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Bishop Kearney Explains Religious Vocations

His Excellency Bishop Kearney discussed the need for religious vocations in a radio interview last Sunday with the Rev. Richard T. Torney. Following is a transcript of the broadcast made over Rochester Radio Station WHAM:

FATHER TORNEY: Bishop Kearney, would you please analyze for our audience what we mean by the "true signs of a vocation?" How can young people and their parents recognize the call that God wants them to enter religious life?

BISHOP KEARNEY: First of all, parents have the opportunity from the very earliest days of studying the character of their own children. Parents can notice very readily a boy or a girl in whose life the spiritual seems to occupy a very important place. They can observe it first of all in the attitude of the child toward the practices of religion.

For example, the child's desire to go to Mass frequently, his willingness to make sacrifices for the reception of Holy Communion daily, a deep interest in religious programs as they come over the radio. All of these things indicate that the child is thinking along spiritual lines.

As far as the child is concerned, in his own prayers, in his meditations and talks with God he very readily develops a sensitive desire to serve God in some way or other. He reads the lives of men and women who have made the work of God their vocation in life. Under the influence of these saintly examples he gradually begins to picture himself in their places.

Again, a boy or girl with exceptional talents very often sits down and asks the question: "Where are these talents going to be spent? Are they going to be spent to see what I can get out of life, or am I going to spend them to see what I can put into life?" It is as the result of these meditations, fortified by consistent prayers that young people finally arrive at the conclusion that their happiness in life is to come not from seeing what they can get out of it but what they can put into it.

FR. T.: Bishop, is it correct to say that a vocation usually requires external persuasion as well as the internal qualities you are speaking about?

BISHOP: I would not say that it requires persuasion but I would say that it requires suggestion from someone and it requires wise encouragement.

I venture to say that most of us who became priests became so because as altar boys we received encouragement from some priest. He took an interest in us, asked us if we ever thought of serving God, and under that encouragement our vocation was gradually developed.

That is why the teaching organizations at the present time have so many applicants coming to them. Probably in all these cases some thoughtful teacher broached the subject and had courage to say to a boy: "Have you ever thought of occupying the place in the classroom that I occupy?"

FR. T.: Many people wonder what goes on in a seminary or convent during the preparation years. Would you please give us, Bishop, a general picture of the educational training the Church provides for the priesthood and sisterhood?

BISHOP: First of all the Church concerns itself with developing the spiritual life of those who are going to serve God. The service of God is a supernatural service. It requires divine help.

The author of "The Imitation of Christ" expressed this very well when he said, "This is not man's work but it is the work of God, who can accomplish such things in frail flesh that what it naturally abhors and hates through fervor of spirit it now embraces and loves."

Those who serve God must be trained to a life of self-sacrifice. Christ expressed that in a very graphic figure when He said: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me." And so, first of all, your servant of God must be trained in the school of self-sacrifice and the school of discipline from the point of view of the soul.

FATHER T.: What about the educational training?

BISHOP: The educational training, of course, must be geared to the requirements of the education of the age in which we live. The educational training in our day must be far more extensive and far more intensive than was required 20 years ago. Our young people demand it and, if our Catholic schools are to keep pace with the progress of the day, our teachers obviously must keep that pace.

FR. T.: This pace requires a great deal of degree work and specialized study, doesn't it?

BISHOP: It requires that our teachers meet the highest standards required by various standardizing organizations. For teaching certain grades there must be a master's degree; for others there must be a doctorate. The Church must be ready to place excellently trained Sisters and Priests in the classrooms because it is unfair to the students to put in the Catholic School classrooms teachers who are not as well trained as they are in schools elsewhere.

FR. T.: Please tell us briefly, Bishop, what is the span of years



BISHOP KEARNEY

that a seminarian must cover to complete his training?

BISHOP: The seminarian's training is quite lengthy. When he finishes elementary school, he has four years of high school, four years of college and then four years of theological preparation. After elementary school he has a span of 12 years to prepare himself for his priestly work.

FR. T.: Does a girl who enters the convent prepare for so long a time?

BISHOP: The convent life is not quite as long because the number of subjects to be covered is not so extensive. The young Sister prepares for her classroom teaching after a few years' training in the spiritual life of the novitiate. Then, of course, her education can be spread over a long period of years after she begins to teach.

In other words, a teaching Sister, in the same position as the ordinary lay teachers who get much of their teacher-training work in extension schools, building up their degree program after they have finished normal school. With the priest it is different. As a rule he must complete his education for a degree before ordination or shortly afterward.

FR. T.: Bishop Kearney, the general public listening in knows that you are responsible for the schools of our Sisters. They might appreciate your official views on the current needs of the Rochester Diocese for all those vocations that are in training and also for those young people who hope will come to serve God here.

BISHOP: Here is a particular phase of the question you should appreciate. Every time we invite a religious organization into this diocese to carry on religious work, to take part in the activities of developing our spiritual program, we assume at the same time the responsibility of furnishing manpower or woman power to continue that program.

Take, for example, the Basilian Fathers who have conducted our Aquinas Institute in Rochester for many years. I was very happy to welcome their Novitiate into Rochester a few years ago because we realize that Rochester homes must furnish the Basilian Fathers of the future.

We have recently invited the Society of Jesus to Rochester. It is an implicit understanding that in the course of the years our own boys are going to replenish the ranks of that organization.

The same is true of the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Religious of the Cenacle. When any of these religious organizations come to our community and spend their energies for the sanctification of our people, we immediately become responsible for supplying personnel in order that the work may be carried on for years to come. Very naturally, that spreads out our supply of vocations over a wide field and makes it so much more important that the numbers increase.

FR. T.: Undoubtedly with the increase of population and the movement of families to suburban areas, you must have a big worry right now as to how you are going to staff the new schools that are being erected in our diocese.

BISHOP: I must say candidly I don't worry. This is God's work and I leave it in the hands of God. I think He is perfectly capable of meeting these responsibilities.

On the other hand, we have the responsibility of doing everything that we possibly can in order to meet this very serious problem with new teachers.

FR. T.: Bishop, you spoke about bringing religious communities into the diocese and helping them to find vocations here. What is the attitude of a Bishop about the young men and women who leave a diocese to enter a missionary order or community that functions outside the diocese? Do you feel that religious groups which serve in our diocese should have a first claim on our young vocations?

BISHOP: No, Father, you can't reason that way because the call of God is a thing we cannot interpret. If God calls a young soul to missionary service, that young soul must go there. They can't pause to look back and see what is going on at home.

I have always found that the attitude we should take in these things is that we should be zealous for the service of God. After all the missions have to be supplied; various religious organizations have to be supplied; diocesan clergy have to be supplied.

I think you will find that the rule which applies in charity generally is "bread cast upon the running waters will return one hundred-fold." The more young people we are willing to sacrifice to help those who need our young applicants more than we do, the more vocations we will have for ourselves.

FR. T.: Bishop Kearney, the spirit of youth is adventurous and it is stimulated by the attraction we can present in Vocation Month. But what would you say to parents who do not hear and see all this vocational stimulation. What about parents who feel that their children should not leave them to go to the convent or the seminary? It's a controversial subject, but it's very common.

BISHOP: To challenge that parental opposition I would simply say that parents are doing a very rash and a very dangerous thing in interfering between their child and Almighty God.

Parents, after all, are custodians of their children and every parent must realize the responsibility he has to get his child back to heaven for all eternity. It certainly is a ridiculous thing for a parent to interfere with a child's method of getting eternal salvation.

If a boy or girl feel they can save their souls in the service of God, for a parent to interfere is simply interfering with the saving of those souls.

FR. T.: Interference is sometimes quite bitter though, isn't it?

BISHOP: It is bitter, unfortunately. Paternal and maternal love are the most beautiful things in the world and I would be the last person in the world, knowing the history of it in my own life, to criticize the devotion and love of any father and mother.

But there comes a time in the life of all young people when they must leave the nest. A young boy or a young girl will want to get married. That's their privilege. The parents go along with them; make them happy. Certainly marriage to the service of God should meet at least the same approval and helps toward happiness.

There is another angle to this question, too. I think it is one of the finest indications of God's acceptance of a father's or mother's work when He calls one of their children to religious life.

I believe it is the most vocal expression on the part of God—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"—if He comes to a father or mother and says:

Noted Protestant Missionary In India Joins Church

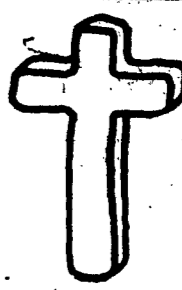
Kottayam, India—(NC)—A prominent Anglican school teacher and missionary here has joined the Church and appealed to non-Catholics to return to the true fold.

K. M. Mann, retired headmaster of a Church of England school near here and a well-known preacher, made a statement to the secular press saying he was impelled to follow the examples set by Cardinal Newman and Archbishop Mar

Ivanies. The latter is a former schismatic, a socialist who led a large number of his Indian followers away from the Malankara Catholics in a revolution with the Holy See in 1930.

In his statement, Mr. Mann asked that Protestants and members of other non-Catholic sects in India give serious consideration to the claims of the Church.

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You may also wish to take this occasion to make a deposit in MARY'S BANK, our support fund for the training of services in our Near East Missions. This month the Rosary Sisters in Jerusalem are guarding our poor orphans. \$10 will keep one for a month. IMAGINE!

In these days when we meditate so often on the suffering of Our Lord what is more in our minds than the Holy Land? Our thoughts quickly turn to those tireless Sisters working today for Him in Israel and Palestine (Jordan). You will want to help the work of these women of God. The Sisters of the Apostles in Bethlehem and the Rosary Sisters in Jerusalem are guarding our poor orphans. \$10 will keep one for a month. IMAGINE!

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