



Adsum

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LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

One of the special patron saints of religious and priestly vocations is St. Joseph, the faithful spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the foster father of Our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ.

The reason for this is founded in his primary vocation in life, which was to watch over and to protect the Virgin of virgins and the Eternal High Priest.

During this month of March which is dedicated to St. Joseph, let us pray to him for an increase in vocations to the religious life and the holy priesthood. Let us briefly consider the vocation to the religious life and to the holy priesthood.

What is a vocation? The word is derived from the Latin word *vocare*, to call, and so a vocation is a calling. In general, everyone has a vocation, a calling, for Almighty God gives everyone particular talents and abilities in order for them to provide for the different needs of the Mystical Body of Christ. For many, their calling is to the married state: to be good husbands and wives, to be good fathers and mothers, raising children in a God-fearing

manner. However, the word vocation is more commonly used when we speak of a person chosen by God to be a religious or a priest.

In the New Testament, we find many references to the call of souls by God to His service. Among them, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, we read of the young man who came to Jesus and asked Him what he must do to

have life everlasting. Jesus replied:

“Keep the commandments”... The young man saith to Him, “All these have I kept from my youth, what is yet wanting to me?” Jesus saith to him, “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow Me.” (Matt. 19:16-22)

In another place of this same Gospel, St. Peter asked Our Divine Lord what reward would he and the other Apostles receive for their leaving all behind to follow Him, and Jesus answered:

“Amen I say to thee that... everyone who hath left

house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting.

(Matt. 19:28-29)



Why does Our Lord make this great promise to those who follow Him as a priest or a religious? The reason for this is that they are dedicated exclusively to His service. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul explained the great advantages of the priestly and religious vocation:

He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband. (I Cor. 7:32-34)

In his encyclical *Sacra Virginitas*, Pope Pius XII reiterated this truth expounded by St. Paul:

It is easy to see, therefore, why persons who desire to consecrate themselves to God's service embrace the state of virginity as a liberation, in order to be more entirely of God's disposition and devoted to the good of their neighbor. How, for example, could a missionary such as the wonderful St. Francis Xavier; a father of the poor, such as the merciful St. Vincent de Paul; a zealous educator of youth, like St. John Bosco; a tireless "mother of emigrants," like St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, have accomplished such gigantic and painful labors, if each had to look after the corporal and spiritual needs of a wife or husband or children?

Chastity and celibacy obviously involve a great sacrifice on the part of the priest and the religious, and it was for this reason Jesus Christ said:

All men take not this word (virginity or celibacy), but they to whom it is given, he who can take it, let him take it. (Matt. 29:11-12)

Our Holy Mother the Church in Her wisdom and prudence does not allow one to be ordained to the priesthood or to take final vows as a religious until they have been sufficiently tested in their vocations.

Just because someone may desire to be a religious or a priest does not mean that they have a true vocation. A true vocation is known when the individual joins the convent or the seminary and lives the life of religious or priest. During that time, it becomes apparent to both the superiors and the aspirant if the candidate is indeed called. That is why it is so important for our laity to realize that when someone leaves the convent or the seminary in the early years, they should not be labeled or looked down upon as having rejected their vocation.

It is for this very reason, to try one's vocation, to put them to the test, that a religious or a seminarian goes through various steps or grades before final profession or before ordination to the priesthood. For religious congregations, Canon Law regulates a six month postulancy, followed by a one year (in some congregations two year) novitiate. During this time, the young religious is exposed to the religious life. If they desire to continue in the convent and if the superiors see that they possess the necessary qualities (both spiritual and natural) to be good religious, they take vows for one year, then for three years, and at the end of their triennial vows, final profession. In reality a religious vocation is actually tested for five and a half years before one can take final vows.

The vocation to the holy priesthood is tested in a similar manner. A seminarian spends two years in academic and spiritual formation in the seminary before he can become a cleric. During his next two years, he advances slowly through the minor orders of Porter, Lector, Exorcist, and Acolyte, which bestow upon him the fundamental responsibilities associated with the priesthood. Throughout his first four years, he is free to leave the seminary if he thinks it is not his vocation. Only after these four years does he make a final commitment to the life of celibacy by ordination to the Subdiaconate.

How does one know whether or not they have been called to the priesthood or to the religious state? Young people sometimes worry about their vocation; they wonder how they may know if they are being called.

Each person must work out the problem for himself.

One great mistake made by young people is to think that if God is calling them to His service, He will manifest it to them in some extraordinary way. They must not expect an angel to tell them. This is certainly not the usual manner that vocations are given. The call from God may be an interior voice within the soul, it may be a certain spiritual attraction for the religious life or priesthood, or it may be a very faint whisper that one occasionally hears from God — “Come, follow Me.”

The most important disposition our young people must have is the simple desire to do the will of God. Thus the Blessed Virgin Mary prayed at the Annunciation, “*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (Be it done unto me according to thy word).” If our young people have this attitude of conformity to the will of God, they will find the vocation to which God is calling them in life. It is also very important that they receive counsel from their spiritual director or confessor who spiritually knows them very well and can give solid advice.

The primary grounds for the fostering of vocations is the Catholic home, the place where the parents raise their children with a love for God and for their precious Catholic faith, where the members of the family frequent the sacraments, and a spirit of humility, obedience, love for one another, and discipline prevails. Vocations are fostered at a very young age when parents teach their children, by word and by example, a spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice.

In his encyclical *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, Pope Pius XI taught:

But the first and most natural place where the flowers of the sanctuary should almost spontaneously grow and bloom remains almost always the truly and deeply Christian family. Most of the saintly bishops and priests whose “praise the Church declares” (Ecclus. 44:15) owe the beginning of their vocation and their holiness to the example and teaching of a father strong in the faith and manly

virtues, of a pure, devoted mother; a family in which the love of God and neighbor, joined with simplicity of life, has reigned supreme.

Catholic parents should remember that no greater blessing can come to their family than to have one of its members called to the religious life or to the holy priesthood. In his encyclical *Sacra Virginitas*, Pope Pius XII exhorted parents to reflect on the great privilege it is for them to have children called by God:

Let parents consider what a great honor it is to see their son elevated to the priesthood, or their daughter consecrate her virginity to her Divine Spouse. In regard to consecrated virgins, the Bishop of Milan (St. Charles Borromeo) writes: “You have heard, parents, that a virgin is a gift of God, the oblation of parents, the priesthood of chastity. The virgin is a mother’s victim, by whose daily sacrifice divine anger is appeased.”

Furthermore, in the writings of the great Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus de Liguori, we find that after the gift of true faith, the vocation to serve God is the greatest gift that God can give to a soul. The saintly doctor declared that a vocation is a singular proof of God’s special love for that soul.

In our own times, when there is such a great need for priests and religious to carry on the mission of the Church, we must work for an increase in vocations. But how can this be done? The answer is found in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

And Jesus was going about all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel... But seeing the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were bewildered and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then, He said to His disciples, “The harvest indeed is abundant, but the laborers are few. PRAY THEREFORE THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO SEND LABORERS INTO HIS HARVEST.”
(Matt. 9:35-38)

With my prayers and blessing,
Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI

Father Connell Answers Moral Questions

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

HEARING MASS OVER THE RADIO

Question: I have been informed that a Catholic who is so physically handicapped that he cannot go to church can fulfill his obligation of Sunday Mass and share in all the benefits of the Holy Sacrifice by listening devoutly to a Mass broadcast over the radio. Can we make this statement to the patients of a hospital where a loud-speaker system has been installed in every room, so that the patients can follow the Mass that is being celebrated in the chapel?

Answer: As far as the fulfillment of the obligation of Sunday Mass is concerned, one does not comply with it by hearing a broadcast of a sacred function over the radio. The fulfillment of this obligation requires physical presence at the Holy Sacrifice, or at least conjunction with the group actually present (e.g. in the case where the crowd is so great that it reaches beyond the doors of the church). Of course, this is a matter that depends on the legislative enactments of the Church. The Pope could decree that the obligation is fulfilled by listening devoutly to a broadcast, just as he has ruled that one may gain the indulgence of the papal blessing over the radio (*AAS*, XXXI [1939], 277). I have heard it stated that during the civil war in Spain the Holy Father announced that the Catholics of that country could satisfy their Sunday obligation by hearing Mass over the radio. But, as far as I know, there had been no general concession to this effect.

As to the particular case presented by the questioner, it is possible that there is sufficient conjunction between the hospital rooms and the chapel to provide the patients with the required physical presence, particularly if the hospital is small, and the rooms are on the same corridor as the chapel. But, even in that event, the patients should not be given the impression that by merely listening to a broadcast Mass they fulfil their obligation. Some of them would doubtless carry this erroneous impression with them after their discharge from the hospital, if the matter were not clearly explained.

It should be emphasized, however, that one may participate in the benefits of the Mass without being actually present—namely, by directing one's intention and devotion to the sacred rite. By hearing Mass over the radio one can certainly foster his devotion, and thus profit considerably from the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. Indeed, it could happen that one who participates in the Holy Sacrifice in this manner will gain much more benefit than many of those who are actually present.

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