to bring salvation; the prophetic preaching of John is understood in light of Jesus’ mission.

Man of the essential

Who was John the Baptist? We derive from the Gospel accounts some limited biographical information about him. John’s extraordinary birth from elderly parents takes place six months before the birth of Jesus (cf. Lk 1:57-66), to whom is related by kinship (Lk 1:39-45). While John’s youth is unknown, he is introduced at the beginning of Jesus’ messianic preaching as a passing figure living in the desert in a radical form of poverty. Evangelists start to talk about him by mentioning the oracle of Is 40:3 (Mk 1:2), which speaks of one “sent” to prepare the messianic age by an eschatological preaching. The Gospels describe him as an austere figure, following the monastic tradition active at that time

in the desert (perhaps he is connected to the Essene movement, near the environment of Qumran), in opposition to the authorities of the temple of Jerusalem and with Scribes and Pharisees teaching the doctrine. He also appears as a leader surrounded by disciples (Jn 1:35), who teaches to fast and to pray (Mk 2:18; Lk 5:33; 11:1). His preaching shakes Judea; he calls all to conversion, the sign of which is a ritual bath accompanied by the confession of sins and a process of conversion (cf. Mk 1:4; Jn 1:28; 3:23; 10:40). John says it is useless to be children of Abraham, if we do not put into practice what is right (cf. Mt 3:8), and gives the rules of justice to the crowd of the humble (Luke 3:10-14). The Pharisees and the teachers of the law, recipients of his indictment (Mt 3:10), do not believe in him. Some treat him as possessed (Mt 21:32; Mk 11:30; Lk 7, 30, 33). John proves to be a brave man denouncing the situation of the adulterous King Herod; for this reason, he is imprisoned and suffers death (Mt 14:3-12; Lk 3:19; 9:9).

The encounter with Christ

It is believed that John the Baptist has an important role even on the formation of Jesus, precisely during the period that preceded his public ministry. The story of the baptism can be seen as the culmination of an “initiation process.” John baptizes Christ and from this ritual will begin the preaching of the Lord. It is a meeting that is the fundamental change from the time of waiting to that of the Trinitarian event. The duty to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15), that is to realize God’s plan to save humanity, allows the Baptist to share the prophetic mission of Christ. John agrees and when Jesus rises from the waters of the Jordan opens the Christological revelation: Jesus is “the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). The encounter with Christ becomes the main model of how a believer should live his spiritual relationship with Jesus. John plays to the end his part, but he knows that Jesus “must increase and he decrease” (Jn 3:30). It is almost a premonition of his arrest, which motivates the Lord to begin the preaching of the Kingdom (Mk 1:14-15).

Who is greater than John?

Jesus himself confirms the greatness of the Baptist when John already in prison sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus: “Are you he who is to come or should we wait for another?” (Mt 11:2). The interpellation allows the Lord to reveal his mission: “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed. And blessed is he who does not find in me reason of a scandal” (Mt 11:4-6). It is not easy for the group of the Baptist to recognize in the miraculous work of Jesus the fulfillment of the messianic promises (cf. Is 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:18:7). It is to accept the “new gospel” that opens up prospects of salvation for all who believe. Jesus adds that John is the ‘first’ who believed and accepted this truth, ahead of everyone in the journey of faith. In this sense “among those born of women there has been none

greater than John the Baptist; but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matthew 11:11). Just because the Baptist made himself “small,” his magnitude remains a fundamental reference for the believers.

The prophet continues to live

According to the biblical tradition, the “prophet” is one who puts his life to the service of God so that the liberating Word reaches all people. No prophet has an easy life, not only in his own country (cf. Lk 4:24), but wherever he preaches because of the very nature of God’s Word. The epilogue of the Baptist’s mission has been proved. Imprisoned at the request of King Herod, because of his wife Herodias, John does not hesitate to reproach the king’s immorality (cf. Mk 6:18). During the feast to celebrate Herod’s birthday, Herodias’ daughter, Salome, dances and pleases the king and his guests. Because of his weakness, the sovereign makes a promise to the girl under oath, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom” (Mk 6:23). Encouraged by her mother, Salome asked the head of John the Baptist to be served on a platter. Not being able to refuse because of his oath and his dinner guests, Herod agrees, allowing the beheading of the Prophet. His disciples, having known his death, came and took the body and laid it in a tomb. The execution of the Baptist is described as a foretaste of Christ’s sacrifice. Victim of hatred and injustice, with his courageous faith John precedes the life of Jesus. He is Elijah who prepares the definitive encounter with God (Mt 17:10-13; cf. Mal 2:22-24). To be a “prophet” means to be “guardian of the truth” and the truth is paid for with one’s life. The truth never dies. Even if the man passes, the prophet continues to live. ■



FR. GIUSEPPE DE VIRGILIO

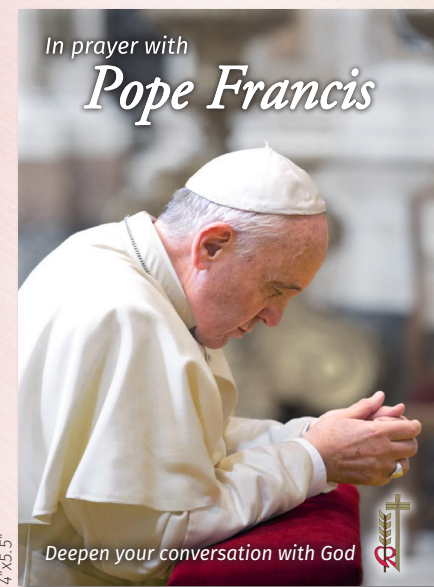
Is a professor and doctor of New Testament exegesis and biblical theology. He is also a faculty member at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.

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Lectio Divina

John 20:19-23

“Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”

By Sr. Emily Beata Marsh, FSP

I have to admit, when I looked at this passage in preparation for writing this article, my first thought was, “That’s kind of a strange passage to choose for a lectio divina on vocational discernment!” I understood the Year of Mercy connection--“Receive the Holy Spirit...sins are forgiven them”--but discernment was not the first thing that came to mind. Well, the Holy Spirit certainly showed me! This passage illustrates key characteristics of the way God works in our lives, of discernment, and of mercy.

The first thing I noticed is that “the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews.” The disciples are afraid. They’re hiding, and they’re terrified. Jesus had just died the most painful and most shameful death they knew of, and they were legitimately afraid that as his followers they would be next. So they went into hiding. They became, as it were, refugees in their own land. They didn’t know whom they could trust, and they didn’t know what to do next.

It is into this fear, this terror, this confusion and lack of direction, that Jesus comes. “Jesus came and stood in their midst.” He not only comes, but he also stands. He remains. He looks their fear and confusion in the face and says, “Peace be with you.” Now this in itself may have been a little frightening for the disciples--after all, they thought Jesus was dead! But it is also the only possible answer to their fear. Jesus is the only possible answer to their fear. Their fellow Jews, the Jewish authorities, the Roman soldiers, and even their own families could not have cast out their fear. Jesus is the only answer.

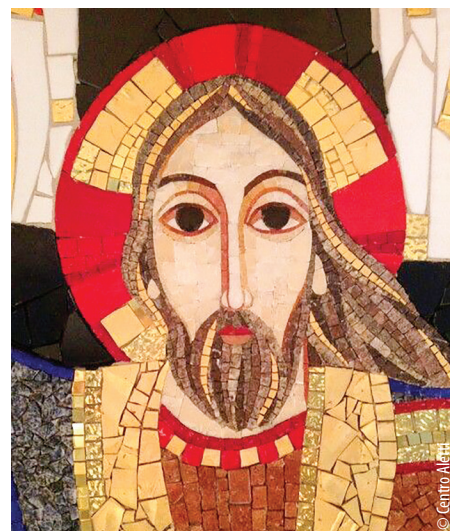
What fears do we have? What makes us go into hiding and lock the doors? Are we afraid that we won’t be able to be ourselves if we follow God’s will for us? Or are we afraid that we’re just imagining what we think God is telling us? Whatever it is, Jesus wants to

come and stand “in the midst” of it. He is the only possible answer to our fear, and he wants to be that answer. Let us invite him into our fear and confusion and allow him to turn it into peace.

For Jesus is insistent and repetitive when it comes to bringing peace. “Peace be with you” is the first thing he says to his disciples after his resurrection. This is how he identifies himself to them--by bringing peace to his distraught disciples. He shows them the wounds in his hands and side. I can imagine the disciples looking at one another in disbelief, then incredulously gathering around Jesus, then slowly daring to believe that it really is Jesus and feeling the happiness creep back into their hearts! “The disciples rejoiced...” And how does Jesus respond to their joy? “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you.’” Jesus repeats his gift of peace. To the disciples’ fear and sorrow, Jesus brings peace; likewise, to their joy and euphoria, Jesus brings peace.

In our experiences of discernment, it is important to notice the times when we are at peace. Interior peace does not necessarily mean that everything around us is going smoothly or that we’re completely sure about the next step in our lives. Ups and downs are part of life and part of discernment as well. But if we are moving in the direction that God desires, then we will begin to notice a deep interior peace. It is a peace that goes beyond the “feeling” of peace. It can be helpful to have a spiritual director who can help us recognize when and how this peace is present in our lives. This peace is what Jesus desires to bring to us. It is what he repeats to us each time we encounter him in prayer, in Scripture, or in the sacraments: “_____(Insert your name here), peace be with you.”

Lastly, Jesus shows how integrated mission and mercy are. He sends the disciples out as missionaries of mercy. First he says, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” To enable them to continue his mission, he says,



“Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them.” In other words, they are sent not to judge or coerce anyone, but to forgive sins and to give God’s mercy, just as Jesus did. They are sent to be Jesus in the world.

Because Jesus shows us how intertwined mission and mercy are, a good question to ask ourselves might be, what are the moments of mercy in my life? Where do I see that I have received mercy, and where have I given mercy? Those are moments of true mission, because they are moments of being Jesus to those around us, and they are hints along our journey of discernment.

My prayer for you this month is that you allow Jesus to step through any locked doors in your life. I pray that Jesus’ peace and mercy overflow in your heart, and lead you out of yourself to be Jesus’ mercy to others. “Peace be with you!”

Risen and Merciful Jesus, step through the locked doors in my life. Penetrate my life with your peace and mercy, and use me to bring your love to all those around me. 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.

Focusing on St. Joseph

Head of the Holy Family

By Br. JOHN M SAMAHA, SM

How much do we know about and appreciate the man who was the husband of the Mother of Jesus and the guardian of our Redeemer? How do we honor him? St. Joseph is often overlooked. Scripture says little of him. We seem to give him scant attention. Yet devotion to St. Joseph has deep roots in Christian tradition.

Joseph is often the overlooked member of the Holy Family. Do you remember as children when we wrote “J.M.J.” at the top of our papers in Catholic school? We did that to remind ourselves to have the intention that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had in life as we did our own work. We pictured the members of the Holy Family side by side.

Husband of Mary

Remember that Mary and Joseph are a couple. And Jesus is their child. They belong together. When separated, their significance in God’s plan of salvation is clouded, because their importance lies in their relationship to each other. While honoring the perpetual virginity of Mary, we cannot disregard Joseph’s privilege and happiness of being Mary’s husband. In past centuries many works of art depicted Joseph as an old man. Most likely this was done to disallow any threat to Mary’s virginity. This tended to undervalue the loving relationship of Mary and Joseph as husband and wife. Despite the tendencies of her times, St. Teresa of Avila always insisted that Joseph was a young man when he married Mary. The Divine Liturgy reinforces this positive approach regarding Joseph: “With a husband’s love he cherished Mary, the Virgin Mother of God.”



Foster Father of Jesus

Since Joseph is the husband of Mary, he is also father to Jesus. We know that he was not the physical father of Jesus. But in the gospel account about Jesus being lost in the temple, Luke has Mary saying to Jesus: “Son, your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow.” And the Divine Liturgy testifies: “With fatherly care he watched over Jesus Christ your son, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

If one might think that Joseph’s fatherhood was not quite real or effective because he did not physically procreate Jesus, let that person speak with adoptive parents, especially those who have conceived a child of their own and adopted others. They will let you know how real Joseph’s fatherhood is.

Head of the Holy Family

Joseph played a very important role as Je-

sus “grew in wisdom, age, and grace before God and men.” In the Jewish tradition children were, until the age of five or so, in the special care and tutelage of their mothers. But beyond that age children came under the special guidance of their fathers. Joseph by duty and privilege was the rabbi of the Holy Family to teach Jesus the Jewish faith and practices. Joseph led his family in the worship of God in their home at Nazareth.

At meal times both Mary and Jesus looked to Joseph at the head of the table to offer the prayer of blessing. Each year when the great evening of the Passover was celebrated, the youngster Jesus played his role and addressed the ritual question to Joseph: Father, why is this night different from every other night? Then he listened with his Mother to Joseph’s narration of the glorious events of the Exodus and the explanation of the meaning of the paschal lamb. Later Jesus would hear John the Baptizer proclaim him, the Son of Joseph and Mary, the Lamb

of God who would take away the sins of the world.

When Jesus was of age, Joseph introduced him to synagogue worship. Jesus was faithful to the synagogue rituals throughout his life. Joseph also taught Jesus the skills of a carpenter. Through the practice of this trade Jesus supported himself and his Mother after Joseph's death.

Jesus' human experience of fatherhood was drawn from his relationship with Joseph, his own earthly father. When Jesus said, "What father would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf or a poisonous snake when he asks for a fish," surely he had in mind how kind and gentle Joseph was to him as he was growing.

When Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son, Joseph must have been the model of that loving father. As Jesus described how the father hugged and kissed the son who had been lost, perhaps he was recalling how Joseph hugged and kissed him after he had been lost in the temple for three days.

When Jesus taught us how to pray, he began with the same loving title with which he had addressed Joseph all his life, abba. His deep affection for Joseph is evident in the circumstances of the gospel. Joseph made a profound impression on Jesus.

St. Joseph's relation to us

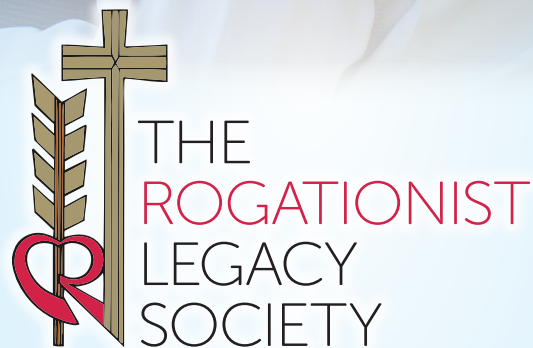
Has Joseph made an impression on us? How do we think of St. Joseph, honor him, and pray to him? Do we appreciate the special place he has in Christian spirituality and in our own heritage? Let us revere wholeheartedly the husband of Mary, the foster father of Jesus, the patron of the universal Church. After all, he is the man who is closest to Christ, our Redeemer. ■



BR. JOHN M. SAMAHA, SM

Is currently serving at the Marianist Center in Cupertino, California. Br. John has been a Marianist for sixty six years.

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"You will never be alone"

A Reflection about my Priestly Vocation

By ADÁN PEREZ HERRERA

God calls us by name and for some of us that special calling is *priesthood*.

For many years, I have been attracted to priesthood. Motivated to experience something new, I attended an event at the Rogationist's seminary in Guadalajara, Mexico, and when I least expected, God was working on His plan for me. Reminiscing about my first day in the seminary, I understand now that God has always been present in my life, but as time goes by, the more I feel his love. His calling just keeps on growing! It's like hearing the word of Jesus when he told his apostles, "Come and Follow me!"

When I think about God calling me to the priesthood, I am speechless, for this is the greatest gift God has given me. Saint Paul said: "The gifts that we receive from God are not for us, but to build the church."

People say that a vocation is like a plant: it starts off with a small seed, but like any plant, you need to take care of in order for it to grow. My vocation began when I was just a child. I remember looking up to the priest and wanting to be just like him. When I was 12 years old I met Fr. Javier, who is now the superior of the Rogationist Fathers in Mexico, and he invited me to a pre-seminar for one week but my mother was sick at the time and I could not attend.

A few months later, Fr. Javier invited me once again to a vocational meeting and I agreed to attend. For this meeting they were expecting approximately 25 people, but I was the only one who showed up! When the vocational meeting was over, I took the first step of the priestly religious formation. I was ready to be part of the seminary's family.

Then one weekend per month, I would go to the seminary. Everything was going perfectly well, and then came a difficult challenge, my mother's death. After her passing,



I lived for a several months with my grandmother, and then she passed away also. Despite these hardships, I continued my training. During these hard times, I found solace praying the Holy Rosary every day.

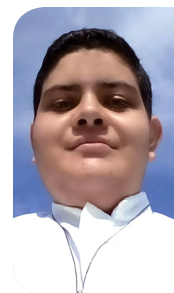
On July 27, 2010, I joined the seminary permanently. I had been waiting for this day for a long time and I could have not been any happier. At first, it was not easy. There were many problems with other seminarians, but with the help of our superiors, we learned to live like brothers. One of the great experiences was in the apostolate that we did. For example, I would teach catechism classes, or assist at mass, or help in some of the parishes where the Rogationist Fathers would go to work with the poor. Many people knew I was a seminarian, and something beautiful would happen: they would show me their support and affection.

Life in the seminary, at times, can be sad and confusing, but there is something that one can be sure of, and that is *you will never be alone*. When times are hard, there is al-

ways someone there to help you or willing to listen. Being a seminarian is not easy, but as Saint John Paul II said,

"when I look back and remember those years of my life I can assure you it's worthwhile to devote themselves to the cause of Christ."

The Lord's commandment, "the wheat is plentiful, but the workers few, pray to the owner of the wheat to send workers in to his harvest" inspires me to invite you to pray every day for vocations. All you have to say is: *Send, oh Lord, Holy Apostles into your Church.* ■



ADÁN PEREZ HERRERA

Is a Rogationist seminarian in Guadalajara, Mexico

Rogationist Fathers of the Heart of Jesus

Jack, the Lamp, and the Lumpy, Clumpy Gift that Kept on Giving

When Lights Come in a Dream



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

Let me tell you a story that I wrote, just for all of you:

Jack Frose's children, from his first wife, Mary, had all grown up. Jack and Ellen (his 2nd wife, and the stepmother of his children) were facing an empty-nest syndrome of sorts, as they prepared to celebrate Christmas, alone, together. Helen's only child, Cathy Anne, her 23-year-old daughter, had been arrested with her third consecutive DUI in the past year, and was in jail, pending bail. Helen and Jack are holding out on throwing down the bail money, for now, just long enough for her to reflect on her actions. Helen and Jack paid her a visit, in an effort to make her spirits brighter, but it did not end well, especially after they told her, "No bail, for now."

It was a different story with Jack and his kids. Although Jack's children immediately took to Jack's new wife, Jack had alien-

ated them, with his nasty temper, and cruel words, so severely, that none of them wanted to visit for Christmas, so they all made other plans, or so they said. They were holding grudges, and Jack was left holding a big bag of guilt, regret, and shame. In his mind, their grudges, were his Grinch, and they were stealing his Christmas.

Despite Jack's distress over his kids, he didn't get much comfort from his wife, Ellen. They had gotten in a terrible argument the day before Christmas, and they made the mistake of letting the sun go down on their anger. In fact, the sun had been down for several hours, before they finally went to bed. A relentless, icy wind, blowing snow, and bone-chilling temperatures had replaced it. Though the furnace offered a good supply of heat, their luxurious, satin sheets felt ice cold, and offered little in the way of comfort, at least as it pertained to their psyches and their souls.

Jack was a real estate investor who had stumbled across some incredible deals in

2016. He took advantage of some low interest rates, and some building owners who were in dire straits, and profited immensely over the past year. The windows on their Pen and Brush Club townhouse suite in Greenwich Village were covered with mother's nature's latest winter work of art, in the form of cobweb-like frosty formations extending from the corners to the mid-section of each window. Through the windows, you could barely see the bustling street below. All that could be seen was the blurry blinking of automobile headlights, blended in with colorful Christmas lights. The only thing that curbed the mounting frustration and Christmas-Eve anger between Jack and Ellen was the prescription-drug-induced sleep that each now enjoyed as a temporary, pre-Christmas-morning rage reprieve.

It didn't take Jack long to go from rage reprieve to R.E.M. sleep. Before he could finish counting the third member of a great fluffy flock of imaginary Bethlehem-like sheep, Jack Frose was dreaming. On

this Christmas Eve, 2016, it would be the dream that lingered on in his memory, well-beyond Christmas Day. In his dream, it was Christmas morning. In his dream, he had been tossing and turning all night long, eagerly anticipating the prospect of his wife granting him his only Christmas wish--- a luminous gift, in the form of a spellbindingly splendid Tiffany Trumper Creeper Table Lamp for his new, luxurious home office desk. This bronze-bound beauty, with its signature Tiffany Farrille, and gloriously mesmerizing colored glass, its design dating back to the early 20th century, was all he needed to brighten 2017. 2016 had been rather dark, despite his financial fortunes. In his mind, this gift is all he would need to brighten the dreary season. In his dream, he awoke on Christmas morning, and dashed to the living room. His wife was still in her pajamas, eagerly awaiting his arrival. He looked around, but saw no gifts whatsoever, under the brightly lit, boldly adorned Christmas tree, standing in the corner of their vast living room. Jack looked bewildered and turned to Ellen: "Over there," Ellen said, as she pointed to his Christmas stocking, hanging from the fireplace as logs smoldered below.

Jack looked at her in puzzled disbelief, and said, "What?!!! Is this some sort of joke?" She replied, "Just take a look inside." Jack did just that. His eyes popped wide open in disbelief. What he discovered, much to his dismay, was a big, fat lump of coal---just the kind Old St. Nick is said to have used to warn bad little children about the consequences of falling from his good graces. In his dream, his wife, Ellen, then disappeared, and, in her place, there was an angel of light.

"Hello Jack, I am Michael Angelo. Merry Christmas! Now I know you wished for a lamp, but instead, you were left with a lump," the angel explained.

"It was not just any old lamp," Jack replied.

"I know," said the angel, "It was a heavenly light---a luminous gift, in the form of a spellbindingly splendid Tiffany Trumper Creeper Table Lamp for your brand new,

luxurious home office desk. It was what you wanted above all else---a bronze-bound beauty, with its signature Tiffany Farrille, and gloriously-mesmerizing colored glass, and a devilishly handsome design, dating back to the early 20th century." The angel paused briefly as Jack tried desperately to take in all that he had, ostensibly, observed. Michael Angelo continued, "Ellen wanted you to have that very gift, even though you have treated her badly, and took her for granted in 2016. It was I who suggested the lump in place of the lamp."

"The light will guide him with a new sense of vision, internal fortitude and resolute courage."

"Why that's a devilish suggestion." Jack looked down, once again at the lump of coal," then continued. What kind of angel are you? I know I haven't exactly been an angel this year, or any other year for about the past twenty years,"

Jack muttered, with a trace of marked martyrdom in his tone, "but a lump of coal? I thought I served a God of redemption. Isn't that why we celebrate Christmas? Isn't that what the baby Jesus came to earth to do---to redeem us? What possible redemption value is there in this ugly old lump of coal?"

The angel simply stared at Jack, momentarily, and then disappeared. Jack woke up.

It was 4 am in the morning---Christmas morning. Ellen was still in her prescription-drug-induced sleep. She didn't hold grudges for long. It is likely she would soon waken, with a smile on her face, and a Christmas song in her heart. Jack tossed

and turned, once again, this time, struggling to answer the question the angel, Michael Angelo had left unanswered. Then, a light bulb went off in his head. It was a Christmas epiphany. "The lump of coal should not be regarded as an irredeemable mass of hard, clumpy black sot," he thought. "Back in the day---even more so than today, it was considered fuel. It fueled trains, and provided enough light to light up villages, towns and even big cities. No, it was not irredeemable---not by a long shot---quite the contrary. Coal could be, and, most often was, with a little effort, completely redeemed, and transformed. He too, could be transformed, he now realized. He began to see himself as the lump of coal in his dream.

Jack ultimately did receive his highly treasured lamp, from his beloved, non-grudge-holding-wife. And his children, grudgingly showed up. When they arrived, much to their delight, their dad was a kinder, gentler man. Ellen bailed out her daughter, Cathy Anne, on that Christmas morning, under the condition that she signs up to an Alcoholics Recovery group at their church. The whole family was together, and had a splendid Christmas Day. They shared hugs, exchanged gifts, ate jolly good food, and sang merrily. For Jack, the joy of that Christmas would linger. He would glance at his glorious new lamp every time he sat at his desk. But even more than that luxurious lamp, he would treasure the dream of the lump of coal---the lump that would fuel his redemption. The light that he now treasured most was one that had been planted by the angel, in his heart. 2017 was not one free from distressing circumstances. But the coal continued to burn, and the light in his heart would guide him through the New Year, with a new sense of vision, internal fortitude, and resolute courage. ■



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

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Vocations and Prayer

Dear Vocations and Prayer Friends,

The Editorial Board of Vocations and Prayer magazine has decided to answer Pope Francis' call to "extend a merciful embrace to our brothers and sisters throughout the world." The online edition of Vocations and Prayer will become available in its entirety and free of charge to millions of Catholics around the world.

Over a century ago, St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, founder of the Rogationist Fathers, published the periodical "God and Neighbor" to spread the prayer for vocations. "The entire Church must formally pray for this aim," he wrote, "because the purpose of the prayer to gain vocations must concern all the faithful, every Christian who has at heart the good of souls."

In the spirit of St. Hannibal and inspired by Pope Francis's message for a more inclusive Church, Vocations and Prayer greater outreach will bring its important message about the need to pray and work for more holy vocations in the Church to a greater audience.

To our subscribers, we would like to express our profound gratitude for your encouragement, support, and friendship. We will continue to offer the printed edition of Vocations and Prayer at the subscription rate of \$25 per year.

Our work to foster a culture of vocations in the Church of North America cannot continue without your help. We need your prayers for our ministry and your financial support as well. To make a donation for our ministry on vocations, please contact Fr. Antonio Fiorenza at afiořenza@rcj.org

May the Lord of the Harvest send workers to his harvest and bless you abundantly,



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Vocations and Prayer Magazine

GET READY FOR WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

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