

We Are a People of Vocation

By Sr. Kathleen Weider, SSJ
Director of Vocations
Sisters of St. Joseph

The faith, vitality and dedication of the Church will only be as strong as the faith, vitality and dedication of its members. How seriously do you take your Christian commitment? What kind of active role do you take in witnessing to your faith and in leading others to the Lord? What implications will the decline in the number of vocations to religious life and priesthood have for the Church? Do you understand the value of commitment through the single life? As Christians we are a called people, a people of vocation... we are people with vocations. How can we better understand what this means for us as Church?

As Christians, each and every one of us is called to a life of love of the Lord and service among his people. This challenge of the Gospel arises out of our Baptism and is affirmed in our Confirmation. The response to this call, the living out of this challenge, is unique to the individual. Each of us, as Baptized Christians, is called to minister to one another and to help in the mission of building up the Body of Christ.

Church Vocations Awareness Week celebrates this universal call to love and service. The week should be one of prayer, action and education about vocations. Each individual should strive for a deeper appreciation of her/his own vocation and a more vital living out of her/his baptismal commitment. All Christians are invited to become more aware of the many vocations alive in today's Church.

As we reflect on the concept of vocation, perhaps we could begin by considering the call of the first disciples of Jesus as described in the Gospel of John:

The next day John was standing there again with two of his disciples when he saw Jesus walking by. "There is the Lamb of God," he said. The two disciples heard him say this and went with Jesus. Jesus turned, saw them following him, and asked, "What are you looking for?" They answered, "Where do you live, Rabbi?" "Come and see," he answered. So they went with him and saw where he lived and spent the rest of the day with him. One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. At once he found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah." Then he took Simon to Jesus. (John 1:35-42)

We find here a simple story about simple men many years ago... a story about human beings who left what they were doing to follow another human being, Jesus of Nazareth. Though we live in very different historical and cultural conditions, this story can reveal for us the major ingredients of vocation.

Vocation, from the Latin voco (call) is, as it was in the Gospel story, a call extended to an individual to follow the Lord. This call can come in a wide variety of ways, but it always involves leaving behind or modifying our way of living if we respond.

How do we receive the call? We tend to think that John and Andrew and Simon were lucky, for they had the chance to know Jesus concretely as a human being. If we look at the Gospel story closely, however, we realize that it holds an important lesson for us. It was John who noticed Jesus and pointed him out to his disciples. Through the experience and witness of one person, two others came to recognize Jesus. We must understand, then, that the call to follow the Lord is a very human experience and adventure which comes to us through the words and experiences of human beings. The call came through John to Andrew, who passed it on to Simon, who himself went to meet Jesus. The same is true today: most often the call to follow the Lord comes through people who are willing to share what they have seen and heard.

A vocation is very personal; but it is rooted within a community. As Mark Scannell, OP, says in his article "Vocation: Call to Follow the Lord," "A vocation is not something I receive or live out in a 'God and me' relationship; rather, it is received and lived with others who have also been called. My vocation to follow the Lord involves the experiences of others who are willing to share with me their calling and what that means to them." My vocation is influenced by their witnessing to what they have seen, as Andrew's rested upon John, and Peter's rested upon Andrew. Vocation is, in a real sense, a passing on of life, the creating of new life; that is why the imagery of rebirth through Baptism is very appropriate.

Vocations Awareness Week is an excellent time to remember the people in our lives who have shared their experience of the Lord and witnessed in such a way that we have been touched and have come to recognize the Lord and his call to us. Perhaps, too, we should reflect on how we are responding to the Lord's invitation and whether we, like John, are helping others to recognize the Lord in their midst.

Vocation Prayer

O God, Who enlightens the minds and inflames the hearts of the faithful by the Holy Spirit, grant that through the same Spirit, I may know my true vocation in life, and may have the grace to follow it faithfully. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The story of the call of the first disciples points out still another significant element of a call to follow Jesus. In the Gospel story Jesus says, "Come and see." This highlights the fact that spending time with the Lord is an important factor in any vocation. We must move from learning about the Lord through others to learning to know him personally ourselves. For this to happen we must have time with the Lord, to speak to him and to listen. In prayer a relationship grows between the Lord and myself... a relationship based on my own experience of the Lord and not solely on the witness of others. In prayer we not only discover the uniqueness of our relationship with the Lord, but also the unique call each of us has - an invitation to make him known in a way that no one else can. Only in prayer can we get in touch with our vocation; only in prayer can we find the vision and courage to be faithful in living our vocation day by day.

A vocation is, then, a call from the Lord to enter into relationship with him, to follow the Lord and to invite

others to follow him; it is a call which comes to us through the words and actions of human beings. This call continues to be heard and spoken in the words of Scripture, in our sharing of bread and wine, in reconciliation experienced. The call is also heard and spoken in the needs of the poor, in efforts for justice and peace, in our love for one another. Let us continue to listen; let us be generous in our response.

If you are at that juncture in your life where you are searching for what vocation the Lord is inviting you to... if you are considering questions of religious life, priesthood, marriage, or single life... if you desire more information or help in moving toward a decision, the Diocesan Vocation Team would be happy to help you. Please contact us at the Diocesan Vocation Office at 328-3210.

Let us remember that together we are a called people, a people of vocation, trying to call and recall others. Let us pray for one another and let us live our vocations with enthusiasm.

we invite you to

JOIN US



priests
sisters
brothers

diocese of rochester



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SPACE
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YOUR
PICTURE

write or call: Father Tom Valenti
1150 buffalo road
rochester, new york
(716) 328-3210 14624