

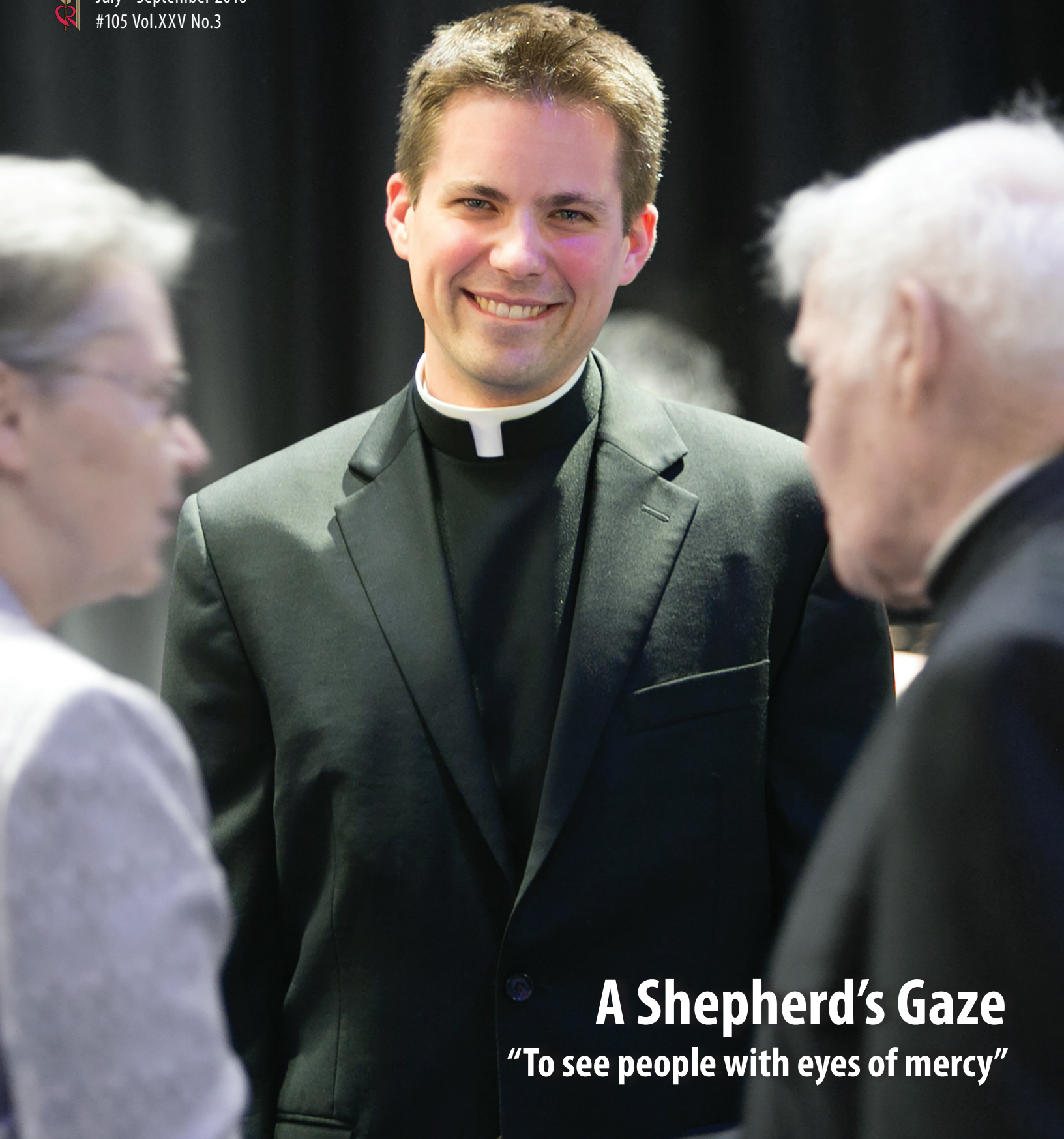
# Vocations *and* Prayer



The Catholic Magazine on Vocation Ministry

July - September 2016

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## A Shepherd's Gaze

**"To see people with eyes of mercy"**





## Editorial

- The Good Shepherd** 3  
Model for All Vocations  
His merciful gaze is the vocation inheritance of the Year of Mercy.  
Fr. Antonio Fiorenza, RCJ

## Special Section

## Pope Francis and Vocations

- Pope Francis as Vocation Model** 4  
A Teaching for All  
Pope Francis models what it means to be a religious today.  
Fr. William Reiser, SJ
- Family as a Launching Pad for Greater Gifts** 7  
A Vocational Reading of *Amoris Laetitia*  
Family teaches us closeness, care, and respect for others.  
Fr. Michael Wensing, STL
- Pope Francis Inspires a Renewed Sense of Religious Vocation** 10  
He encourages us to turn our focus to live our consecration.  
Sr. Eloise Rosenblatt, RSM

## Interview

- "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man"** 13  
A Conversation with Bishop Joseph V. Brennan, Episcopal Vicar of the San Fernando Pastoral Region in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles  
Jesus just ignored all of it. He knows we need him.  
Monica J. Llerena

## Vocations Spotlight

- A Brother or Dad?** 20  
How to Discern your Vocation to Brotherhood  
What do I aspire to do with these qualities?  
Br. Adam Becerra, FSP
- Vocations Director's Corner** 22  
**"I am open to it"**  
Vocation Ministry: A Call to Minister To and Accompany Youth  
There is a need for creating a culture of vocation.  
Sr. Norma Pocasangre, MM

## Bible

- A Sinners' Guest** 23  
Mercy and Vocation in the Gospel  
Before being a work of healing, mercy is shown as a "vocation."  
Fr. Giuseppe De Virgilio, Ph.D.

## Spirituality

- Lectio Divina*: Mark 10:46-52 25  
**"Take courage; get up, he is calling you"**  
Jesus "passes by" in our life, too. Do we recognize Him?  
Sr. Emily Beata Marsh, FSP
- Detachment, Generosity and Kindness** 26  
The Personality of Mercy  
Some of the qualities to minister mercy at its best.  
Fr. Eugene Hemrick

## Vocations Witness

- Vocation** 28  
A Deeper Sense of Life  
The human being is made for more, not to live a life without goals or sense.  
José Carlos Herrera

## Psychology

- If Jesus Ran for President** 29  
A Political Platform Based on Peace and Love  
We can vote for the candidate who most closely approximates the ways of Jesus.  
Dr. Bruce L. Thiessen, Ph.D.

## News

- Poland** • **World Youth Day** 31
- Italy** • **XII General Chapter of the Rogationist Fathers**
- Vatican** • **II Vatican Impact Investing Conference**
- Corner Message:** "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack."  
Inspired by Sr. Maria Rosa Guerrini
- Insert:** Holy Hours by Fr. Peter Quinto, RCJ



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# The Good Shepherd Model for All Vocations

By Fr. ANTONIO FIORENZA, RCJ

**H**ave you ever imagined the face of Jesus? Have you ever thought of His gaze? Have you asked yourself what his allure on people, especially the poor and the sinners?

Artists, painters and sculptors of all ages and time have attempted to produce “replicas” of the face of Jesus. Resulting from these attempts generations now have many treasured masterpieces. However, none of them was able to exhaust the beauty of Jesus’ face, the intensity of his gaze, which is just impossible to encase within the limits of human language and artistic endeavours. The face of Jesus of Nazareth in fact is “full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:140), “refulgence of the Father’s glory, the very imprint of his being” (cf. Heb 1:3). Then “whoever sees Jesus of Nazareth – writes Pope Francis in the *Misericordiae Vultus* - by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.”

There is an image in Christian literature and iconography, derived from the Scripture that shows more than any other representations the merciful face of the Father; this is the image of the “Good Shepherd” (Ps. 23; Jn 10:1-8; Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:1-7; Heb 13:20). It is for this very reason that the image was chosen to be the symbol of the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

“The Heart of the Good Shepherd reaches out to us, above all to those who are most distant,” affirmed Pope Francis in his homily of the Jubilee Year of Priesthood (June 1-3, 2016). He continued saying that “The great riches of the Heart of Jesus are two: the Father and ourselves. His days were divided between prayer to the Father and encountering people. Not distance, but encounter.” Pope Francis in closing said, “So too, the heart of Christ’s priests knows only two directions: *the Lord and his people.*”

In the Pope’s mind, the priests, as shepherds of God’s people, are called to live lives that are in communion with Jesus, the ultimate “Shepherd” of every soul. They are to model their lives on Jesus; to possess the same attitude of Jesus’ Heart, the same loving and merciful gaze for each person. A preferential gaze for those who have strayed away, the

poor, the marginalized, and the outcasts, to show them the love of God and enkindle in them the fire of life’s joy.

The “Good Shepherd” is life’s model of priests and also for the other vocations in the Church: for the deacons, consecrated persons serving God and the neighbors, for those who have special roles in the Christian community: parents, teachers, and catechist; all of us are called to communicate by our gaze the merciful love of the Father.

The picture of the “Good Shepherd” with his merciful gaze on the people is the vocation inheritance of the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

The *National Vocation Awareness Week* that will be celebrated this year on November 6-12, will be a special time to deepen this theme in its multiple aspects. Let us take inspiration and guidance in the example of Jesus compassionately gazing on the crowd that appears to be sheep without shepherd; he heals their infirmities and then turns to his disciples saying: “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest” (cf. Mt 9: 35-38). ■



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# Pope Francis as Vocational Model

## *A Teaching for All*



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By Fr. WILLIAM REISER, SJ

Since his election three and a half years ago, Pope Francis continues to capture the attention of people all over the world. His warmth, his humility, his simplicity, the ease with which he speaks about faith—all these qualities bear eloquent witness that he is someone who is familiar with God and at ease with himself. The story of his life and some of its details are, by now, fairly well known. It has been the cover story in places as different as Rolling Stone and National Geographic. The world knows he took the bus and subway in Buenos Aires, that he paid his own hotel bill after the conclave, and that he washed the feet of women and non-Christians during the Holy Thursday service. His disarming “Fratelli e sorelle, buona sera” on the night of his election still

plays in our ears. And for those who would like to know more we have Austen Ivereigh’s *The Great Reformer* (2014), as well as Francis’ remarkably candid interview with Antonio Spadaro that appeared in *America Magazine* in the fall of 2013 (“A Big Heart Open to God”). Many of us were glued to television screens when Francis visited the United States last year, both listening to what he had to say and watching how he interacted with people. It’s not just because he was the pope that we watched so intently; it was because he represented so beautifully the grace or the charisma that led us to religious life or ordained ministry in the first place.

### Ecology and the poor

Two features of Francis’ spirituality that stand out are his concern for the environ-

ment, which came through eloquently in *Laudato Si’* (On Care for our Common Home), and his constant mindfulness of the poor and those forced to live at the margins, which he speaks of repeatedly and to which he draws our attention by going to the margins himself. He shows up at a hospital, or a prison, or a refugee center, or a soup kitchen, or a border-crossing. Sensitivity to the environment and to the earth as “our common home” is not just an expression of one of the great moral concerns of our time. It is also a mark of vocational awareness. In the “Guidelines for Pastoral Renewal,” during his address to the leadership of the Episcopal Conferences of Latin America (2013), he recalled the opening words of *Gaudium et spes*, noting that those words are “the basis for our dialogue with the contemporary world.” A major part of that dialogue is listening to the earth itself and joining the



efforts of the women and men dedicated to raising ecological awareness and re-thinking how we view and use the earth's precious resources. Of course, it's not just for the sake of the planet that we enter the dialogue; it's for the sake of the people of God who are most vulnerable to the potentially disastrous effects of climate change. Mindfulness of the environment is an important corollary to the option for the poor.

The reasons why people embark upon consecrated life or ordained ministry are not necessarily the same reasons that they remain, and perhaps the same thing can be said of marriage. The promises we make guide and shape us. Fidelity to them may take us down paths we did not anticipate; much depends on the challenges—seen or unforeseen—that life presents us. What centers us, ultimately, is our search for God—and our desire to be loved only the way God can. But the search for God, especially for religious and priests, leads directly into the life of God's people—even, I would argue, for contemplatives. There is no bypassing the world. And this is something that watching and listening to Pope Francis makes abundantly clear.

## Noticing those at the roadside

In the homily he gave at the Mass for the closing of the general assembly of the synod of bishops in October (2015), Francis spoke of several temptations that threaten the following of Jesus. The gospel text was the story of Bartimaeus at the end of the tenth chapter of Mark. Francis noted that it was Jesus who stopped, not the disciples. His words are worth recalling: "If Bartimaeus was blind, they were deaf: his problem was not their problem. This can be a danger for us: in the face of constant problems, it is better to move on, instead of letting ourselves be bothered. In this way, just like the disciples, we are with Jesus but we do not think like him. . . . We are able to speak about him and work for him, but we live far from his heart, which is reaching out to those who are wounded. This is the temptation: a 'spirituality of illusion': we can walk through the deserts of humanity without seeing what is really there . . . A faith that does not know how to root itself in the life of the people remains arid and, rather than oas-

ses, creates other deserts." He wrote something similar in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel): "Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard . . ." God's voice is no longer heard: that is, the divine voice that speaks to us through the lives of the world's throwaways.

Francis' focus on people at the margins is not only the most forceful characteristic of his papacy; it is also central to the example he gives of vocation. He models what

*"True joy comes from being in the presence of Jesus."*

it means to be a religious today, a priest, and a disciple of Jesus. Francis' expression "shepherds with the odor of sheep" is well known. It is, of course, deeply evangelical—an apt description of the Good Shepherd, for it puts us in mind of the people who surrounded Jesus and who often sat with him at table. Jesus had the smell of the sheep, and because of that many of the righteous ones—those who were ritually and morally clean—walked away from him. "Opening the door to the Lord means opening the door to those he loves: the poor, young children, those who have strayed, sinners . . . the heart that has space for the Lord has space for others too. . . . And the Lord is like the poor: he draws near without our calling him, and he insists a little, but he does not stay if we do not stop him from going. It is easy to get rid of him. It is enough to move a little more quickly, as happens to beggars, or to look the other way when the children confront us in the subway."

## "God so loved the world"

In the narrative of our faith, God and world go together. God creates the world, God redeems the world, and God accompanies it. To hear the voice of God, we listen to the world: the voice of God in nature, in the events of our time, in the great interior silence we call the human soul—the place where the Spirit dwells—and in the people around us. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness, but the rest of his story unfolded among his people. His concern for others was not simply a moral response that flowed from his experience of God's love, nor was loving his neighbor basically another commandment, alongside the ten well known ones—an additional religious requirement.

How often does it happen that we confess our failed efforts to love others, as if the call to love others were like the commandments about not lying or stealing or envying or swearing? The only remedy I know of is the grace of realizing, profoundly, how much God has loved us. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). As I have loved you: that's the part we need to think about. The love and care of the Good Shepherd are grounded in Jesus' own experience of having been loved: "As the Father has loved me" (John 15:9). It is that experience, that grace, that enabled Jesus to love the way he did. For our part, we learn to love the world—and its people—to the degree that we learn to find God in it, just as Jesus did.

Toward the outset of the interview that appeared in *America*, Francis recounted his devotion to Caravaggio's painting *The Calling of St. Matthew*: "That finger of Jesus, pointing at Matthew. That's me. I feel like him. Like Matthew. . . . Here, this is me, a sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze." Such is the grace that enables compassion and stretches a heart so that it can embrace the world.

## Prayer from the heart of the Good Shepherd

In a short, inspiring collection of homilies under the title *I Ask You, Be Shepherds* (2015), we find several places where Francis speaks about the prayer of pastors and





Painting by Caravaggio

priests. What he says, however, could easily be extended to the rest of the praying community, for no matter how solitary our lives, the Christian never steps into God's presence alone. How many voices lie behind every Our Father, every Hail Mary, every one of the psalms—they are countless. "When we pray," Francis writes, "we are fighting for our people. Do I pray this way?" Then he asks, "Am I like Abraham in his courageous intercession, or do I end up in that pettiness of Jonah lamenting the leaky roof rather than those men and women who are victims of a pagan culture?" Such prayer "fatigues our heart"; it is "pastoral fatigue" or "that interior heaviness experienced by fathers and brothers who do not want to lose any of those who have been entrusted to them." Saint Paul may have had the same thought when he wrote, "May I never boast except in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal 6:14).

Crucified to the world. Ministers of the gospel and those who have been embraced the evangelical life discover pretty quickly that the closer they come to God, the more they carry within the hopes and disappointments, the joys and the sadnesses of other human beings. Indeed, we develop a particular sensitivity to the suffering of our people, as well as to the hardness of heart among those whose social privilege or whose lack of faith makes them deaf to the cries of the many Lazaruses outside the gate. That deafness can make us angry, but in our heart of hearts we also realize that God is always seeking to break through it. God's response to human stubbornness is a divine determination to redeem: and we must learn to respond with the same love. That is not easy, and it contributes to the heart's fatigue.

The good shepherd does not simply roll over and go back to sleep after listening to the story of a broken marriage, of hungry children, of refugees terrified and rejected at a border crossing, of a parent without a job, of a deportation, of yet another crucifixion. The more we pray after listening to the plea of the Good Shepherd. Are we better off or worse off for coming to know Christ? That's not a bad question to ask ourselves, for coming to know Jesus brings with it a brand new sort of spiritual challenge and tension—ask any one of the disciples—a tension that both reveals our hollowness and draws us into a deeper dependence upon God. As the scripture scholar James Dunn noted in *Jesus and the Spirit*, "In short, the warfare does not end when the Spirit comes; on the contrary, that is when it really begins."

### Vocational joy

"An evangelizer," Francis reminded us in *Evangelii gaudium*, "must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral." And what prevents life from becoming a perpetual Lent—or an unending wake—is personal encounter with the risen Jesus. In the mission of preaching and bearing witness to the Good News, paying attention to Jesus is the only way to keep ourselves (as he would say) from being distracted by the weeds.

People radiate joy for a number of reasons. Some, because they are at peace with themselves and content with their lives. Others, because they have been naturally graced with a bright disposition. All of us could cite an example or two of socially and economically privileged people who are not necessarily happy, and other examples

of people who are poor and disadvantaged yet find reasons to thank God; life still has its blessings. But true joy—the joy or peace that no one can take away from us (John 16:22)—comes from being in the presence of Jesus, as if life were one long Emmaus road. Such joy comes from the hope that Jesus is. It also comes from feeling God among the people.

An outstanding feature of the vocational model that Francis gives us is the degree to which his imagination is steeped in the gospel narratives. Every gospel scene becomes a Caravaggio painting. His daily homilies reflect a warm, prayerful engagement with Scripture; they are spiritually and pastorally rich. The only way to know Jesus is to follow him, and following him requires the use of imagination, for imagination draws us into the narrative world of the evangelists and then transposes those scenes into our own. He says, "It seems that in order to answer that question that we all hear in our hearts—Who is Jesus for us?—what we have learned and studied in the catechism is not enough. . . In order to know Jesus we have to make the journey that Peter made. . . Jesus did not say to Peter and his apostles, 'Know me!' What he said was 'Follow me!'"

Life along the Emmaus road draws joy and peace from walking alongside the risen Lord. At the same time it is a journey, and we have much to learn along the way. Yet learning from Jesus is unlike learning from any other, because he never looks at us as disciples who have failed. The joy that is so evident in Francis, the tenderness with which he embraces people, especially the least ones among us, his thoughtful awareness of the earth and our environment, and the humble simplicity from which he speaks about Jesus—all of these are expressions of the vocational example Francis gives the Church. ■



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# Family as a Launching Pad for Greater Gifts

## *A Vocational Reading of Amoris Laetitia*

By Fr. MICHAEL WENSING, STL

I went on my annual priest retreat this summer having just finished reading Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation "The Joy of Love" with much to meditate upon. An exhortation is not meant to introduce new doctrine, but in this case was meant to take a serious look at important issues facing the Church today and as a summary of the pope's thoughts following the Synods of Bishops on the Family in 2014 and 2015.

My fellow pastors on retreat said they will use portions of the document for marriage preparation (such as chapter six) and others will use portions for family programs (e.g. chapter four, perhaps the heart of the document, reflecting on the quality of love discussed in 1 Corinthians 13). And at least one pastor is taking 15 minutes every morning at the staff coffee break to read and reflect on the entire document. And since it is a long document (256 pages) I asked him when he expected to finish. He responded it may take all Summer and Fall...but it will be worth it based on what they have done so far. It could serve as a time to examine the ministry programs and orientation of the entire parish and its staff.

### "Regularizing Irregular Situations"

Because of the media hype prior to and upon publication of this exhortation, many of us rushed to chapter eight first to read what the Holy Father said regarding ministering to divorced and remarried couples. In this chapter Pope Francis evoked the image of the Church as a field hospital in regard to cohabiting couples and those divorced and remarried. He emphasized the role of conscience and discernment on the part of the faithful and encouraged pastors to look at each case individually. He cites the mercy of God and "the logic of the Gospel," and recommended a process of accom-

paniment in which the pastor "guides the faithful to an awareness of their situation before God." This fits well with the other papal document in full effect this year, the jubilee year of mercy: *Misericordiae Vultus*. But this chapter builds on an address that St. John Paul II gave the bishops in which he recommended the pastoral practice of 'regularizing irregular situations' in the lives of couples, with the hope of bringing such couples to the full participation in the sacraments of the church when and if possible. This chapter combined with chapter six recalled the procedural changes in the processing of annulments, which the Holy Father instituted only a half year prior to the present document (to approach annulments with greater efficiency and with new encouragement for those needing such a study to initiate an application).

Pleased after reading chapter eight I went back and began a slow reflective reading of the entire document. It is truly a spiritual and encouraging reading with concrete suggestions for families and pastors on what they can do in a confused age. Pope Francis has spoken about the family since the beginning of his pontificate. Thus *Amoris Laetitia* may be seen as the culmination of all of his and the bishops' efforts to focus the Church on what our faith tells us about family life – a message that, quoting the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis says "is good news indeed."

### Marriage and Consecrated Life

Because the exhortation dwells on the family today in the context of traditional marriage, there is great emphasis on the sacrament of matrimony. However, this reflection is soon couched in the larger reality of what he calls the "vocation of the family" (cf. chapter three which is titled: 'Looking to Jesus: the Vocation of the family'). And it





is here in which we can take our vocational readings within the reflection on family life, which would be inclusive of religious and sacred orders, vocations along side the marriage vocation. He calls the family of faith (the praying family) the domestic church. It is rightly shown to be the basic building block of the larger church families of the parish and the diocese. It is within such nurturing families that the full range of vocations in the Church will prosper, be it marriage, the single life, religious consecrated life or the priesthood.

While the Pope does not do a specific development of priesthood and religious life vocations, it is easy enough to draw trajectories from what is said to see how the children of the kind of family life he envisioned would freely choose such vocations. The most concrete of such is when he writes on marriage and virginity beginning with paragraph 158: “Many people who are unmarried are not only devoted to their own family but often render great service in their group of friends, in the Church community and in their professional lives.” This statement would cover the single vocation and religious consecration as well as the celibacy of the priesthood. Such is hinted at in the following sentence: “Many put their talents at the service of the Christian community through charity and volunteer work.

Others remain unmarried because they consecrate their lives to the love of Christ and neighbor.” The Holy Father reflects on virginity and the single vocation of St. Paul who definitely was a vocation of ministry for the gospel. “As a sign, it speaks to us of the coming of the Kingdom and the need for complete devotion to the cause of the Gospel” (cf. 1 Cor 7:32). It is also a reflection of the fullness of heaven, where “they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Mt 22:30). In paragraph 161 he makes a comparison and contrast: “Whereas virginity is an “eschatological” sign of the risen Christ, marriage is a “historical” sign for us living in this world, a sign of the earthly Christ who chose to with continence in itself, but with the entirety of a life based on the evangelical counsels.” Now this is truly vocational language in the tradition of the church. “The value of virginity lies in its symbolizing a love that has no need to

possess the other; in this way it reflects the freedom of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

## A Not Merely Doctrinal Formation

My bishop assigned a seminarian transition deacon to my parish this summer to do a kind of residency in his ministry as deacon. In his self-introduction to the parish at the Masses of our first weekend together he mentioned his discovery of the eschatological meaning of love after an early failed marriage. As a teenager he told his father he was in love with a girl and was going to marry her. His father said he did not really know what love was. He rebelled at that statement and married anyway. Within a few years they were divorced and he wanted to ask his dad what he really meant by the meaning of love. But, alas, his father had died recently and he had to turn to God in a spiritual quest to better understand love.

His story summarized what I quoted from the Holy Father above. He discovered that love had no need to possess another and he wanted his love to be consecrated to the love of Christ and his neighbor. After his annulment he was free to investigate the pursuit of this kind of eschatological love in the priesthood. I was humbled listening to his witness. He said coming to this kind of desire to love more completely now in life was due to the Father’s love first given to him so he could in turn pass it on.

The apostolic exhortation mentions priests, deacons, men and women religious in another context, their formation in better pastoral care of today’s family. “Along with a pastoral outreach aimed specifically at families, this shows the need for “a more adequate formation...of priests, deacons, men and women religious, catechists and other pastoral workers” (#202). “Seminarians should receive a more extensive interdisciplinary, and not merely doctrinal, formation in the areas of engagement and marriage. Their training does not always allow them to explore their own psychological and affective background and experiences... It is important for families to be part of the seminary process and priestly life, since they help to reaffirm these and to keep them well grounded in reality” (#203).

## Education as a Foundation for All Vocations

In chapter seven Pope Francis provides advice to parents regarding raising their children with strong morals and values. This would be a primary chapter to emphasize vocational awareness in the family setting. Even in the area of needed sex education in the family setting he states it should be presented “within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving (#280). Mutual self-giving speaks of a generosity of heart and life, which must underlie any religious vocation as well as marriage vocations.

He begins the chapter by advising parents to examine what their children are exposed to, their entertainment, friends, media, education etc. It is within this context that parents can be conscious and aware to expose their children to the lives of the saints, to good models of religious men and women, to good liturgies in their parishes or in religious retreats. We can trust this exposure would allow the Holy Spirit to plant the seeds of religious vocations in the hearts of many of our children. In #262 he speaks to the development of maturity in the children as a development in freedom. “Inevitably, each child will surprise us with ideas and projects born of that freedom, which challenge us to rethink our own ideas. This is a good thing. Education includes encouraging the responsible use of freedom to face issues with good sense and intelligence. It involves forming persons who readily understand that their own lives, and the life of the community, are in their hands, and that freedom is a great gift.” Vocations to the priesthood and religious life come from mature freedom what sees the larger picture of the decision and consequences of being a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. Mature freedom allows some to take on the “harvest of souls” in the kingdom of God.

Later, in #264, Pope Francis speaks to the parental responsibility of shaping inclinations toward goodness (and generosity) in their children, which would be the foundation of any vocation. “Parents are also responsible for shaping the will of their children, fostering good habits and a natural



inclination to goodness. This entails presenting certain ways of thinking and acting as desirable and worthwhile, as part of a gradual process of growth. The desire to fit into society, or the habit of foregoing an immediate pleasure for the sake of a better and more orderly life in common, is itself a value that can then inspire openness to greater values.” This is complemented in #265 when he writes: “We have to arrive at the point where the good that the intellect grasps can take root in us as a profound affective inclination, as a thirst for the good that outweighs other attractions and helps us to realize that what we consider objectively good is also good “for us” here and now... Today, it is less and less effective to demand something that calls for effort and sacrifice (e.g. *vocations to priesthood and religious life*- italics mine) without clearly pointing to the benefits which it can bring.”

A part of education toward mature freedom is development of good skills of socialization, so important in religious vocations and ministry to others. “The family is the primary setting for socialization, since it is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one. The task of education is to make us sense that the world and society are also our home; it trains us how to live together in this greater home. In the family, we learn closeness, care and respect for others. We break out of our fatal self-absorption and come to realize that we are living with and alongside others who are worthy of our concern, our kindness and our affection” (#276).

## Growing in Faith

Finally, a primary incentive for thinking of a religious vocation is the desire to pass on the faith. It was a primary motivation for my own thoughts of priesthood long ago. Pope Francis dedicates a section toward the end of the document on just this, passing on the faith. “...the home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith, to pray and serve our neighbor. This begins with baptism, in which, as St. Augustine said, mothers who bring their children “cooperate in the sacred birthing.” ...Faith is God’s gift, received in baptism, and not our own



work, yet parents are the means that God uses to for it to grow and develop. Hence “it is beautiful when mothers teach their little children to blow a kiss to Jesus or to Our Lady. How much love there is in that! At that moment the child’s heart becomes a place of prayer” (#287). “The work of handing on the faith to children, in the sense of facilitating its expression and growth, helps the whole family in its evangelizing mission. It naturally begins to spread the faith to all around them, even outside of the family circle. Children who grew up in missionary families often become missionaries themselves; growing up in a warm and friendly family, they learn to relate to the world in this way, without giving up their faith or their convictions” (#289).

In the closing paragraphs of this document Pope Francis writes about the family reflecting Trinitarian love and participating in the motherhood of the Church, something which religious vocations consciously attempt to do with their lives. “When a family is welcoming and reaches out to others, especially the poor and the neglected, it is “a symbol, witness and participant in the Church’s motherhood.” Social love, as a reflection of the Trinity, is what truly unifies the spiritual meaning of the family and its mission to others, for it makes present the kerygma in all its communal imperatives” (#324). The family is not an end in itself but a launching pad for greater gifts of the self and of love. “All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families, and every family must feel this constant impulse”(#325).

Because of this year’s focus on the vocation of the family in the Church as a result of this exhortation, I dedicated a new statue of the Holy Family in our parish church for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are a family model for us to look to in prayer and in imitation. Pope Francis appropriately closed his apostolic exhortation with a prayer to the Holy Family:

*“Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love; to you we turn with trust. Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches. Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division; may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing. Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God’s plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Graciously hear our prayer. Amen” ■*



**FR. MICHAEL WENSING, STL**

Recently director of the Priest Sabatical Program in Rome. Fr. Michael is currently the pastor of Holy Name Parish in Watertown, South Dakota.

# Pope Francis Inspires a Renewed Sense of Religious Vocation

By Sr. ELOISE ROSENBLATT, RSM

**M**y favorite grade school teacher was Sister Therese Marie Morales, O.P., who taught me in third grade at St. Mary's School in Whittier, California, 1953-54. Did I have special affection for her because I earned quite a lot of holy cards in her class? I do remember that one holy card was a reward for reciting all 15 mysteries of the Rosary. I knew them because we said the Rosary every night at home for night prayers. Whatever the origin of my affection for Sister Therese Marie, our friendship has endured over the years—more than 60! After high school, I joined this community of Dominican Sisters based in Houston, Texas, leaving after a year. Five years later, after college and graduate school, I joined the Sisters of Mercy.

Just a couple of weeks before writing this article, I made a trip to visit family members in my home-town in Southern California, and joined Sister Therese Ma-

rie at the Saturday 5:00 p.m. Sunday Mass at the parish church. The celebration was vibrant with energetic participation by the congregation, well-chosen music, conscious, reverent reading by the lectors, and an intelligent homily by the Redemptorist pastor, Steven Nyl, C.Ss.R. We had our photo taken after Mass on my I-Phone by a kindly man outside the entrance to our parish Church. We are standing beneath the bas-relief of Mary of the Assumption, and under the banner that says "Jubilee Year of Mercy."

The photo expresses several things Pope Francis has proposed that religious women consider as the purpose of their consecration—no matter the country, the particular Order or Institute they joined, how long they have been members, or what their congregational ministries are.

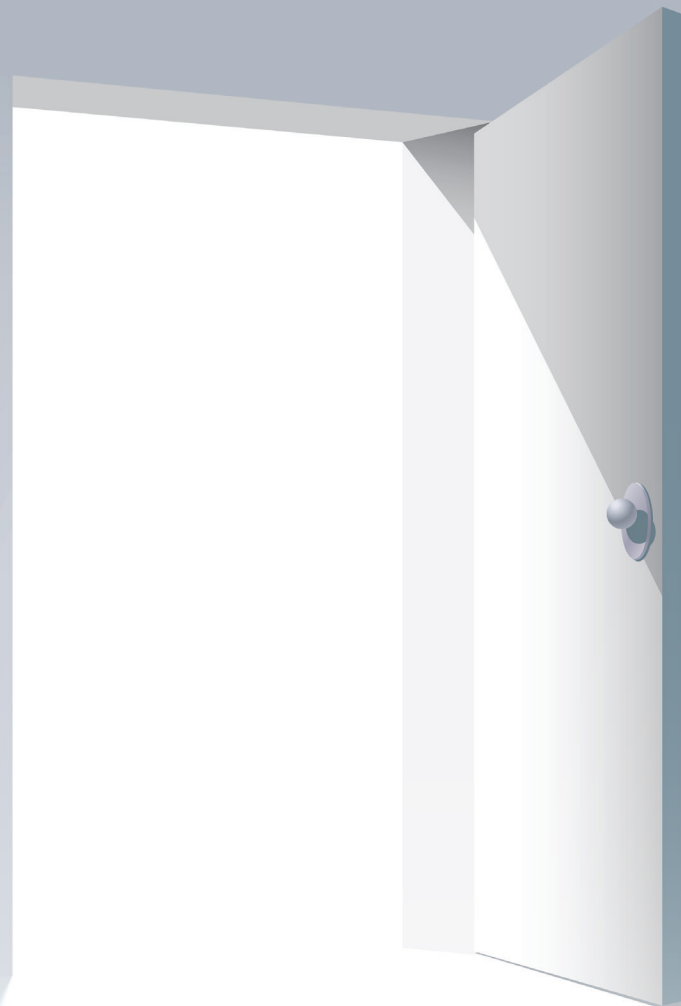
## Gratitude for the Church's Heritage Inspires Consecrated Life

One motive for entering religious life in

our founding documents was commonly expressed as the "salvation of our soul," giving up everything for the "one thing necessary"—the love of God. Religious consecration was a response to the will of God; following the demands of the life and accepting the sacrifices would result in union with God.

I think Pope Francis re-orientes this inspiration. In *Misericordiae Vultus* (April 2015), he emphasizes gratitude as the starting place for crossing the threshold into the church, but this is also a way to think about the motive for responding to a religious vocation. "With these sentiments of gratitude for everything the Church has received, and with a sense of responsibility for the task that lies ahead, we shall cross the threshold of the Holy Door, duly confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly support us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us." (MV§ 4)

In this sense, responding to a religious vocation expresses our gratitude. Our en-



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try into the heart of the Church—entering a particular congregation-- is crossing the “threshold of the Holy Door” where we gratefully live out our call to religious life. The Risen Jesus sustains those who follow him.

## The Mission of All Religious is to Enact the Mercy of Jesus

Many people have a fearful image of God and imagine that God is as likely to punish them as reward them. In *Misericordiae Vultus* Pope Francis urges religious, along with all baptized, to become messengers and missionaries of a compassionate God. “The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way, must penetrate the heart and mind of every person.” (MV § 11)

Pope Francis turns to the Psalms to describe the way the ministry of Jesus shows a merciful, not a fearsome God. Quoting Psalm 147 at length, he emphasizes that God shows concrete signs of his compassion: “[H]e executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up all who are bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over sojourners. He upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin...He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds...the Lord lifts up the downtrodden; he casts the wicked to the ground.” Pope Francis says this is a “visceral love that gushes forth from the depths naturally.” (MV § 6)

The charism and history of a particular community may emphasize the work of prayer, recitation of the divine office and contemplation, or education, healthcare, preaching, parish-based service, care of children or vulnerable adults, missionary outreach, retreat work, or the needs of particular ethnic or regional social group. The charism may be directed at justice-based advocacy, connection of the poor with social or government services, the relief of a particular kind of suffering, or a moral or ethical or devotional theme in the Church’s tradition. However the blue-

print for the actions flowing out of these charisms, says Pope Francis, is the Mercy of God. God’s real self is shown through Psalm 147, and whose continuous mercy is identified in the compassionate works of Jesus in his public ministry in the gospels.

In announcing the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis called attention to a particular gospel, the story of the sinful, weeping woman forgiven by Jesus during a dinner party (Luke 7:36-50). “It is good that we should feel that same compassionate gaze of Jesus upon us, as when he perceived the sinful woman in the house of the Pharisee...This woman’s every gesture speaks of love and expresses her desire to have an unshakeable certainty in her life: that of being forgiven and Jesus gives her this assurance...” (*Homily with Announcement of the Year of Mercy, March 1, 2015, Vatican Radio*).

Pope Francis considers two dimensions of our ministry to enact the mercy of God: 1) that we ourselves remember we have experienced the gaze of Jesus on us and experienced that “unshakeable certainty” of being loved and then 2) we look upon others with that “same compassionate gaze of Jesus,” concerned that other people feel what we know about God.

## Religious as Prophets and Sentinels of the Dawn

In his *Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People* (Nov. 2014), Pope Francis proposed three “movements” to renew the sense of the vitality of religious life: 1) Look at the past with gratitude; 2) Live the present with passion; and 3) Embrace the future with hope. While he speaks of religious as “prophets,” I prefer Pope Francis’ description as “sentinels who keep watch in the night and sense the coming of the dawn” (§ 2). I think this image of sentinel as the nighttime guard and caller of the hours until dawn is especially timely. Because of fewer entrants to religious life, aging of members, need to sell Motherhouses, and communities having to surrender the management of institutions—it’s been a difficult time for women religious.

“Prophet” seems to suggest a more ex-

alted biblical role than most women religious adopt for themselves. Our “prophecy” is more modest than the dramatic roles of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, or Ezekiel. We critique government policies that are unfair or disadvantageous to the poor, and support those which provide healthcare to the sick and feed the hungry. We write letters of advocacy and support for immigrants and do quiet, tedious work of filling out applications for residency. We support political initiatives, which protect the environment in our states and regions. Women religious in North America don’t ordinarily fear they will end up on a death-list, targeted for their political advocacy for ending the death penalty, their identification with the cause of the economically poor, or the rights of ethnic minorities.

However, women religious in Central and South America do endure fear for their lives by being identified with the Catholic Church’s mission to the poor, their personal safety compromised by their visibility as “church women.” In Africa, and Asia, women religious endure the danger, along with other Roman Catholics, of being targeted for their minority status in Islamic states. There are still survivor women religious in Eastern Europe under Communist governments in the post-WW II era, who courageously lived their religious vocations in exile from their convents, hiding their identity in public, and secretly sustaining their community life. I think these women are more properly called “prophetic.” The recent writings of Pope Francis do not seem to address directly the risk, suffering and death faced by these truly prophetic women religious.

## Living Religious Life on This Precious Earth

Pope Francis has written an extraordinarily influential Encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si’* (May 24, 2015). I read it as offering a way to re-contextualize our consecrated life. If in earlier periods of formation, our spirituality was oriented toward living in terms of “the next life,” *Laudato Si’* turns our focus to living our consecration in the midst of the beau-

tiful world that surrounds us. He urges us to adopt the gaze of Jesus. “As he made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty shown by his Father, and invited his disciples to receive a divine message in things: ‘Lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest (Jn 4:35).’” (LS § 97)

Pope Francis might suggest another vow, or perhaps specification of our vow of poverty as “ecological citizenship”—development of habits, attitudes and orientation to consuming less, conservation of resources, and protection of the environment. (LS § 211)

Environmentalism or passionate concern for the welfare of the earth, however, cannot be separated from a care about our fellow human beings. Pope Francis cautions against a dedication to a “cause” to save the earth, which does not simultaneously include the needs of real persons.

“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and our unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.”

## Shared Vision with All Consecrated Women

In his *Apostolic Letter To all Consecrated People* (Nov., 2014) Pope Francis reminds us that “Our founders and foundresses shared in Jesus’ own compassion when he saw the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd (§ 2). There is a transcendence of our charism that unites us as religious women as “experts in communion” who are “witnesses and architects of the plan of unity.”

One week ago, I had an unexpected experience of this “mysticism of encounter” with another woman religious. Sister Anastasia, a missionary-speaker from St. Elizabeth Convent in Minsk, Belarus, made an appeal for funds at the Sunday Mass I attended at Ascension Church in Saratoga, Northern California. The pas-



Sr. Anastasia (left) with Sr. Eloise (right) at Ascension Church in Saratoga, Northern California.

tor, Fr. Joe Galang, invited us both to breakfast, and thus I had a chance to get better acquainted with Sr. Anastasia. In her mid-thirties, she’s a university graduate in international relations, linguistically gifted in four languages, experienced in working with mentally retarded children, and is now in charge of administration and fundraising for her community’s works in Minsk. What are the works? Counseling and caring for women fleeing domestic violence, teaching special-needs children, running an orphanage, and caring for patients with tuberculosis, among others. She spoke of needing a projector for her Downs-syndrome children; she was directing them in a performance of an adaptation of St. Exupery’s “The Little Prince.”

This was clear to me--- I understood well enough the ministries Sister Anastasia’s community was doing, and why she was sent abroad to raise funds, next stop Chicago, U.S.A., where she would appeal in Polish to parishioners in that archdiocese on behalf of her community ministries. As a lawyer, I also work with women who are victims of domestic violence, so we had a ministerial connection. I learned that in Belarus, women do not have the same legal or court protections from domestic violence as my clients do here in California. This made me sympathize with the difficulties she faces.

And I understood very sympathetically the urgency she felt, her dedication to her children, and the reason why she would find interest and support no matter what parish she visited in the U.S. I felt she was a Sister to me, and I to her. She is doing the Church’s mission. Everyone at

Mass who hears her will understand that. I had never met her, but our shared consecration was a spiritual bond. Though we belong to different communities, thousands of miles apart—we share the same dedication that makes us sisters to each other. Sister Anastasia’s community at St. Elizabeth Convent, started in 1999, originated from an Orthodox women’s community of the same name—so her congregation is a renewal, re-founding and continuation of the work of women religious before her.

Pope Francis encourages us in his *Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People*, “to embrace the future with hope...it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history will into the future.” (§3)

I felt my religious life has been blessed by two “book-end” experiences in one month: Rootedness in the history of my vocation, because of my long friendship with Sister Therese Marie, my dear third-grade teacher...as well as the future of my vocation, because of my meeting with Sister Anastasia of Minsk, Belarus who is carrying forward the mission of Jesus, in the spirit of compassion and hope I recognize in my own life and ministry. ■



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# "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man"

## *A Conversation with Bishop Joseph V. Brennan, Episcopal Vicar of the San Fernando Pastoral Region in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles*

By MONICA J. LLERENA

*On the day of his 36th anniversary of priestly ordination, Bishop Joseph V. Brennan spoke with Vocations and Prayer. It was a joyful occasion to talk about his call to priesthood and vocations. After reading the Scriptures, Bishop set the tone for a conversation in which he revealed his deep love for God and his ministry.*

**B**ishop Joseph Brennan was born in 1954, grew up in the San Fernando Valley, and is the son of Roger and Helen Brennan. One of ten children, he attended St. Elisabeth's Church and School in Van Nuys and graduated from Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks in 1972. After his freshman year of college at the University of Portland (Oregon), he entered St. John's Seminary College from which he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy in 1976. After four years of graduate studies at the Theologate of St. John's Seminary, Bishop Brennan was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles on June 21, 1980. His first assignment was at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Angeles (1980-1983). He spent the following years of his ministry in various locations, including St. Linus in Norwalk (1983-1987), the 'old' Cathedral of St. Vibiana (1987-1992), St. Linus once more as the new Pastor (1992-2004), and Holy Trinity Church in San Pedro as Pastor (2004-2012). On July 1st of 2012, he began what became three years of service in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles as the Moderator of the Curia and Vicar General for Archbishop Jose H. Gomez. On September 8, 2015, Bishop Brennan was consecrated as one of the new auxiliary Bishops for the Archdiocese, along with Bishop Robert Barron and Bishop David O'Connell. He is currently experiencing a bit of a 'homecoming' since being assigned as the regional



Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Bishop for the San Fernando Region.

### ***When did you first hear God's call to priesthood?***

I felt the call early in life, but I resisted it. It took me a long time to respond to it. My first seminary was home with my Mom and

Dad who were just wonderful true Catholics. My uncle, who was a priest here in Los Angeles, became a wonderful and powerful father figure and a beautiful model of priesthood. I loved his spirit and attitude. As a child I had a deep sense I wanted to be like him when I grew up. Then, when I got a little older, I learned some of the things

that my uncle did: his service to the poor and the celebration of the Eucharist. He did it so reverently and so prayerfully that his ministry became attractive to me. He is still alive and very much a role model.

I wondered: Oh my Lord, could I ever follow in his footsteps? He was so good and so holy. But I still resisted it. I had a lot of objections; I told God all the reasons why he could not use me: I was not smart enough; I was not holy enough; I was not good enough; and I did not hear anything back. The Lord was not disagreeing with me! It is exactly like Peter after the catch of the fish when he meets Jesus for the first time and he falls to his knees and says to the Lord: Leave me; I am a sinful man. In other words, Lord, you can't possibly use me. I am damaged, I am broken, I am sinful, and you can't use me. And Jesus just ignored all of it; he knows all of it anyways. In fact, I think because of that he calls us because he knows he can use us, and he knows we have a sense that we need him.

During my freshman year of college, the question in my life and in my heart changed. It really did. I do not know how it happened or why it happened, but I stopped asking what I want to do. That was a normal question, the right question to ask God. What do I want to do with my life? Then I changed: Lord what do you want and then the answer kept coming back, the priesthood. I say yes in my freshman year of college and I called the vocation director here in Los Angeles because I never felt any other tug except to the parish life. I never felt any other calling, except to the parish priesthood, the diocesan priesthood.

### ***How did a Catholic education nourish your vocation to priesthood?***

I attended St. Elisabeth School in Van Nuys, California, where the Rogationist Fathers serve now. It was a place where my vocation was cultivated. I got a foundation with the Sisters of Providence and the young Irish priests who really inspired us and taught and confirmed what was going on in our homes. I remember the young priest playing basketball with us and that impressed me. They were normal; they loved life; and they were healthy

spiritually and physically. Also, I remember being very moved by the Stations of the Cross as a little child. The Sisters modeled that for us; those priests modeled that for us; Mom and Dad did too.

My Catholic education from St. Elisabeth School continuing to Notre Dame High School had a major, major impact on my vocation. The Brothers of the Holy Cross at NDHS imparted to us a deep faith, a faith that examines itself challenging everything and questioning everything. But we survived because we had that strong foundation.

### ***How can the Church create a better environment for the pastoral care of vocations?***

We can do youth ministry better. We have a tendency in Southern California to mesh our youth ministry with Confirmation programs and that is fine, but the youth do graduate and then disappear. This year, there are approximately 20,000 newly confirmed teenagers in Los Angeles, L.A. should be on fire! Not in the hills, but on fire with God's love! On fire with the Holy Spirit! What's happening? It is not happening; there is disconnect.

We need to help youth understand that our spirituality is not about achievement. It is a life-long journey and a deep, abiding, intimate, and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a whole different world; they grow up with incredible challenges: instant communication and instant access to things that are beneath the Christian. The challenge is great for us to help them to navigate those really dangerous waters and teach them what it means to be in a lifelong journey of faith.

### ***Are there many vocations to priesthood and religious life in your Pastoral region?***

This region has produced a number of vocations in the last few years. There is a very positive trend in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, where clearly promoting vocations is one of the top five pastoral priorities of the Archbishop. It is being done with intention, and it is being done vigor-

ously. We should not be caught up with results because God is in charge of all of this. If we have one ordination, we should rejoice in that. We had nine young men ordained to the priesthood a few weeks ago.

I think the quality of candidates and young priests today is higher than it was 36 years ago when I was ordained. My time at the seminary was wonderful, but there is something about these men now. When I was ordained, becoming a priest was incredible and everybody supported and loved you. It was like becoming a soldier in times of peace, a little bit easier. Now, becoming a priest is like becoming a soldier in times of war, at a time of conflict. They know that what they are getting into is difficult and they are still saying yes to the call. They are saying yes in a courageous way and are joyfully embracing what they know it is a difficult life in a time and a society that does not appreciate them. These nine young men are on fire of God's love and are deeply and profoundly spiritual.

### ***What is Pope Francis' impact on vocations?***

He speaks frankly and in a very challenging way. He does to all of us, but in particular with priests. Pope Francis holds our feet to the fire, and he wants us to be accountable. For example, he has some clear things to say about our preaching and the execution of the homily. He encourages us to engage with people and to speak courageously. We will see the Pope Francis effect in a few years. Those who are being inspired are just now entering the seminary or are just beginning to think about it.

Pope Francis is amazing and such an attractive figure, and yet he is very clear and challenging about his teaching. But young people like that, old people like it also: clear teaching.

### ***Has the role of lay people in fostering vocations to religious life and priesthood become more important nowadays?***

Lay people have always played an im-



# On Love in the Family

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Pope Francis tells us in *Amoris Laetitia*: “Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together. What we have been promised is greater than we can imagine. May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us” (n. 325). Brothers and sisters, let us offer this holy hour for all families, called to be authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches, that they may be places of communion and prayer, and of future vocations.

## 2. EXPOSITION

O Saving Victim opening wide the gate of heaven to all below. Our foes press on from every side; Your aid supply, your strength bestow. To your great name be endless praise Immortal Godhead, One in Three; Oh, grant us endless length of days, In our true native land with Thee. Amen.

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

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.**

Jesus, our Lord and God, we bow down in humble adoration before you. From the depths of that humility, we raise our eyes to you and, in humble supplication to your Sacred Heart, implore your mercy and forgiveness for our many sins.

**R. Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

Give us the grace to spend this hour of loving reparation with all the holy dispositions you desire. Enter into our hearts yourself, dearest Lord, and work your pleasure in it; directing all our faculties, senses and powers to your greater honor and glory. Help us to console you for all the wrongdoings your loving Heart receives from an ungrateful humankind.

**R. Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

May Mary, our dearest Mother, and St. Joseph, lend us all the love of their hearts and the love of all the angels and saints with which to love you more and more, Lord Jesus.

May they teach us to pray, to love, to make reparation and to adore your loving Heart, so often abandoned, hidden in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

**R. Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

## 4. HYMN

Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All, How can I love you as I ought? And how revere this wondrous gift, So far surpassing hope and thought. Sweet Sacrament we Thee adore, O make us love Thee more and more, O make us love Thee more and more. Had I but Mary's sinless Heart, To love You with, my dearest King. O with what bursts of fervent praise, Your goodness Jesus, would I sing.

*Optional, 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 adore the Son of the living God who humbled himself to become a son of a human family, and let us proclaim:

**R. Lord, you are the model and Savior of all.**

- For the Church: that we may embrace our baptismal vocation to holiness of life, we pray.
- For families: that they may always have a positive regard for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, we pray.
- For parents: that, in their vocation as Christian parents, they may foster in their children a desire to serve the Lord, we pray.
- For all those discerning their vocation: that they may be attentive to the voice of the Lord in their hearts, and respond with freedom and generosity, we pray.
- For those who have died: that they may be admitted into the family of the blessed, we pray.

Let us again offer our praise to God and pray in the words of Christ: **Our Father...**

## 7. FAMILY PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Loving God, each member of our family is a special gift from you. You have given each of us gifts and talents so that we may enjoy life but also so we can share with others. Generous and loving people are needed for service and leadership in our Church. Help us to know how to encourage and support each other so that we can respond generously to this need. We know that you will be with us, invite us to become the kind of people you desire us to be. Help us to trust in you and in each other. 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 Jesus Christ, you gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of your suffering and death. May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood help us to experience the salvation you won for us and the peace of the kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

## 9. REPOSITION

Blessed be God, our Father and Creator.

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

Blessed be his Word that will never fail.

Blessed be his Body given up for us.

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

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Consoler.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### The Church Rejuvenates

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Church rejuvenates in the power of the Gospel and the Spirit continually renews her, builds her up, and guides her with hierarchical and charismatic gifts. The Second Vatican Council has repeatedly highlighted the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit that sanctifies the People of God, guides it, adorns it with virtue, and enriches it with special graces for her edification.

Brothers and sisters, let us pray during this holy hour for a greater openness and attentiveness to the actions of the Holy Spirit who enriches the Church with gifts in order to carry out her mission of evangelization.

*(From the Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Iuvenescit Ecclesia")*

#### 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

V. O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine,

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

My Jesus, from all eternity you were pleased to give yourself to us in love. And you planted within us a deep spiritual desire that can only be satisfied by yourself.

**R. Draw all things to yourself, Lord.**

- We may go from here to the other end of the world, from one country to another, from riches to greater riches, from pleasure to pleasure, and still we shall not be content. **R.**
- All the world cannot satisfy the immortal soul. It would be like trying to feed a starving man with a single grain of wheat. We can only be satisfied by setting our hearts, imperfect as they are, on you. **R.**
- We are made to love you; you created us as your lovers. It sometimes happens that the more we know a neighbor, the less we love him. But with you it is quite the opposite. The more we know you, the more we love you. Knowledge of you kindles such a fire in our souls that we have no energy left for worldly desires. **R.**
- My Jesus, how good it is to love you. Let us be like your disciples on Mount Tabor, seeing nothing else but you. Let us be like two bosom friends, neither of whom can ever bear to offend the other. **R.**

*(Saint Jean-Baptiste Marie Vianney)*

#### 4. HYMN

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

*(Saint Augustine)*

*Optional. 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

Christ the Lord has gathered his Church in unity through the Spirit. With confidence let us ask him:

**R. Lord, increase in us the life of the Spirit.**

That the whole Church, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, may give joyful witness to God's infinite mercy, we pray.

That those who suffer persecution in the name of Christ may remain full of faith and hope, and experience and know love, joy and peace from God, we pray.

- That those who devote themselves to the service of others may not be deterred from their goals by discouraging results or lack of support, we pray.
- That the youth of our parish and diocese may find a joyful faith in their families, and encouragement to respond to God's will in their lives, we pray.
- That those who embrace God's call to live the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience may inspire through their Christ-like witness the hearts of the faithful, we pray.

And now let us pray as the Lord told us: **Our Father...**

#### 7. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

God of love and of life, from whom every good gift comes, we pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

May we always feel the presence of the Holy Spirit directing us and guiding us. May we use the gifts that the Spirit offers to help others in the community and in so doing build up your kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### 8. BENEDICTION

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

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

**R. Having all sweetness within it.**

Let us pray. Lord our God, teach us to cherish in our hearts the paschal mystery of your Son by which you redeemed the world. Watch over the gifts of grace your love has given us and bring them to fulfillment in the glory of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

#### 9. REPOSITION

Blessed be God.

Blessed be his holy Name.

Blessed Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be his Heart, full of love.

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

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, our Defender.

Blessed be the Mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin.

Blessed be St. Joseph, chaste and responsible husband.

Blessed be God in the glory of all His Saints.



## Called to Communion

### 1. WELCOME

The work of effectively proclaiming the Gospel has proven to be particularly urgent in our time. The Holy Father Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, recalls that:

“If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life.”

Brothers and sisters, let us pray during this holy hour that many may respond generously to the call to share the Gospel in the priesthood and in religious life.

### 2. EXPOSITION

Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore, Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more, See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art. Jesu, whom I look at shrouded here below, I beseech thee send me what I thirst for so, Some day to gaze on thee face to face in light And be blest for ever with thy glory's sight. Amen.

(*Adore te devote* - Saint Thomas Aquinas)

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.

O Christ Jesus, you are sinful dust and ashes, but you call to yourself all who labor and are burdened, that you may refresh them.

R. May all your people praise and adore you, O Lord.

- Are you not our refuge? To whom else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. You alone can comfort us in every trouble. R.
- Lord, we are weak and sick, but you are our salvation. Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick do. R.
- Therefore we come to you, our refuge and our strength, hoping that this holy hour may be to us the increase of Faith, Hope, and Charity; a firm defense against the snares of our enemies; a help to the removal of our faults and defects and to the bringing forth of works well pleasing to you, and a pledge of future glory. R.
- This is the hope and desire which we cherish in our hearts, for you are compassionate and of tender mercy, and in all your promises most faithful. R.

### 4. HYMN

Hail! Thou living Bread from heaven Sacrament of awesome might! I adore Thee, I adore Thee; Ev'ry moment day and night. Holiest Jesu! Heart of Jesu! O'er me shed your gift divine, Holiest Jesu! My Redeemer! All my heart and soul are Thine.

(Old German chorale 87. 87.)

Optional. Another hymn may be chosen.

### 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 always and everywhere give thanks to Christ our Savior, and ask him with confidence:

R. Lord, help us with your grace.

- That we may offer ourselves to the service of others and do God's will in all things, we pray.
- That we may always seek the bread of everlasting life, the bread that is God's gift, we pray.
- That the young people of our parish may always seek the will of God in their lives and respond with generous hearts, we pray.
- That all those who minister in the Church may be blessed with abundant joy, we pray.

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

### 7. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

O God, in the past you called men and women to dedicate their lives to you through priesthood and religious life. Today stir up the grace of a religious vocation in the hearts of many within our parish community. Grant them the willingness and generosity to place their lives completely in your hands as priests, brothers and sisters. Help us to support them by our own fidelity to your call to holiness through prayer and Christian service. If you desire that one of our family or friends follow you in this way, grant us the wisdom and insight to support and encourage that person to listen to your voice and follow you without delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### 8. BENEDICTION

"Tantum ergo" or another suitable Eucharistic hymn

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

Let us pray.

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

We ask this through Christ our Lord. 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 Cup of salvation.

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

Thank you for filling us with your grace.

Thank you for joining us in love.

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

## The Holy Rosary and Additional Prayers

### SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READING

- **Rom. 12:6-8** - We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us
- **1 Cor. 12:4-11(31)** - There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit
- **Col. 1:9-14** - Live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God
- **1 Peter 4:7-11** - As generous distributors of God's manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure he has received
- **Mt 13:44-46** - The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field

### LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

#### 1. The Baptism in the River Jordan

Let us pray for the grace of humility, and that we may live fully our Baptismal promises.

#### 2. The Wedding at Cana

Let us pray for the grace of obedience to God, and to trust in Jesus and in the intercession of Mary.

#### 3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom

Let us pray for an increased faith in God's infinite mercy and love, and for the graces necessary to proclaim the Gospel by our lives.

#### 4. The Transfiguration of the Lord

Let us pray for the grace of a holy fear of God and that we may live a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit.

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

Let us pray that we shall ever be mindful of Christ's sacrifice for us and that our desire for Him may be strengthened and may flourish.

### GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

#### 1. The Resurrection of the Lord

Let us pray for the grace of a strong faith and that those without faith may see it born or restored.

#### 2. The Ascension of the Lord

Let us pray for the virtue of a lively hope, and that all those without hope may be comforted.

#### 3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit

Let us pray for the gift of a great love for God, and that all people might experience the Holy Spirit as Comforter, Guide and Paraclete.

#### 4. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Let us pray for the grace of a holy and happy death, and that all may come to know Mary as their mother and honor and revere her, gladdening the heart of her Son.

#### 5. The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Let us pray for the grace of final perseverance and a deeper love for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

*Optional invocation after each decade:*

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

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

### PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

1. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love; to you we turn with trust. Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches. Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division; may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing. Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

*(Pope Francis- from "Amoris Laetitia")*

2. Holy Family of Nazareth, community of love of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, model and ideal of every Christian family, to you we entrust our families. Open the heart of every family to the faith, to welcoming the word of God, to Christian witness, so that it becomes a source of new and holy vocations. Touch the hearts of parents, so that with prompt charity, wise care, and loving devotion they may be for their sons and daughters sure guides towards spiritual and eternal values. Stir up in the hearts of young people a right conscience and a free will, so that growing in "wisdom, age and grace", they might welcome generously the gift of a divine vocation. Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that all of us, contemplating and imitating the assiduous prayer, generous obedience, dignified poverty and virginal purity lived out in your midst, might set about fulfilling the will of God and accompanying with far-sighted sensitivity those among us who are called to follow more closely the Lord Jesus, who "has given himself for us" (cf. Gal 2:20). Amen!

*(St. John Paul II)*

3. Heavenly Father, Lord of the harvest, call forth vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life from our diocese and our families. Inspire men to imitate Christ the Eternal High Priest in sacrificial service to Your Church. Move the hearts of men and women to offer themselves wholly to you in poverty, chastity, and obedience. Send them as laborers for your harvest. Inspire the faithful to support them with prayer and sacrifice. Raise up holy families who foster openness to Your call. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.
4. Eternal God, from my mother's womb you have known and loved me more than I can ever know. I ask for the courage to live a holy life, that your hand guides my decisions and that your mercy be extended when I seek my own glory instead of yours. I ask for the wisdom to know your will for me, and like our Blessed Mother, I ask for the strength to say yes. May I find you in every person I meet, and may my life so shine forth your goodness and love that each person may be led to you through Jesus, your Son, who is Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

*By Fr. PETER QUINTO, RCJ*



portant role. The kind of support that comes from a lay person is even more powerful when a person is discerning a call to priesthood or religious life. It is good to hear from someone who is not wearing a collar or a veil ask: Have you ever thought about becoming a priest? Or to a young man or a young woman: You have a vocation, you have a calling, maybe you are fighting it, but you should give it a shot, you should try it.

***What are the activities in your Pastoral Region to promote vocations to the permanent diaconate?***

I hold meetings with all my deacons every other month. During these meetings, we have a vocations component and talk about what we are doing to encourage vocations to priesthood, religious life, and the permanent diaconate. The deacons and their wives themselves become promoters in their parishes. Pastors also become promoters. In our region, we have an inquiry evening on a quarterly basis. We announce it on the parishes' bulletin and anyone who is inclined or thinks he may have a vocation to become a deacon is invited to inquire, attend a short presentation, ask questions, and meet with our deacons. We just had the ordination of 14 deacons a few weeks ago.

***As the shepherd of a diverse and dynamic Pastoral Region, you face many challenges. What is the source of your strength?***

The source of my strength, I believe deep in my heart, is the Eucharist, the celebration of, the reception of, and being in the true presence of Christ. The Lord wants us; he wants us to be with and for him; he wants us to realize how close he is to our hearts and that is where the Eucharist comes in. It is that intimate and personal relationship with Jesus. In our Catholic tradition, Eucharist always is about us too; it is an amazing moment when you are in the chapel, by yourself, but you are connected to communion, to community, to companionship.

***What should anyone discerning***



***a vocation keep in mind?***

Anyone contemplating a vocation can expect to face obstacles and the first one you have to overcome is yourself. You go through a litany of how and why God cannot choose you because you have many objections and a sense of realization that your choice is going to cost you something, your life. But how much does the Lord love us? How much does the Lord want of us? The Lord wants us to work in his name, and he wants us to realize how close he is to our hearts.

***Can you share your thoughts about the consecrated life of men and women?***

The archdiocese would not function without the religious, their presence, and their lives and ministry. If we did not have the number of religious communities, sisters and brothers, and priests, this archdiocese will cease to function as we know it. It will be far poorer. The beautiful thing about religious communities is that they function really properly when they are in community, literally living with and collaborating with others who share the charism of their community of their founder and foundress. When a young person is discerning a vocation, you have

to help them to truly discern their vocation and into a community that is in line with their personality, with their traits, their gifts too. We need to let God work in whatever way he wants because God chooses us as we are. There are communities that would lend themselves to people of a particular nature and character.

We depend on religious vocations. I would like to share a joke with you. I try to discourage anyone from becoming a Jesuit, just kidding, because I have a cousin who was a Jesuit and for many years I gave him a very hard time about him being a Jesuit. I told him honestly, I was not smart enough to be a Jesuit, or holy enough to be a Franciscan, so I had to become a diocesan. There was not another option for me.

Discerning your vocation is recognizing your nature because that is what grace is built on, right? ■



**MONICA J. LLERENA**

Is the managing editor of *Vocations and Prayer* Magazine and has over 17 years of experience in the field of vocations promotion. Currently, she is pursuing a masters degree at the USC Marshall School of Business.

# A Brother or a Dad?

## *How to Discern a Vocation to Brotherhood*



Composition by Leonel Romero

By Br. ADAM BECERRA, FSP

Often times, students at Chaminade College Preparatory approach and ask me the question: “Wouldn’t you like to ever be a dad?” My response to the question has always been very general: “I don’t feel God calling me to be a dad. He has called me to be a brother.” Given this response, it seems to me that my students were never satisfied because there was no context provided for my answer. After a few more times of students asking me the same question, I had to take a step back and reflect upon what they were really asking me. The problem was that I wasn’t listening to how my students were describing some of my “father-like” qualities such as being: humble, patient, loving, caring, and passionate. For lack of better words, I cannot believe that I am actually including these qualities in this

article—it is uncomfortable for me because I believe that everyone has these qualities and I should not be singled out. However, the reality is that we should be proud of the God-given qualities that we have by acknowledging them as blessings and offering them back to God and his people in order to build up the Church.

### **Bringing a charism of hope**

Why a brother and not a dad? God has taught me how to be a brother to the world. I consider my students and educators at Chaminade like my own brothers and sisters. Seeing them in this role helps me identify with them in their daily struggles and even in the moments of celebration. I would like to put into perspective the qualities that my students have affirmed in me. First, caring for a person and showing them that you love them is essential in helping the person understand that you

are interested in their life experiences. In my ministry at Chaminade, I believe that each person is a unique individual who needs a secure and stimulating atmosphere in which to grow and mature intellectually, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. As an administrator, I take pride in helping our students and educators meet their fullest potential in these areas by providing an environment that is safe, integrates faith, and fosters a climate of family spirit where everyone is included. Each person is made in the image of God and as a friar I bring my own charism of “hope” to our students and educators to help them understand that all of us are on a journey with God and that “nothing is impossible for God.”

### **Encouraging a climate of acceptance**

Second, having passion for ministry



is important as a brother. As a Catholic-Marianist school, my goal is to educate in family spirit by exhibiting our Blessed Mother's traits of hospitality and graciousness. Every student and educator makes up our Chaminade family and no one is left behind. There is a place for everyone. I encourage a climate of acceptance, discipline when it is needed, and love with an understanding of "prudent tendency toward leniency." This requires active listening in order to make informed decisions on difficult issues while recognizing the value of growth and improvement in the life of our students and educators. Being passionate requires a collaborative learning and processes that address issues personally and welcome input from all concerned.

### Acknowledging everybody's dignity

Lastly, being humble and patient are two qualities that are difficult as human beings. The dynamics of human living pulls us away from listening to people's stories that may teach us valuable lessons in life. As a brother, I have to "lower" myself in the presence of another person to acknowledge their dignity. This doesn't mean that I become a servant to other people's needs—it's about actively listening to their story that is life-giving and/or may have some challenges. I attempt to do this by promoting a respect for the dignity of my students and educators and encourage personal exploration, reflection, and creativity that promote a positive self-image in the person. I encourage each one of them to develop his or her "interior spirit" and desire for self-knowledge.

While of all of this sounds glorious, it is not an easy task because I am called to be a brother in the context of people's lives and model Jesus Christ by being in solidarity with their joys and sufferings. Jesus gave his disciples the title brother after his resurrection. Through the consecration of my vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and self-sufficiency, I am rooted in the life of God consecrating my work and recognizing the presence of God in my daily events at Chaminade.

### A community of learning, prayer, and service

If you are considering a vocation to brotherhood or fatherhood, think about the qualities that you are most passionate for and ask yourself this question: "What do I aspire to do with these qualities in order help God build up his Church?" For me, I answered this questioned with the sense that God was calling me to a community of learning, prayer, and service. He gave me the passion to be a brother in a ministry of education where I could build up a community and exercise my baptismal priesthood. Why is this important? Our Tradition affirms our common baptismal priesthood. In a recent Vatican document on religious brothers and sisters, the document calls brothers' communities "a prime manifestation of the baptismal priesthood." With my priesthood, I organize my Chaminade family to see the action of God present in their daily lives and discover the history of salvation that is being fulfilled every day. In my Chaminade family, my vocation calls me to assist our community to give thanks, celebrate, and offer ourselves to God as best as we can! This is the history of salvation to be the best version of ourselves while acknowledging that Jesus Christ has saved us once and for all.

Brother or dad? I thank God for my vocation as brother. My prayer every day is to have faith, passion, and love for God and for my work. With this prayer, God gives me the courage and zeal to exercise the qualities that the students have recognized in me, which confirms my decision to being a brother. For those of you who are discerning a vocation to brotherhood, "listen with the ears of your heart" as St. Benedict once said to his community of monks. There you will find a God who speaks, loves, and gives you zeal to listen to his plan for you! ■



**BR. ADAM BECERRA, FSP**

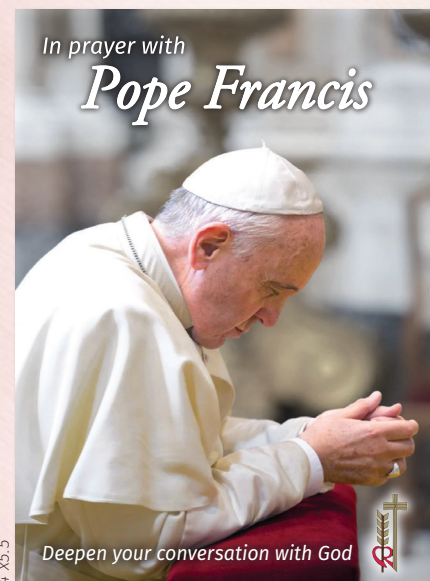
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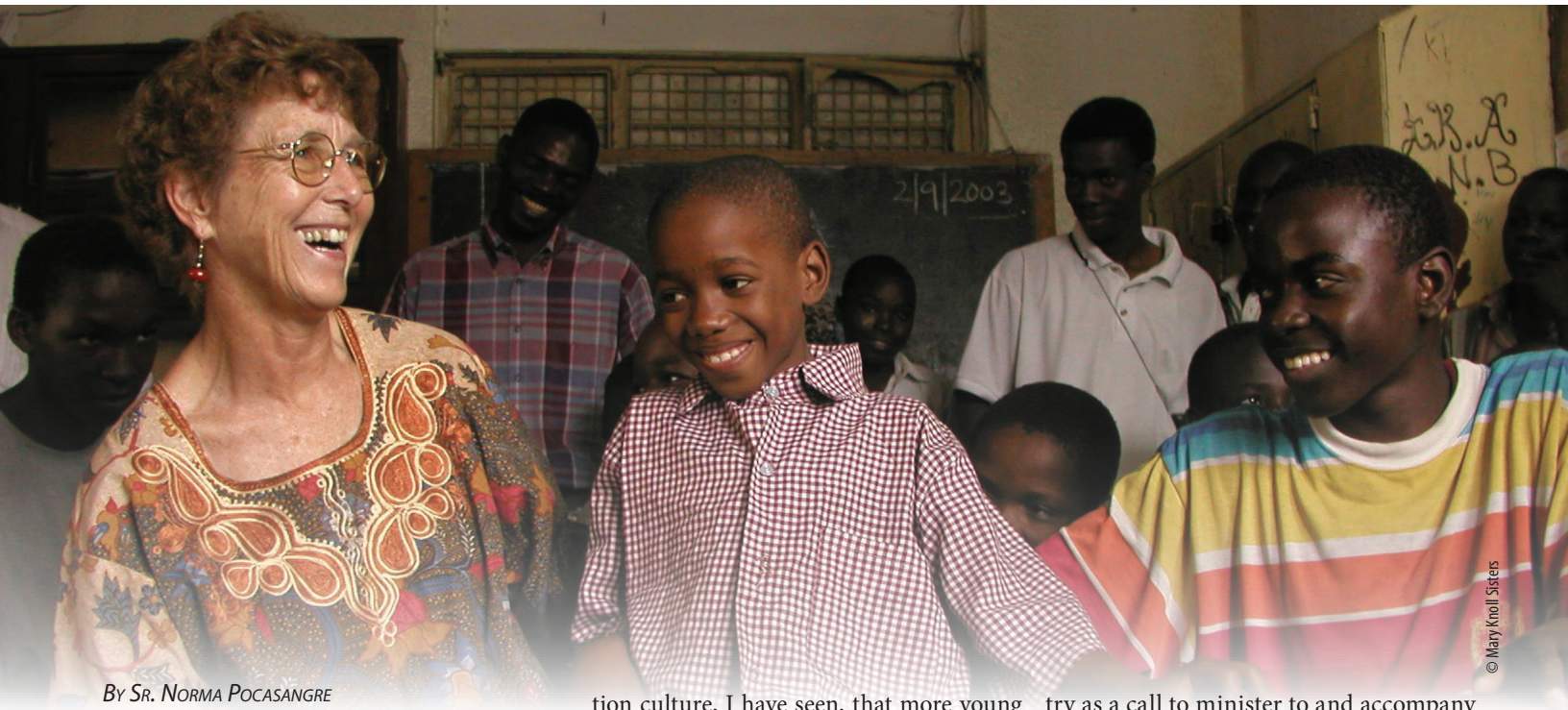
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## "I Am Open to It"

### *Vocation Ministry: A Call to Minister To and Accompany Youth*



By Sr. NORMA POCASANGRE

**"H**ave you ever thought of becoming a sister or a priest?" This is a question that I often ask young people, during conversations, at some of the youth congresses. To this question, some respond: "Yes"; "No"; "At one point, I did consider it"; "I am open to it."

Vocation Ministry is not easy, these days, especially if we concentrate only on numbers. However it is a very needed and meaningful ministry, in terms of accompaniment. Young people need accompaniment, as they discern how to respond to God's call in their lives. I believe that guiding our young people to follow their call is not only a ministry for vocation directors, but it is a ministry for every member of the church. This begins in the family, where children learn the most important values for their lives.

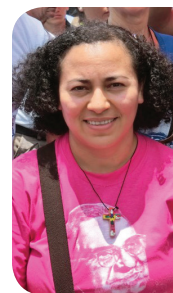
There is a need today for creating a culture of vocation. In dioceses, where there is more encouragement to create a voca-

tion culture, I have seen, that more young people are open to the specific vocations of Religious Sisters, Brothers, and Priests, as well as the priesthood of the laity. Personally, during my short experience in vocation ministry on the West Coast, I have observed that young people have a thirst for encountering God in their lives. They long to experience God's love, forgiveness and healing in this encounter. This implies the importance of accompaniment of young people in discovering their call, and not the focus on one or two vocation events. Vocation Ministry is a commitment to a process, in the lives of young people. It means being present with them during different activities: getting mud and dust on our shoes; sleeping on the ground; dancing, cooking and eating with them. It means listening to and sharing with them. Accompaniment of young people in camps, retreats or other gatherings, means to be present with them. As Pope Francis has said "We need to be Shepherds, living with the smell of the sheep." His statement also applies to all those who minister in the Church.

As a vocation director, I see my minis-

try as a call to minister to and accompany youth in their process of discernment. In order to respond to God's call, young people first need to discover where they can become fully human and fully connected to God. They need to discover a place where they feel they belong; where they can fully trust; and where they can commit themselves.

For myself it has been a call to accompany young people but also a time to continue discovering and confirming my own call to give and receive God's awesome love in the diverse manifestations of creation. I can say I am happy because years ago someone accompany me and "I WAS OPEN TO IT" ■



**SR. NORMA POCASANGRE**

Is the Maryknoll Sisters vocation director for the West Coast in the U.S. and Latin America. Her missionary work spans from El Salvador to China.

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# A Sinners' Guest

## *Mercy and Vocations in the Gospel*



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By Fr. GIUSEPPE DE VIRGILIO, Ph.D.

### I desire mercy, not sacrifice

**T**he Gospel accounts show a unique relationship between the proclamation of mercy and the experience of the call to discipleship. The typical example is the vocation of Matthew Levi, the public tax collector who meets Jesus in Capernaum and accepts his vocational invitation (Mt 9, 9-13). At that time Jesus declared he did not come to “call the righteous but sinners” and emphasized the close relationship between “vocation and mercy,” quoting the expression of Hos 6.6: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (cf. Mt 9,13). In the biblical tradition, we can consider the “mercy of God” a central aspect of the vocational dimension, as it is especially evident in the story of Exo-

dus (Ex 34.6; Ps 86.15) and in the prophetic oracles (c. Jer 15, 15; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4,2). From the “womb of mercy” (in Hebrew: Rahamim) flows the maternal love of God, which caters to every person, calling to live the profound family communion with him and with our brothers. In the vocational dynamism of mercy we must include tenderness (“loving kindness,” in Hebrew: hesed), the strength of “compassion” and “prophecy of forgiveness.” It is a relational attitude that overcomes the logic of duty: living the compassion means building reception and relationships of gratuitousness. This internal process involves a personal commitment to each other and, therefore, a social responsibility. Mercy is therefore a divine gift and, at the same time, an altruistic and liberating vocational attitude, which takes place in acceptance and reconciliation.

### Jesus Christ, who reveals the Father's mercy

In the New Testament Jesus fully reveals the merciful plan of God. He came to call sinners (Mt 9:13), to reveal the mercy of God (Lk 15.11 to 32) and to teach every man the Divine Mercy (Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36). It is especially the evangelist Luke who describes the life of Jesus in view of mercy and salvation. In particular, some stories reveal the essence of God the Father's merciful love towards men. From the beginning of the Gospel, mercy is evoked in the Magnificat (Luke 1,50.54) and Benedictus (Lk 1,72.78). In Nazareth, Jesus proclaims the project of mercy as a sign of the messianic fulfillment (Lk 4,16-30) and later the Lord teaches the value of mercy and solidarity (Lk 6.36 to 38). In particular, the theological message on this theme culminates in the three “par-

ables of mercy” (Lk 15.1 to 32). The merciful face of the Father is revealed by the Son, who gives himself for the salvation of mankind (Jn 12:45; 14:9). The culmination of mercy is accomplished in the forgiveness of the “good thief” given from the cross and extended to all those who crucified him: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

### Mercy as “vocation”

Retracing the Gospel narratives, you can see both in the stories of miracles and in his teachings, as the Lord reveals the mercy of God, who acts through the powerful work of liberation and healing of man. Before being works of healing, mercy is introduced as a “vocation” (cf. Mk 2,13-17; 5:19; Lk 19,1-10). It is an effective and deep appeal, which reaches the intended audience and invites them to respond with an act of conversion and discipleship. Conversion and vocation show the attractive and liberating dynamism of God’s mercy. In addition to the example of Matthew Levi (Mark 2:14), stands the experience of Simon Peter, who since his first call at the Sea of Galilee, experienced as a “sinner” the Lord’s mercy and he hears Jesus repeating: “from now on you will be catching men” (Lk 5,8.10). The Gospel narrative will show his weakness in the hour of sad denial of his Lord (Lk 22.54 to 62). Again the mercy of the risen Christ will overcome the weakness of Simon and on the shores of the same lake, Jesus will confirm in his merciful love, as a “shepherd” of the Church (cf. Jn 21.15 to 19).

### Mercy as “beatitude”

The transforming wealth of mercy, revealed fully in Jesus’ mission, becomes “beatitude.” It is a wise teaching that challenges man’s life. In his first great sermon at the beginning of his public teaching (cf. Mt 5-7; Lk 6.20 to 26), Jesus proclaims: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5,3). On the mountain, proclaiming “blessed” all men, the Lord teaches us to seek the full realization of our existence in merciful God. The Beatitudes delineate the life of the believer called to be poor in spirit,

comforter, meek, eager for justice, pure of heart, peacemaker, and firm during persecutions. Of the eight Beatitudes, the fifth reads: “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5,7). Mercy is God’s gift freely granted to man. Living the compassion means to accept and generate this gift in others. In this sense, to “be happy” and fulfill their own vocation according to the Gospel implies a journey of faith that opens the heart to the logic of tenderness and forgiveness. God alone

*“Mercy is an altruistic and liberating vocational attitude.”*

is the source of forgiveness, has “tender mercy” and is able to help the poor and to forgive sins. The fifth beatitude presents the dynamics of mercy as a “generative” process of the believer that leads to happiness and internalization of the love of God. Only the attractive love of God, with the power of his gratuitousness, overturns the logic of revenge and renews the social and interpersonal relationships. In this sense the beatitude of mercy becomes a “new prophecy,” full of hope and life. Every day he asks believers to live the exodus of mercy, which consists in the conversion process and continuous progress in the spiritual life.

### Ministers of reconciliation

Continuing with his teaching, the Master outlines some important dynamics of mercy, and formulates them through a series of “antithesis” concerning the Mosaic Law (cf. Mt 5.21 to 48). They include respect for our brother and the primacy of reconciliation (Mt 5.21 to 26), purity of

heart, which does not allow compromise (5,27-30), the indissoluble unity of the marriage relationship (5,31-32), frankness in speaking (5.33 to 37), the overcoming of the “law of retaliation” (5.38 to 42), the merciful love of our enemies (5.43 to 47).

The beatitude of mercy is thus expressed in the practice of forgiveness “without measure.” It is this concept that is included in the great prayer of “Our Father,” which involves to have God’s forgiveness and to forgive each other (6:12). The whole preaching of the Lord and the subsequent ecclesial reflection show that there is no alternative way to the free and liberating mercy that comes from the Father, God “rich in mercy” (Eph 2,4; Jas 5:11). The beatitude is further explained in the ecclesial teaching (Mt 18.15 to 22) and in the eloquent parable of the “merciless servant” (cf. Mt 18.23 to 35). In it the utilitarian logic of a servant, who uses the hardness of the law to obtain compensation, contrasts the logic of unlimited mercy of God that precedes and frees of any debt. The experience of life teaches us how to learn mercy through forgiveness received (cf. 1 Tm 1,13.16). Those who are called to follow Christ in the life of the evangelical counsels, must feel involved in a “history of mercy” and become “a witness and servant” of reconciliation of all men with God (cf. 2 Cor 5:20). ■



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## Lectio Divina

Mark 10:46-52

# “Take courage; get up, he is calling you”

By Sr. Emily Beata Marsh, FSP

The story of the blind Bartimaeus is one of my very favorite healing stories in the Gospels. It is a story that I have prayed with since I first began discerning my religious vocation. I remember one time, when I prayed with the story of Bartimaeus I realized how much Bartimaeus must have desired Jesus and His mercy. He was willing to look ridiculous in front of everyone else. He was willing to leave behind his cloak and everything else in order to encounter Jesus. As I prayed, I also realized my own desire and longing for Jesus.

The movements or moments in Bartimaeus’ healing reveal a great deal about God’s mercy, and especially about God’s mercy in relation to our discernment and our vocation. “On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, son of David, have pity of me.’” When Bartimaeus hears that Jesus is passing by, his knee-jerk reaction is to cry out for mercy. He asks—begs—out loud for Jesus to have mercy on him. Bartimaeus may not have met Jesus before, but he knows that he wants Jesus to enter his life. He wants Jesus to act in His life. In some way, Bartimaeus wants Jesus to be his life.

Jesus “passes by” in our life, too. Sometimes it’s a homily that we hear at Mass. Sometimes it’s a text message from a friend that makes our day. Sometimes it’s a smile from someone we pass on the street. Recently, I was riding the Metro and saw a girl get on with her little brother who was crying. A gentleman saw them and began chatting and joking with the little boy to cheer him up. When they got off, I remember thinking to myself, “That was Jesus, passing by just now.” Our lifestyle of discernment should include noticing when Jesus passes by and noticing our reaction. When Jesus passes by, do we recognize Him? Do we acknowledge Him? Do we call out to Him like Bartimaeus did?

“So they called the blind man, saying to

him, ‘Take courage; get up, he is calling you.’” Jesus responds to Bartimaeus’ plea for mercy. I have always found it interesting that Jesus does not come over to Bartimaeus; instead, he stops and asks Bartimaeus to come over to Him. This took a great deal of courage on Bartimaeus’ part—remember, he couldn’t see! But Bartimaeus responds wholeheartedly to Jesus’ call. Not only does he get up and go to Jesus, but he also leaves behind his cloak. His actions say that he needs nothing in his life except Jesus and His mercy.

There are certainly instances in my prayer life when Jesus asks me to take a step toward Him. Often, this takes courage. Always, it takes trust. Sometimes trust might mean believing in what Jesus is doing even if we don’t understand it. Sometimes it might mean continuing to communicate when we don’t feel like it. Sometimes it might mean praying when we don’t feel like it! But Jesus desires the gift of trust and our love. He truly loves our love. Bartimaeus shows us the beauty of making this gift to Jesus.

“Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.” Jesus gives Bartimaeus the free gift of His mercy. Jesus’ mercy in Bartimaeus’ life takes the concrete form of the gift of sight. Just as Bartimaeus responded to Jesus’ call earlier, so now he responds to this gift of mercy by following Jesus. Jesus’ mercy became active in Bartimaeus’ life in

the gift of sight. Bartimaeus allows that mercy to remain active in his life by continuing to follow Jesus.

Just as discernment includes noticing the presence of Jesus in our lives, it also includes allowing that merciful presence to remain active in our lives. Living out of that mercy is our vocation. Bartimaeus can be a model of this for us during this Year of Mercy. Pope Francis tells us that Jesus’ gaze of mercy frees, heals, and loves; it “restores sight to the blind” (“Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee of Mercy”). Let us, like Bartimaeus, call out for God’s mercy, get up and go toward His mercy, and receive it and respond to it. Let us allow God’s mercy to heal our blindness.

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved (“Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee of Mercy”). ■



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.

# Detachment, Generosity, and Kindness

## *The Personality of Mercy*

By Fr. EUGENE HEMRICK, Ph.D.

What qualities should a priest possess to minister mercy at its best?

**M**ore often than not when this question is raised, priests envision the spiritual and corporal works of mercy as the epitome of their priesthood. The main focus is on performing works of mercy like feeding and clothing the poor, visiting the sick and forgiving offences willingly. However, the driving force behind these works is seldom discussed. What is that force and what must be done to maintain its strength?

Theologian Fr. Romano Guardini gives us our first answer in stating it is the force of our personality that consists in “Generousness of life, truth of thought, pure will to work and sincerity of one’s disposition.”

During my priesthood I have been blessed to experience the powers of which Guardini speaks. While cycling to Seattle, Washington from Wall, South Dakota in the mid-70s, my partner and I stayed at a Jesuit mission for Indians living near Wounded Knee. After lodging with several other priests along the way, I asked my companion, who was one of our college students, “Who of all the priests we met stood out most? Without hesitation he answered, “The Jesuit at Wounded Knee.” As I reflected on his reply it occurred, “The reason that Jesuit was so impressionable was because he was an *ad rem* priest whose personality fit his ministry well: he mirrored serious devotedness with a beautiful human touch.”

Upon later reflection, an “*ad rem* priest” came to mean a priest exemplifying a high degree of detachment. Undoubtedly the Jesuit had self-concerns and desires. In watching him work, however, his essential concern was the needs of his people, and

seeing that his work was done well and in its entirety; he exemplified generosity and the pure will to work *par excellence*.

Guardini states such a person “will not let his actions be determined by considerations extrinsic to the task. In this sense, he is disinterested. He serves in the fine sense of the word. He does the work, which is important and timely; he is devoted to it and does it as it should be done. He lives in it and with it, without self-interest or side-glances”: a perfect description of Mother Teresa’s works of mercy.

Kindness consists in being well disposed toward life, others, the world and God, and as with all virtues, it is interchangeable with mercy. Having stayed at several Indian reservations along our way I often wondered how their missionaries maintained a loving, devoted disposition. Along the roadsides we often encountered numerous white crosses. As one Indian chief confided, “Father, alcohol is the curse of the American Indian.” Not only was this disturbing, but we encountered a woman who looked like she was seventy years old only to learn she was twenty-one: a living example of how the health of the poor is so vulnerable.

And yet, the missionaries plowed on

attending to the work at hand: no side-glances, no pining for rewards. Oh yes, they did at times complain about their difficulties, but it seemed their ultimate glory was doing the work of the Father, as doing it was Christ’s glory. It is no exaggeration to say their mercy was filled with heart --- the heart to heart relation of Christ with the Father.

When Guardini speaks of “truth of thought” he is speaking of realism. In the case of the reservations we visited, dealing with devastating alcoholism, squalor living conditions, and ministering to people who felt their race was broken contained ingredients that would dishearten anyone. Yet, the missionaries were not disheartened. [As we know, some priests in similar difficult situations have become so disheartened they left the priesthood. Experiencing this reminds me of my desire to work with a priest friend who served street people. When he heard this, he taught me reality lesson 101, “Gino, not everyone is cut out for street mercy”].

As wholesome as is mercy, often it places priests in environments that require dirtying their hands, stench and culture shock. As a young priest, I remember speaking of the joys of being a shepherd to a priest friend who exclaimed, “Gino,



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sheep stink! Don't let idealism carry you away." He spoke the "truth of thought" of which Guardini speaks. A very thin line exists between idealism and naïveté.

Obstacles to mercy like the above come with the territory. However, lurking in that same territory is the deadliest of all impediments to mercy: a priestly personality out of synch with itself. In his first ordination of priests as Pope Benedict identified them as clericalism and entitlement, the direct antitheses to detachment and being a selfless, generous ad rem priest.

Undoubtedly the priesthood is exalted, and hardworking priests should rightfully be rewarded for their endeavors. As with all high positions, however, there is the temptation to cast side glances to see who's looking at me or using an exulted status to gain prestige. Speaking realistically, we live in a world that is constantly encouraging us to amass possessions with the hope that the more we possess the more we will want. How easy it is to go with the flow, become attached to possessions, feel entitled to them and weaken our priestly personality.

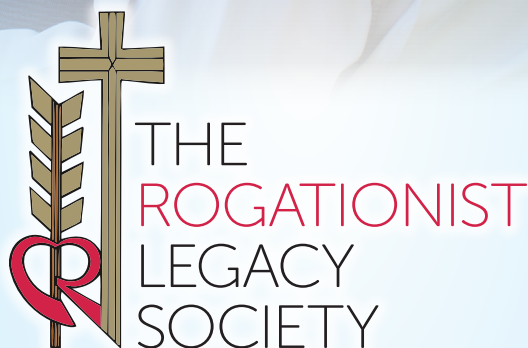
How, then, do we keep the force of our personality strong? It is through the never-ending practice of refining the qualities of a merciful personality. As periodic checkups help us stay healthy, so too, does a personality we often take for granted need periodic checkups. Here the book of Ecclesiastics would remind us there is a time for doing works of mercy and a time to step back from its hurried and distracting side and to reflect on the health of our personhood. As a healthy spiritual life requires one conversion after another, so, too, is a merciful personality in need of repeated conversions. ■



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# Vocation

## *A Deeper Sense of Life*

By JOSÉ CARLOS HERRERA

**B**efore entering the seminary of the Missionaries of St. Charles Scalabrinians, many questions frequently arose as a whirlwind in my heart and in my mind: What is the meaning of my life? What is my reason for having come to this world? What does God want of me? Can I be happy with the plan that God has for my life? I knew that answering these questions would be crucial and that they would become a key piece, a priority that I must take care of. The direction that my life would take, my well-being, and my future, depended on these answers.

I realized that you only live your life once making it necessary to have an objective that makes you feel alive and full of passion to the point of wanting to fight, to fall, to get up, and to pour yourself all out. God created every soul and entrusted to each of us a mission that at the same time will make the life of those called a symbol of abundance. I had to answer these questions from the depths of my heart and to embark in a fearless journey within to find the “whys” and the “for whats” that I have always experienced. After leaving all laziness and fear behind, I embark on this mission to achieve that ideal that fills our life with meaning and take us where we are meant to go.

Sadly, many people dedicate their lives to pleasures, vanities, or small things that are superficial and fleeting. The human being is made for more: to live a life with goals and meaning and not to go through life without leaving a trace of goodness, love, and joy. We are made to fight and to fall many times if necessary, but to dare to stand up and to make others happy. And thus not only we leave footprints in this world, but in the hearts of loved ones and the people around us. Man is made to embark on major challenges and ideals to achieve his happiness.

Indeed, this effort is not easy and there will be difficulties, but to discover such ideal and to give everything in order to achieve it is worthwhile. Our capabilities and all the stamina God gives us, but which have never been unveiled, will be present when we are ready to journey with Him. Life is a gift from God and as such one has to use it to do good, and with the freedom to choose between leaving behind or not a mark on history.

At the beginning of my experience as a seminarian with the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Scalabrinians, I wondered if this was in fact the road to take; if it was worthwhile dropping everything to dedicate with my body and soul to what attracted me since childhood, religious life.

When I felt God’s call and I entered the seminary, I started living the charisma of helping migrants. Being able to serve in this capacity took my breath away. I am filled with joy and it is the best decision I have made in my life. I admit that the discernment process was a little difficult because it takes a lot to leave behind family

and loved ones. But thanks God throughout this time I have been able to understand that sacrifices have great recompenses and God never abandons those who seek. I love the fact I found new friends, people who share the same happiness, because I have seen the love of God in them. I have also noticed that prayer is the spring of force one needs to go ahead with any compromise in life. The seminar has provided a beautiful experience because here I have come to know myself, to grow as a person, to see beyond my eyes, seeing the need for people who are willing to surrender to the service of God, so that we can see the celestial Kingdom among us more deeply. I know that I still have a lot of walking to do, but with God’s help, I know that my goal will be accomplished. ■



**JOSÉ CARLOS HERRERA**

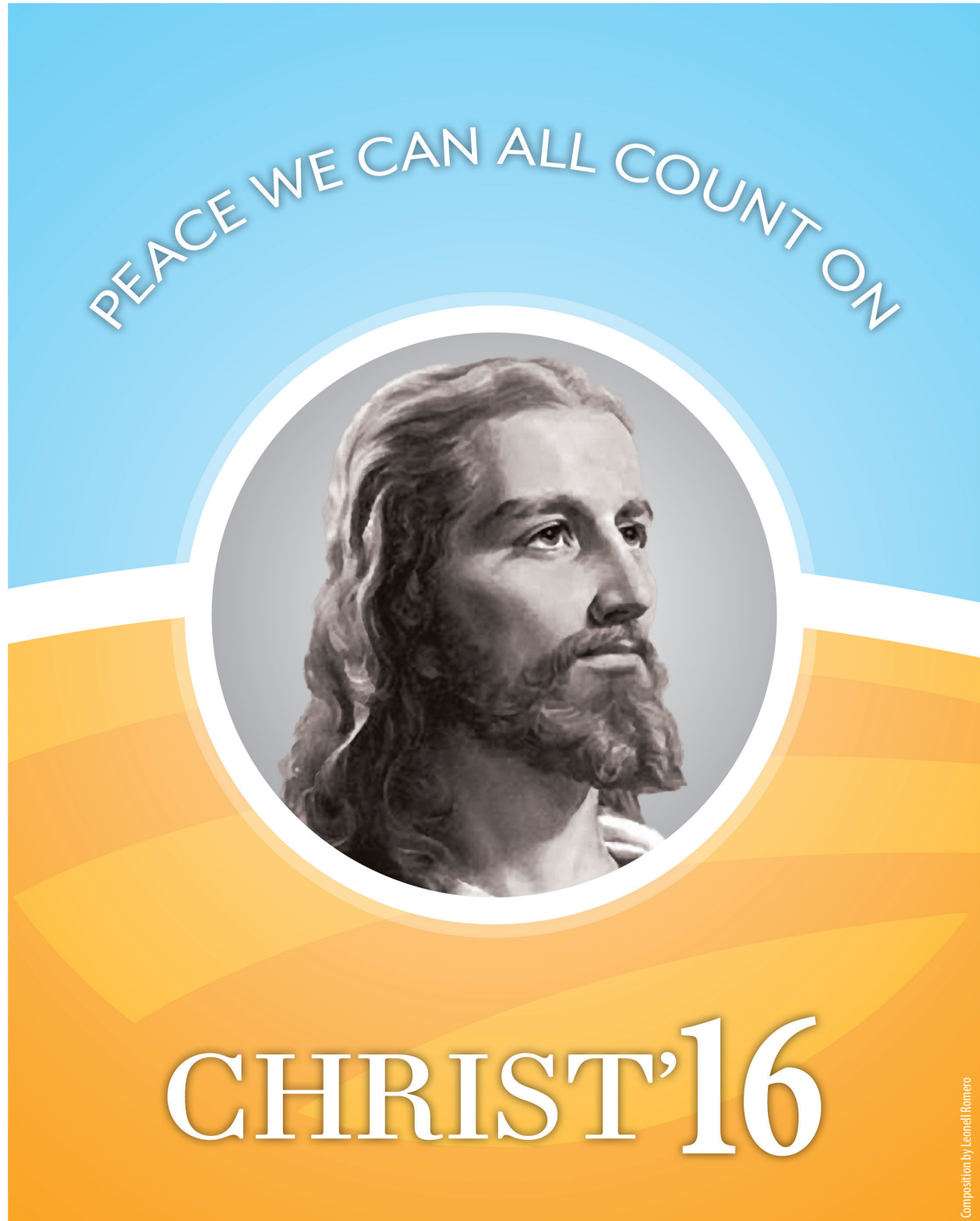
Is a seminarian with the Missionaries of St. Charles Scalabrinians. His congregation works to mitigate the suffering of migrants and refugees.





# If Jesus Ran for President

*A Political Platform Based on Peace and Love*



Composition by Leonel Romero

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

If Jesus ran for President of the United States, what would his platform be? To cobble together a coherent platform, one would need to identify common themes in the very words Jesus is said to have spoken. That would involve much more than cherry picking scripture passages to fit one's own political bias. I would defer that task to a seasoned theologian. However, since the message of peace was at the core of the message of Jesus, beginning from the announcement by the angels that he was to be born in Bethlehem, and since he reduced all of the commandments down to a simple three-layered commandment to "love the Lord, your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of thy mind, and all of your strength, and your neighbor as yourself," it is likely rather safe to assume his platform would rely heavily on peace and love.

How would that translate into specific policy? That is perhaps the most difficult question of all as we entertain this hypothetical question of what a presidential candidate named Jesus would look like. Is the message of peace, love and turning the other cheek, practical, given the complexities of a world plagued with terrorists' intent on wiping all infidels off the face of the earth? This to, is a difficult question at best. That's why I introduce these questions, only for you, the reader to ponder. I have no answers to these questions, however, in my opinion, raising questions may be more important than ushering in unexamined answers. So I will now move on, at the risk of being perceived to be acting just like a politician, who sidesteps important questions.

## Fulfilling his father's mission

Let's move on to an easier question. Would Jesus be beholden to special interest groups? If one subscribes a fairly traditional interpretation of scripture, I think one can safely say, that the interest of Jesus, would be to follow the will of the Father---to fulfill the mission set out before him by his Father in Heaven, which was to become flesh and blood, and to walk among men, women and children, to fulfill his mission. And I think one can safely assume, based on the scriptures that

his mission was to offer himself as a living sacrifice, and, in doing so, to save the people of the world from themselves. In my opinion, Jesus would answer to no one, other than his Father in heaven, and he would be beholden to know special interest groups, unless those special interest groups shared in the vision of Jesus. And, judging by his response to those who would use the temple as a money-making marketplace, money would not wield influence over Jesus, as a presidential candidate. He would rather toss another table, in a passionate display of righteous indignation.

## An unconventional running mate

Let's move on to another question. Who would Jesus pick as a running mate? I think an important consideration, in answering this question, is to study what Jesus valued in others. Perusing the New Testament, it is clear that he consistently elevated the lowly. Just look at how he responded to the woman who offered merely two small copper coins (amounting to approximately one penny) in the temple coffers. She gave everything, though she had next to nothing. Consider the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican--the Pharisee who held his head high as he prayed, boasting of his greatness and religious status, as compared to the Publican, who bowed his head, and humbly stated, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Consider the statement of Jesus, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It is clear, that Jesus elevated the lowly, and placed a high value on characteristics such as contrition and humility. Those characteristics are hard to find in the general population, let alone among people who seek political office, so it is safe to assume that Jesus, even being all-knowing, and all-powerful, may have a difficult time finding a running mate. Would Jesus run as an independent, or start his own party called the Publican Party?

## Campaign Politics

Are you ready for the next question? Would Jesus have a campaign slogan? If so, what would it be? Would it be Jesus Saves? Would it be something that could fit on a bumper sticker? Perhaps you have something cleverer in mind. Would Jesus have a campaign song? Would it be an old hymn? Would it be a modern rock, pop or R&B song? Would it be Let it

Be, by the Beatles, or something else, judged to be "secular" by so who follow Jesus. Would Jesus have a Twitter account, or a Facebook page? These questions are also exceedingly difficult to answer. Any answer would be speculative at best?

Would Jesus be tempted to engage in the politics of personal destruction? The scriptures tell us that he was tempted in all ways, as we are tempted, so he would likely not only be tempted to resort to mudslinging, lies, and all sorts of scandalous behavior. It is also safe to assume that he would be tempted to take bribes and to succumb to political correctness, or to fall in the opposite trap, to hide behind not wanting to be politically correct, to sanction all manner of speech that he would offer, regardless of how crude, how demeaning, and how abusive it may sound. Of course temptation is not equal to committing a given act, so we can safely assume that he would find a way to overcome each and every temptation.

I could go on, and on, presenting more and more questions to answer the hypothetical grand question of what would Jesus, as a presidential candidate look like, act like and sound like. Is raising the issue of Jesus as a presidential candidate a worthwhile undertaking? I believe it is, and here is why: Though we can never expect any political candidate to be Jesus, we can hope for and try to vote for the candidate who, in our minds, most closely approximates the ways of Jesus. Of course, if we're left having to choose between two evils, such a Hobson's choice leaves little room for a Jesus preference. And to answer a question, that by now, you may be itching to ask me, the answer is no. Jesus would never run for President of the United States. If he would, it would make choosing a candidate easier than ever. But that's never going to happen. If it did, it would clearly be a cold day in heaven. ■



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## VATICAN CITY



## II Vatican Impact Investing Conference

*"Making the Year of Mercy a Year of Impact for the Poor"*

The world's impact investing leaders convened in Rome to attend the II Vatican Impact Investing Conference last June. In her description of impact investing, Dr. Carolyn Woo, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services, states, "Impact Investing brings in private capital, acting as both supplements to and substitutes of charity and government funding, to support social enterprises for their benefits to the poor and marginalized and their ability to sustain themselves financially."

Pope Francis, a visionary leader at the forefront of the fight against income inequality, understands the importance of partnering the Catholic Church with financial organizations that invest in social impact. His organizing of a second impact investing conference signals his intent to encourage a transition from a charity-oriented model to a market-enterprise model to fight poverty.

## ITALY



## XII General Chapter of Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus

*"Seeing the Crowds, He felt compassion and said: 'Rogate'"*

Representatives from the Rogationists' delegations present in the five continents met in Rome from July 5-21, 2016. The Chapter Assembly elected Fr. Bruno Rampazzo, the 11th successor of the Rogationists' founder, Saint Hannibal M. Di Francia.

The Rogationists reaffirmed their commitment to continue their work for vocations and serve the poor. They were inspired by the Holy Father's message: "Our time more than ever calls for good workers to build the Kingdom of God on earth and therefore the "Rogate" is alive and fresh and every religious Rogationist becomes effective sign of the Holy Spirit who, through the gospel command, continues to call and to send holy apostles for the edification of the Church."

## POLAND

## Vocations Center

*A Highlight of World Youth Day Krakow 2016*

Organizers for the WYD in Krakow, Poland, welcomed visitors to the Vocations Center, which included four Academies: God, Family, Job, and Mercy. The objective of each academy was to offer an opportunity for participants to share vocation experiences.

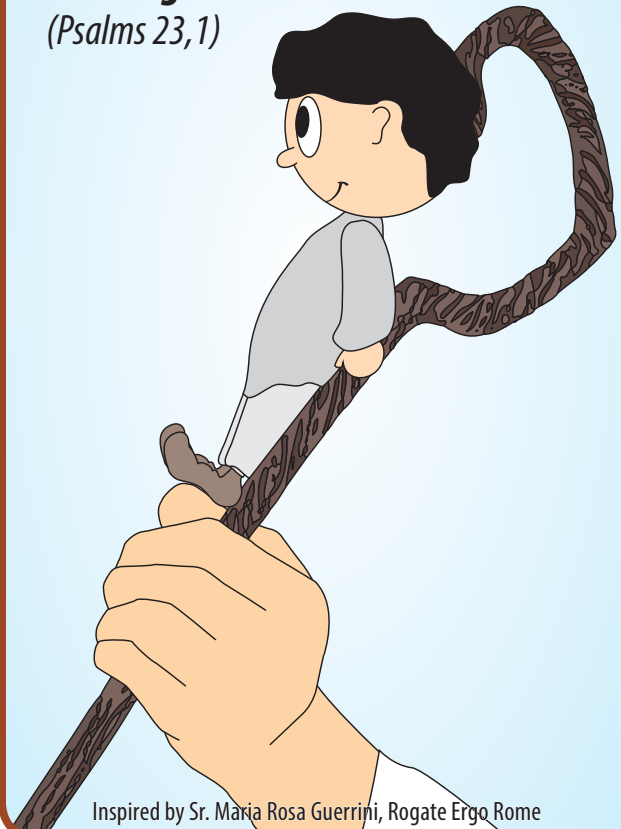
The official site of WYD Krakow explains each Academy's goal as follows: "The God Academy will help you discern your vocation; the Family Academy will help you learn about marriage and family life; the Job Academy focuses on your vocation to work within your chosen career path; and the Mercy Academy will remind us that doing good acts and works of mercy toward our neighbors is both a person's privilege and their highest calling."

The Vocations Center in Krakow also gathered religious congregations and Catholic organizations from around the world. Pilgrims were able to explore different vocation paths. According to the USCCB, 40,000 Americans and 85 U.S. Bishops registered to attend WYD. This was the largest American delegation to participate in a WYD outside of North America.

## CORNER MESSAGE

**"The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I Lack."**

*(Psalms 23,1)*



Inspired by Sr. Maria Rosa Guerrini, Rogate Ergo Rome

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