

hard to delight in the flowers if you're hopelessly lost in the forest."

"That's for sure," thought Jim. As he copied down the proverb in his personal journal, he decided to list all the good things — the "flowers" — in his life. The list began with honesty and continued with forgiveness, Liz, mercy, understanding, patience, friends and faith. To his list he added some teachers.

The storm outside the window seemed to be lessening. Jim thought of the connection between the rain and flowers.

As Jim closed his journal, Father Riley, the junior religion teacher, entered the waiting room. After many good talks over the past two years, Jim considered him a friend.

"Jim," Father Riley began, "I heard you were called in. I just stopped by to let you know I'll be around the rest of the day if you want to talk after you get finished here."

The secretary's eyes flashed up,

To delight in the flowers

a look of "Do you know what you're asking for?" on her face.

"How about fifth hour today," replied Jim. "I've got an open period then."

"Fine," said Father Riley. "In my office then at 2:10. By the way, are you finished using my car? I'll need the wheels tonight, so don't forget to bring back my keys. When you need it again, though, let me know."

With that, the principal's door opened. A blushing student came out, followed by the principal. His eyes stared at Jim. "OK, Knox. I want to talk to you."

As Jim rose, Father Riley winked at him and thunder rolled outside the window.

(Father Sherry is director of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation.)

FOOD...

...for thought

•The person who witnesses severe injustice in the world may begin to wonder if there truly is a good God.

Questions about life's meaning and purpose do not usually occur in a vacuum. These questions are generated by the course real life takes.

That is why the demands placed on church ministers are great. That is why those in the church who think of themselves as having a vocation — and this can include anyone trying to live out the Christian life — have a task of considerable scope.

For people trying to live out a Christian vocation sometimes will find themselves in situations where they must try to rekindle an appreciation of life's worth. Often they will find themselves with people who need support and concrete help in recognizing their own talents and potential. Again, it may at times be a matter of listening attentively to someone who needs to express personal feelings and questions to a person who is compassionate and respectful.

All Christians from time to time find that they are called to serve friends, co-workers, family members and others who have basic decisions to make about the future and about values.

This kind of service to others is an important dimension of the Christian vocation.

For a teen-ager, the journey toward adulthood is often tumultuous. This time of dramatic change in life is full of doubts and unanswered questions: What kind of person am I? Should I look upon the future as a threat, or is it filled with promise for me? How should I relate to the other people in my life? Does anyone else genuinely care about me? Why is there injustice in the world?

In reality, however, teen-agers are not the only ones who quietly ask these questions of themselves. An adult at the age of 35 or 50, even an adult at retirement age, may wonder seriously about life's meaning and purpose. And this concern must be worked out in the context of life's actual events:

•The person who experiences a significant loss, like a death in the family or a job loss, may develop serious questions about life's worth.

•The person who experiences a failure or a profound disappointment may simultaneously experience a sense of profound confusion about his personal identity.

•The person who experiences a broken personal relationship may become overwhelmed with doubts about the value of close relationships.

•The person entering life's later years may mourn the passing of youth.

...for discussion

1. What does the word "vocation" mean to you? What is your vocation as a Christian?

2. Sister Jane Pitz discusses her vocation as a campus minister in an interview this week with Katharine Bird. Sister Pitz says it is her task to support students, to help them work out their problems, but not to impose solutions. Can you recall a situation in which your support was needed by someone who was working a problem through? How did you give support to that person?

3. After reading this week's articles by Father Joseph Kenna and Katharine Bird, do you think there are ways in which your Christian vocation resembles the vocation of a campus minister, even though your vocation might not be fulfilled on a college campus?

SECOND HELPINGS

"Sharing Moral Values With Your Teen-ager" by Subdician Father Gerald Coleman. "Most parents do an excellent job in raising their children. And this is because they are not afraid to speak and act out of their strengths," writes Father Coleman in this 24-page pamphlet. "Young people really want to know the strengths, values and opinions of their parents and their teachers," he adds. Father Coleman briefly touches on the confusion many teens experience when they encounter values in society which conflict with those of Christians, especially in relation to the drug and alcohol abuse and sexual practices. Christians should make it clear that society demands a deep sense of fidelity. We love people. We do not use them. Adults should be honest with youths and truthful and treat them with respect. He says: "But don't retreat from your own values when you help the people." Light of Faith, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 1-24.