

Vocations and Priesthood Sunday Resources 2011

VOCATIONS SUNDAY
15TH MAY 2011

PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY
22ND MAY 2011

Prayer to Follow the Call of Christ

Lord, I thank You for the gifts You have given me, especially for life, love, family and friends.

Help me to know myself better and to know my talents, as I pray, study and decide on my life's work.

Help me to see and understand the path You open for me. Help me choose a life's work which will be in response to my potential and your love for me.

If I am being invited to follow You as a priest, brother, sister, give me a generous heart to respond to your challenging call and the strength to follow You wherever You lead me. Amen.



Vocation Prayer for Discernment

God, I know You love me and have great plans for me. But sometimes I am overwhelmed by the thought of my future. Show me how to walk forward one day at a time.

May I take heart while I search openly, learn about all the choices, listen to others for advice, and pay attention to my own feelings. By doing these things, may I hear your call to a way of life that will let me love as only I can, and let me serve others with the special gifts that You have given me. Amen.

Beatification of Pope John Paul II

To coincide with the Beatification of Pope John Paul II the office for priestly vocations has brought out a poster quoting the great Pope on his own Vocational journey to priesthood. The following are excerpts from his writings on Vocation that may be of help to you as you plan your Vocation Sunday Masses and prayer events.

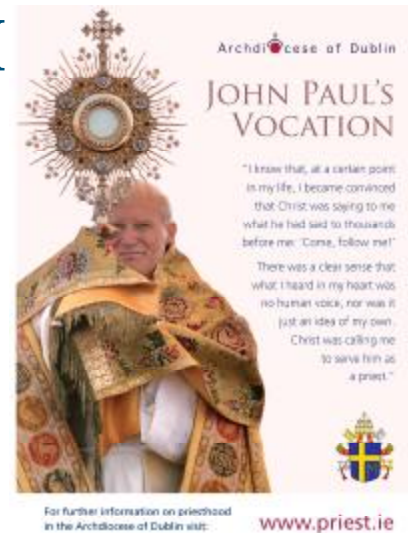
"In the first place, then, a vocation is that which God uses to direct each and every one of us to his task in life. "Jesus has a specific task in life for each and every one of us. Each one of us is hand-picked, called by name by Jesus! There is no one among us who does not have a divine vocation!" *Homily, June 1, 1982*

Some are called audibly by God, but the usual kind of call is internal, through the inner working of the Spirit. "What is a vocation? It is an interior call of grace, which falls into the soul like a seed, to mature within it." *Angelus message, December 14, 1980*

We cannot give an everywhere valid account of how a vocation takes place, since "apart from the universal elements that are found in every vocation, each call takes place concretely in ways that are always new and always different—and let us add, always beautiful and wonderful, because God is always wonderful in all that he does." *Homily, September 7, 1986*

'There was a clear sense that what I heard in my heart was no human voice...Christ was calling me to serve him as a priest'

Do not be slow to answer the Lord's call! From the passage of the Book of Exodus read to us in this Mass we can learn how the Lord acts in every vocation (cf. Ex 3:1–6, 9–12). First, he provokes a new awareness of his presence—the burning bush. When we begin to show an interest he calls us by name. When our answer becomes more specific and like Moses we say: "Here I am" (cf. v. 4), then he reveals more clearly both himself and his compassionate love for his people in need. Gradually he leads us to dis-



cover the practical way in which we should serve him: "I will send you." And usually it is then that fears and doubts come to disturb us and make it more difficult to decide. It is then that we need to hear the Lord's assurance: "I am with you" (Ex 3:12). Every vocation is a deep personal experience of the truth of these words: "I am with you." *Homily, January 13, 1995*

In the hidden recesses of the human heart the grace of a vocation takes the form of a dialogue. It is a dialogue between Christ and an individual, in which a personal invitation is given. Christ calls the person by name and says: "Come, follow me." This call, this mysterious inner voice of Christ, is heard most clearly in silence and prayer. Its acceptance is an act of faith. *Homily, February 10, 1986*

Introduction;

Today we celebrate Vocations Sunday. Our Mass today gives us the opportunity to recognise in a very special way our own unique calling as sons and daughters of God. On the day of our baptism we were anointed with Chrism to set us apart for the work of God. On that day our giftedness and our sacredness was recognised by the whole community. Today we rejoice in our sacredness and we thank God for the dignity he gives us.

As we recall our own baptismal calling as disciples of the Lord, we unite our prayers with the prayers of all believers throughout the world in praying for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, we ask: Lord send workers to your vineyard.

Invitation to Sorrow:

Let us begin our Eucharist by reflecting upon the Love and mercy of God, and ask Him to heal us and give us strength;

Lord Jesus, you are mighty God and prince of peace: **Lord have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you have given us the consolation of the truth: **Christ have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd leading us to everlasting life: **Lord have mercy.**

Readings:

First Reading Acts 2:36-41

The only response to the God who calls is repentance and baptism in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 23 and John 10:2-10.

The Lord is truly the Good Shepherd who leads his people to life.

Second Reading: 1Peter 2: 20-25

Christ left us the greatest example which we must all follow: He trusted the Father in all things.

Thought for a Homily

1. Following God's call brings joy and fulfilment in life.

One of the most basic desires of a parent's heart is to want their children to have a happy life. That's how the human heart works. We see that clearly with you biological parents: the great lengths fathers and mothers are willing to go so their children can have a happy life. We see it most clearly with God the Father. He is willing to sacrifice all so that his children can find happiness. The most basic desire in a parent's heart is for his or her children to have a happy life.

According to the numbers, according to surveys, even secular ones, it would be very difficult to find a happier life being reported than the priesthood. According to surveys, those people who report being most happy and fulfilled in their life and work are clergy. According to a survey performed by Fr. Stephen Rosetti, the Director of St. Luke's Institute in the states, he found that

92% of priests surveyed stated that they were fulfilled ministering as a priest. Clearly, sharing in Christ's priesthood is a satisfying and happy life.

Considering this, I ask, "Are we parents who desire our children to have a happy life open to believing that being a priest or sister or monk could be the very life by which God leads our child to happiness?" (*It would be a good opportunity as a priest to share with your people the sense of fulfilment you feel in your ministry*)

2. Give God Permission

I wish to speak briefly to all of the young single adults here at Mass today. If God has chosen you to be a priest or sister, this is the first thing he will do: He will make you think about it! One of the very first things he will do, and must do, in order for you to discover your vocation, is to put the thought into your mind. God can not call anyone to any vocation without making that person first think about it. So, if you have been chosen to be a priest or sister, he will make you think about it, even if you do not want to. And those thoughts will not go away easily.

If that is happening, do not get afraid. He is simply trying to give you a great gift. All you need to do is simply tell Christ that you give him permission; simply say again and again in your heart, "Jesus, I give you permission." Or "Jesus, I want whatever you want." Or "Jesus, I trust in you."

There is a story of the late John Cardinal O'Connor and Mother Teresa. Shortly after he was named the Archbishop of New York, he asked Mother Teresa for advice. He asked Mother Teresa what advice she would have for him as he

begins his work as the Archbishop of New York. She said only three words, "Give God permission." Young people, I give you the same advice: Give God permission. To quote Pope Benedict, "I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! **He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything.** When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life."

Eve did her own will, what she wanted, and ended up afraid and confused, the Virgin Mary gave God permission, gave up her plans – May it be done to me according to your word - and she was filled with joy, as she said, "My spirit rejoices in God my saviour." Young people, God only wants what is good for you, do not be afraid to say "yes" to him.

3. Trust the voice of the Lord.

Since the beginning of time God has been speaking to the human heart. His message is always one of hope and joy. It can also be a challenging voice, calling us to out of our comfort zone to challenge and inspire. God speaks clearly to the human heart. However His voice can often be muffled or distorted by the cares and noise of this world. This is where consistent prayer, silence in the presence of the Lord is vital for anyone trying to discern God's purpose for their life. Samuel lay down in prayer, Jeremiah scrutinised in prayer, Mary pondered in prayer, Christ united himself with the Father in prayer. On this vocation Sunday no matter where we are called by God in life the time we give to God in prayer will be the most vital time given to God. Prayer unlocks the heart, prayer gives God permission, prayer sustains the pilgrim on their journey to holiness and unity with God. 'Speak Lord your servant is listening!'

Introduction; (Share collection replaced by special collection for the support of our Seminarians)

Today we celebrate Priesthood Sunday– a special day in our diocese when we reflect on call to serve the Lord and the people of God through the ministry of priest.

The priest today is called to be ‘spiritual father’ in the greatest sense for his people. For a priest today his primary concern is not for himself but for the spiritual needs of the people to whom the Lord entrusts him.

We pray today for priests throughout the world, that they may truly reflect in their lives the love of God. We pray for our seminarians who journey towards priesthood that they may be sustained in their journey. We pray for vocations to the priesthood, that generations yet to come may experience the peace and joy of the Sacramental life of the Church.

Invitation to Sorrow:

Let us begin our Eucharist by reflecting upon the Love and mercy of God, and ask Him to heal us and give us strength;

Lord Jesus, You come in Word and Sacrament to strengthen us in holiness. **Lord have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You bring pardon and peace to the sinner. **Christ have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You bring light to those in darkness. **Lord have mercy.**

Readings:

First Reading Acts 6:1-7

Seven were chosen to serve while the disciple preached the Word.

Psalm 33

A Hymn of praise of God for His steadfast love.

1Peter 2:4-9.

We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart.

tion and sense of mission about them that made a big impression on me.

I suppose you could say that a certain seed was planted by that early experience, even though it would be several years before the flowering of a vocation. Today as I look back on 25 years spent as a priest myself I am grateful that my experience of priests when I was growing up was so positive. Despite all the negative experiences of recent years and the shame and scandal of the abuse crisis, I am glad to say that I still retain the enthusiasm and sense of purpose that first attracted me to this way of life. And like my perception of the priests of my childhood I find great happiness and fulfilment in being a priest. I think it is important to say that. There are many who think that the life of a priest is one of loneliness and isolation, and while that may be a reality for some, I am convinced that a majority of priests are basically happy. But maybe we could do a better job of letting people see that. True, we all have suffered the shame and loss of reputation brought on by the scandals and we are faced with an ever-increasing workload with no immediate sign of an increase in the number of vocations. But there is also much to be positive about: despite all the negativity surrounding the church in recent years there is still a great energy in parish communities and a much greater sense of shared ministry between the ordained and the non-ordained.

There is a sense of timelessness in the words of Jesus in today’s Gospel: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in me.” We have all used this text to console the bereaved at funerals. There is a great power in the assurance of Jesus that he has gone to prepare a

place for us, he who is ‘the way, the truth and the life’. To be able to minister to people in their time of loss and grief is one of the great strengths and privileges of priesthood: we can be a real sign of hope and consolation to people who are mourning. Every generation, no matter how sophisticated or educated, faces the same basic questions about human life and death; every individual must face the pain and tragedy of loss. We have something very precious and valuable to bring, given to us by the grace of ordination. The call to holiness, to be close to Christ, is the key to a fulfilling ministry as a priest. It is a call that needs to be constantly renewed as we are faced with our own human weakness and failings. Today’s Second Reading from St Peter is particularly appropriate for those who share in the ministry of the priesthood: “Set yourselves close to him so that you too, the holy priesthood . . . may be living stones making a spiritual house”.

Five reasons why I am (still) a priest

I am still inspired by the Christ of the Gospels and still enthused by the challenge of helping others to find what I have found.

I find great joy in celebrating the liturgy, especially the Sunday Masses.

Sharing faith with young people through school ministry and sacramental preparation is very fulfilling as well as challenging.

Friendship and support of fellow priests and parishioners is a great source of strength and joy.

‘Being there’ for people in their time of need, knowing that the ministry of the priest is really appreciated and valued.

Fr Donal Roche, Assistant Vocations Director and PP Lucan South.

Thought for a Homily

I grew up in a parish where there were six curates as well as the Parish Priest. Going to Mass on Sunday had a certain unpredictability about it. Who will it be today? Will it be the jovial one who always had a smile and a joke? Will it be the one who bursts into song in mid-sermon? Maybe it would be the very holy and devout parish priest who seemed to be very wise and scholarly; or maybe the shy, young curate who gave very thoughtful but short sermons. Maybe it would be the one we all dreaded, who spoke for at least twenty minutes denouncing the previous night’s Late Late Show and everybody who appeared on it? They were all very different characters but what struck me, even as a child was that they all seemed to get on so well together and that they all seemed to be happy in what they did, even the one who gave the grumpy sermons. Although very different, there was a certain convic-

The Facts	Where the money goes?	Encouraging Vocations
<p>The Special collection on priesthood Sunday is for the formation of students for the priesthood in the diocese of Dublin. This collection which takes place on Sunday 22nd of May— Priesthood Sunday, replaces the usual share collection. It is used exclusively to pay the academic fees of the seminarians, the cost of their accommodation and board in the seminary, and other incidental costs related to formation. It also makes possible the payment of a small monthly allowance to cover other necessary expenses such as a bus-pass. The majority of the students are in their late twenties or thirties, and have given up careers to study for the priesthood for our diocese. It would be unreasonable to expect them to depend on their families.</p> <p>The Diocesan Vocations Centre is funded separately as a diocesan agency, and is</p>	<p>not in receipt of funds from the seminary account.</p> <p>At present we are blessed to have 16 seminarians studying for the priesthood for our diocese. They are spread over all years of formation.</p> <p>They hail from the following places: Mount Merrion, Booterstown, Ballybrack, Marino, Malahide (2 seminarians), Cabinteely, Rathcoole, Rathmines, Chapelizod, Bayside (2 Seminarians), Co.Galway (2 Seminarians), and Whitehall.</p> <p>All our seminarians are either studying in St Patricks Seminary, Maynooth or on pastoral placement in Dublin parishes.</p> <p>Two of our seminarians are undertaking the Parish Pastoral Workers course in Mater Dei.</p> <p>It takes huge courage today to say 'Yes' to a vocation to priesthood so please keep our seminarians in your prayers.</p>	<p>As a diocese we need to re-double our efforts to promote vocations to the priesthood. Keeping the following in mind is important in this task:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All priests are vocations directors: All are entrusted with the responsibility to call new vocations into the Church. This is done through sermons, prayers for vocation, a priest sharing his own vocation story, and most importantly: Identifying those whom he feels may have a vocation to priesthood and at an appropriate time inviting them to contemplate a vocation to priesthood. Christ calls others through the words of the priest. 2. Creating a 'priestly' vocations culture in your parish. Encouraging 'Vocation' in a general sense should be done every Sunday. Vocations and Priesthood Sunday are only two Sundays in which we explicitly refer and encourage 'priestly' vocations. However we are not limited to those two as including a prayer of the faithful for vocations, holding a holy hour for vocations, etc can be done throughout the year. 3. Create a 'vocations space' in your church. 4. Put promotion of 'priestly vocations' on the agenda of your Parish Pastoral Council. 5. Print the contact details for the vocations director every Sunday in your parish Newsletter. Also Invite the Vocations director to your parish to speak at Sunday Mass or Youth groups, altar servers groups etc. 6. Most importantly: Pray for vocations!

Intentions for Vocations awareness week

Monday 16th of May 2011:
For Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI.

Tuesday 17th of May 2011:
For a deeper awareness of our vocation to holiness and to live lives of love and service.

Wednesday 18th May 2011;
That our young people may make wise decisions in choosing their vocation in life

Thursday 19th of May 2011;
That families may be united in their commitment to love and support each other.

Friday 20th of May 2011;
For an increase in vocations to priesthood and religious life in the Diocese of Dublin.

Saturday 21st May 2011;
For Priests, religious and all in formation for priesthood and religious life.

Vocations Director Contact details:

Fr Eamonn Bourke can be contact through www.priest.ie, vocations@dublindiocese.ie or **0868346071**. Fr Eamonn will meet with anyone who feels they are being called by God to priesthood. All contact is in strict confidence and does not put the contacting person under any obligation. Fr Eamonn undertakes intensive discernment with those who are seriously contemplating a vocation to priesthood. The Emmaus Vocation Journey, a once a month meeting with those who are contemplating a vocation starts each October and runs to the following March. This course provides an opportunity to bring together those thinking about a vocation so as to give peer support. All services of the Priestly Vocations Office are provided free of charge.