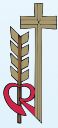


Vocations and Prayer

 The Catholic Magazine on Vocation Ministry
#108 Vol. XXVI No. 2



**The Journey of the Rogationist Fathers
to the Land of Freedom**



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Printing and Design

Challenge Graphics, North Hills, CA
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Subscription Rates

Single Copy \$5.00
One-year subscription \$18.00
Two-year subscription \$30.00
International:
One-year subscription \$25.00
Two-year subscription \$44.00

Vocations and Prayer is published quarterly by the Rogationist Fathers, U.S.A., in cooperation with:

**ROGATE ERGO/
MONDO VOC**

Via dei Rogazionisti, 8
00182 Rome, ITALY

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02926 Sao Paulo - S.P. BRAZIL

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Cover photo:
Composition by Leonell Romero

Like a Mustard Seed

The Power of the Charism of a Religious Institute

By Fr. ANTONIO FIORENZA, RCJ

“The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed” (Mt 13:31).

Whenever I think about the charism of consecrated life in the Church and the charisms of every single religious family, I remember the parable of the mustard seed. In fact, it reveals the amazing contrast between the small beginnings of the kingdom and its marvelous expansion. Is it not similar to the charism of the several religious families? If we look at their story, we can see how the beginnings are marked by men and women often unknown in the public sphere, who are simple people captivated by a word of the Gospel or an episode of Jesus’ life and subsequently dedicate themselves to the service of their neighbor and attract other men and women to share their mission. The beginnings are always difficult, but then every religious family “becomes a large bush, and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches” (Mt 13, 32).

The Benedictines, the Franciscans, the Jesuits, the Salesians, the Sisters of Mother Teresa... How many people, men and women, of every race and culture come, dwell, and live among the branches of the trees of the innumerable religious families, ancient and modern, that mark the history and life of the Church?

This pattern is exactly what we have seen in the religious families of the Rogationist Fathers and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. Their founder, Fr. Hannibal Mary Di Francia (Messina, Italy, 1851-1927), felt the same compassion and concern as Jesus for the “exhausted and abandoned crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9: 36). As a result, he used every means to spread the “Rogate,” the command of Jesus to pray to the Lord of the harvest to obtain “good workers” for the evangelization and service of the poor.

His spirituality attracted several women and men to commit themselves to the same mission. This same spirituality led him to found the Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Rogationists of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To them, he entrusted the mission to live and spread the spirit of Jesus’ teaching, which centered on



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prayer for vocations, as well as service to children and the poor.

The two religious congregations founded by Father Hannibal currently work in all continents with their specific ministry of prayer for vocations and charity, in missions, parishes, houses of prayer, centers of spirituality, schools of all levels, colleges, institutes for the disabled, and social centers for the help and evangelization of the poor, especially for youth. They are also present in the US, fostering a vocation culture based on the primacy of prayer and service to the poor.

This year the Rogationist Fathers are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their presence in the United States. After fifty years, they have not become numerically “a large bush,” but have maintained their charism, the prayer for vocations sustained by charitable works, like the yeast that ferments the pastoral care of vocations and always maintains the power of a “mustard seed.” ■



FR. ANTONIO FIORENZA, RCJ

Ordained in 1978. He holds a degree in Spirituality from the Lateran and Gregorian Pontifical Universities in Rome. Presently, he serves as the director of the Rogate Center in Van Nuys, California.

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The Journey of the Rogate to the Land of Freedom

50th Anniversary of the Presence of the Rogationists in the USA



By Fr. JOHN BRUNO, RCJ

Nowadays, when the need for priests is great, many bishops in the U.S.A. would gladly welcome a religious community in their diocese. It was not the case in the past.

A Wondering Aramean Was My Father (Deut. 26, 5)

Fr. Giovangelista (Joseph) Tursi was sent to the U.S.A. in January 1947. His purpose was to raise funds for the Rogationist (Anthonian) Orphanages in great need after World War II and to establish a house to spread their charism: an universal prayer for vocations. Fr. Tursi wandered from New York to Philadelphia, to Miami, and even to Cuba. Although he was successful in raising some money for the orphan children, no Bishop needed the services of the Congregation. At that time, the Church on the east coast of the United States had an abundance of priests and many seminari-

ans to be ordained needed to seek a Bishop willing to accept them in missionary diocese on the West Coast.

In 1950 Fr. Tursi moved to the diocese of Fresno and received many assignments: a priest at the cathedral in Fresno, a hospital chaplain in Merced, a priest resident in Fowler, an ultimately an “assistant” to Msgr. James Bennis in Riverdale for the next ten years. In September 1957, the new Superior General of the Rogationists, Fr. Luca Appi, paid him a visit and received from a bishop the following suggestion: “If you want to establish your Congregation in the U.S.A. send seminarians, who will study here, learn the language, inculturate themselves, and when ordained they will certainly receive a place to call their own.” Fr. Appi liked the idea, but nothing was done in concrete. Fr. Tursi was still a wandering presence.

Reaching the Promised Land

In 1966 the new superior General, Fr.

Carmelo Drago, decided it was time for Fr. Tursi to come back to Italy and sent Fr. Paul Petruzzellis from Brazil to achieve this purpose. When the news spread that Fr. Tursi was leaving, different priest friends mobilized to convince Bishop Willinger to give a parish to the Rogationists. Fr. Tursi was the confessor of the Bishop and well-respected. The diocese of Monterey-Fresno was about to be divided and Bishop Willinger was retiring. Nonetheless, Bishop assigned the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mendota, California to Fr. Tursi and Fr. Petruzzellis. It was September 1, 1967. The Promised Land was reached. Mendota was a poor parish and within it the mission of Three Rock. This little town was made famous by the Soviet newspaper Pravda, which in an article described it as a shame of the capitalistic system. The place was seen as a sign of Divine Providence, since the Congregation started in Avignone, the poorest quarter in the City of Messina, Italy, described as unfit for human beings. We celebrate 50 years of our official presence in



Rogationist Fathers

the U.S.A., even though the first Rogationist set foot in this country 70 years ago.

Growing in the New Land

Bishop Bennis' suggestion of sending students was accepted. I am one of them, educated and inculturated in the New Land at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo. In 1978 a new parish was assigned to the Rogationists in the Diocese of Fresno in Sanger, where the charism of helping the poor was fully implemented through the Fr. Hannibal House Service Center. In 1987 a procure house was established in Los Angeles where vocation promotion and the spreading of our charism of praying for vocations was our priority. The time to be assigned to a parish in Los Angeles had to wait until 2001. Many religious communities were leaving the direction of parishes and the Archdiocese was ready to accept us to direct St. Elisabeth of Hungary in Van Nuys, and St. Jane Frances in North Hollywood in 2015. We crossed the borders to Guada-

lajara, Mexico in 2004 where a house was canonically erected in Tonalá in 2008. We are now the "Our Lady of Guadalupe Delegation" of the Rogationist Fathers in California and Mexico.

Coming Together as an International Community

The growth of our Delegation was not possible just with local vocations. In the past we were all Italians trying to integrate in the new American and Mexican culture. Nowadays, we have member priests of other Rogationist Provinces such as the Philippines and India. As Fr. William Reiser, SJ wrote in an article on Vocations and Prayer (Oct.-Dec. 2016): "Inculturation and integration create a small dilemma. When cultures meet they also exchange. What emerges is a bit of both, but something is also lost or transformed as cultures interface." This is true in our relationship among members of our delegation and especially in our relationship with the people entrusted to us. Fr. Reiser

suggests growing in humility to appreciate one another and becoming friends. Pope Francis reminds us that we are called to build bridges and not walls. Fr. Reiser adds: "Throughout history religious communities have functioned as laboratories where men and women from different cultural backgrounds and social worlds learned the ways of the Spirit... More than any work or mission they undertake, the colossal bond that unites religious communities is that shared search for God. This bond makes it possible to look beyond the many limitation and shortcomings each of us carries" (Id. Vocations and Prayer).

The Plans of the Lord

As we celebrate 50 years of our presence in the U.S.A., we are grateful to the Lord and beg him to fulfill his plans. We are only instruments to share the gift of the Lord: feel his compassion for the abandoned crowds and beg the Lord of the Harvest to send workers into his harvest (Mt.9, 35-38f). ■

St Hannibal Mary Di Francia

The Apostle of the Unceasing and Universal Prayer for Vocations

By Fr. ANTONIO FIORENZA ET AL.

"The problem of priestly vocations – and even both male and female religious vocations – is the fundamental problem of the Church. It is a test of its spiritual vitality and the condition of such vitality. It is the condition of its mission and of its development." With these words John Paul II, in his homily on May 10, 1981, closed the II International Congress for vocations. This was also the belief that led Saint Hannibal M. Di Francia, Founder of the Rogationist Fathers and Daughters of Divine zeal (1851-1927) to spend his whole life for the cause of vocations. The lack of good vocations was his agony, their promotion his passion, and the propagation of the prayer to obtain them his obsession.

He wrote: "Imagine for a moment that the Priesthood, like the setting sun, were turned off. Would not the whole world be in darkness? Where would be the worship of God, the sacraments, the Most Holy Eucharist, the Word of God, Faith, Charity? All would perish. Imagine for a moment the opposite, i.e. that the Earth were full of elected Ministers of God, numerous priests and saints; so numerous that they would correspond to one for every hundred inhabitants of the globe, so Holy that they would equal the ancient Apostles: wouldn't this be the sudden salvation and happiness of all souls, no one excepted? Inscrutable judgments of God! The Almighty wanted to connect the abundance of worthy Workers of the mystical harvest to the prayer for obtaining it! He gave it as a command to the Apostles and the disciples, and he repeated several times saying: *Messis multa quidem Operarii autem pauci: rogate ergo Dominum messis ut mittat Operarios in Messem suam*" (The harvest is great, but the labourers are few: pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, to send out workers in his harvest).



An overwhelming inspiration

Let us see when and how Hannibal Di Francia "discovered" in the Gospel this indication of the Lord. Let's say right away that he was neither a priest nor a cleric; indeed, he did not even know he had the vocation. We believe that in order to fully understand his importance it is necessary to get into the dynamism of his existence.

Born in Messina in 1851, the young

Hannibal lived directly those moments when united Italy was born, at the price of so much blood and conflict. Garibaldi with his thousand red shirts conquered Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples, when the College San Nicolò, where he studied, was closed. With his family he had to move to Naples in his grandmother's house. It seemed that the world was turning upside down. He heard of priests and friars throw away their cassocks, embrace the rifle and participate in revolutionary

activities. After the formation of the new Kingdom of Italy it was decided to send him to the Academy of the Nunziatella to launch him on a military career, but, fortunately, it was understood that he wasn't inclined for it.

The young man Di Francia was overwhelmed, like all adolescents of any era, with many thoughts. When he went to church – he preferred the church of the convent of Porto Salvo which was quiet – he was attracted by the silence, but then he was assailed by discouragement: he saw the statue of one Saint and then another. He admired the frescos and felt the stories of those heroes, and he said to himself: 'I can never be a Saint, for holiness is too transcendent.' Meanwhile, churches and convents became empty and faith was persecuted to some extent. Certainly, a reason there was: often interests and politics had made the clergy not exemplary. A renewal was, therefore, necessary with holy priests who would revive and once again put the greatness of the faith forward, but they had to be saints.

What was the means? His confessor had taught him to pray, so he began to think that only through prayer one could achieve the goal of obtaining vocations. In this phase of interior work was the particular moment that marked his life. One day while in the Church of St. John of Malta in Messina "he had in mind this dominant thought – it is Fr. Hannibal himself who narrates it in third person – i.e. to carry on the greater good in the Holy Church, to save many souls, to extend the Kingdom of God on Earth, no half was as certain as the growth of elect ministers of God (...) and so the excellent and fruitful prayer of choice would be to ask insistently to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus to send on earth holy men and elect priests (...). This idea seemed to him very clear and indisputable. Later he was surprised and struck upon reading in the Holy Gospel those divine Words: 'the harvest is great, but the labourers are few: pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, to send out workers in his harvest.'

He was surprised that none of the preachers known until then, none of the

many devotional manuals ever examined, ever beckoned to what Jesus had ascertained, indicating clearly its solution. This intuition-inspiration, "at the beginning of his spiritual life" when the call to the priesthood was not yet mature in him, was considered "as an internal addressed to him, to make himself its Apostle and propagator," wrote his biographer and successor, Fr. Francesco Vitale.

Zeal or fixation?

Father Hannibal was fully aware of his eagerness to draw the attention of the whole Christian world on this subject, to the point that, with his usual bit of irony, he had to write in his Funeral speech: "For the Rogate let us not say anything: for it he devoted himself either for zeal or fixation, or both." In his turn, one of the censors theologians of his writings had pointed out: "even here we must take his too much modesty with a grain of salt: it wasn't for fixation, it was for zeal. He was so affected by the need, for the Church, to have many worthy workers and by the effectiveness of the evangelical remedy in order to implore them, that, to realize it, he moved, one may well say, heaven and earth. That argument was the reason of his life, the dominant theme of his writings, the characteristic of his work. To this end he procured the blessing and membership and spiritual collaboration of the Prelates of the Holy Church (Supreme Pontiffs, Cardinals, Bishops, Superiors General of Orders and Religious Congregations)."

The great merit of Hannibal Di Francia was to have "discovered" and have worked hard all his life to spread this request-command of the Lord. The World Day of Prayer for Vocations, established by Paul VI in 1964, certainly a result of Vatican Council II, can be considered as the realization of the dream of Hannibal Mary Di Francia. He had fought for the rest of his life that prayer to the Lord of the Harvest would become a cry of the whole church. Years after his death, John Paul II acknowledged that "from the providential intuition of Di Francia arose in the church a large movement of prayer for vocations." The same Pontiff enrolled him first in the register of the Blessed calling him "au-

thentic forerunner and zealous master of modern vocation ministry," then canonizing him he gave him the well-deserved title of "distinguished apostle of prayer for vocations," with which he is entered in the Proper of the Mass.

Following his example

"One sows and another reaps" (Jn 4, 37), it is written: Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia, faithfully following the Lord's mandate, has sown, leaving the Lord of the harvest to decide when and how the seed should give its fruit. And he gave it when the "right" times are ripe in the light of God.

The whole work of Di Francia could be summed up in the words that John Paul II pronounced on the day in which he canonized him (May 16, 2004): "If one loves me, he will keep my word' (Jn 14, 23). In these evangelical words we see outlined the profile of Hannibal Mary Di Francia [...]; He sensed the urgency to realize the evangelical command 'Rogate ergo... Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.'" (Mt 9, 38) To the Rogationist Fathers and the Daughters of Divine Zeal he left the task to work with all forces so that the prayer for vocations would be "unceasing and universal."

This same invitation Fr. Hannibal Mary Di Francia addresses to the young people of our time, summarizing it in his habitual exhortation: 'Fall in love with Jesus Christ.' From this providential intuition arose in the church a large movement of prayer for vocations." From this large movement was born the great "Family of the Rogate" which includes member diocesan priests, the Rogationist Missionaries (Association for consecrated laywomen), the Union of Prayer for Vocations and the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations, different International lay Associations (Rog Families, L.A.V.R., E.R.A, Former Students) and numerous other associations and local groups.

Thus Fr. Hannibal became the "eminent apostle of the prayer for vocations," an example to those who pray to obtain vocations in the Church. ■

The Rogationists in the U.S.A. and Mexico Today

Serving the Church through Prayer for Vocations and Reaching out to the Poor



St. Elisabeth Church
Van Nuys, California



St. Jane Frances De Chantal Church
North Hollywood, California



St. Mary Church
Sanger, California



Rogationist Seminary
Guadalajara, Mexico

50th Anniversary of the Rogationist Fathers' Presence in the U.S.A.

By EDITORIAL STAFF

The Rogationist Fathers are celebrating their 50th anniversary of continuous work serving the Catholic Church in the United States and promoting vocations in the Church of North America this year. Their journey has been very challenging at times, but with God's providence and inspired by St. Hannibal M. Di Francia's love for vocations and work for the poor, the Rogationists' presence is felt in the communities of Van Nuys, North Hollywood, and Sanger in California, and Tonalá, Mexico.

The Rogationist Charism

Jesus' words found in the Gospels of Mathew and Luke (Mt 9,35-3; Lc 10, 1-2) are the foundation of the Rogationist charism: "The harvest is great, but the labourers are few: pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, to send out workers in his harvest." The whole life and mission of the Rogationists is to respond to this deepest desire of Jesus for good workers in his vineyard. In unison with prayer, there is charity, which is the expression of the good workers. The prayer for vocations cannot be fulfilled unless it is supported by charitable works. The Rogationist Fathers came to this blessed land of freedom to share the charism of the "Rogate" (pray) by fostering a vocation culture through prayer and by reaching out to the poor.

The Rogate Center, Van Nuys, California

Through the Rogate Center's work, the Rogationists have reached thousands of Catholics in the U.S. and around the world. It has two distinct but complimentary offices: The St. Hannibal Center for Vocations, which takes care of the vocational dimension of the Rogationists' charism, and the St. Anthony Charity Center, which takes care of the charitable dimension of the Rogationists in the U.S.A.

St. Hannibal Center for Vocations

Rogationist Publications promotes the

culture of prayer for vocations by publishing Vocations and Prayer magazine and a diverse array of vocations related material. Vocations and Prayer, a quarterly publication on vocations, has been in circulation for over 27 years and features articles from renowned leaders in the field of vocations. Rogationist Publications has printed many editions of successful publications such as "The Way of the Cross for Vocations," "The Holy Rosary for Vocations and Eucharistic Adoration," "Speak, Lord, Your Servant is Listening," and "Vocations Anonymous," among others.

The St. Anthony Charity Center

The activities of the St. Anthony Charity Center support the Rogationists' mission and coordinate the assistance and evangelization of the poor in North America and Mexico. Through the generosity of countless donors and the committed participation of volunteers, the St. Anthony Charity Center aims to raise funds to advance the Rogationists' mission to help the poor.

St. Elisabeth of Hungary Church and School, Van Nuys, California

The Rogationists Fathers took under their direction the parish and school community of St. Elisabeth Church in Van Nuys, California in 2001. Serving over 3,000 registered parish families, the Rogationists' apostolate encompasses many facets: to minister the parish, to serve and evangelize the poor, to educate children, and to foster a culture of vocations. At St. Elisabeth Church, the Rogationist Fathers work at the S.E.R.V. Center where they serve 45 families per week by providing assistance and food.

St. Mary's Parish and the Rogationists' Seminary, Sanger, California

The community of St. Mary's Parish in Sanger welcomed the Rogationist Fathers in 1978 and became a thriving and dynamic parish under their direction. From 1978 until the present, there has

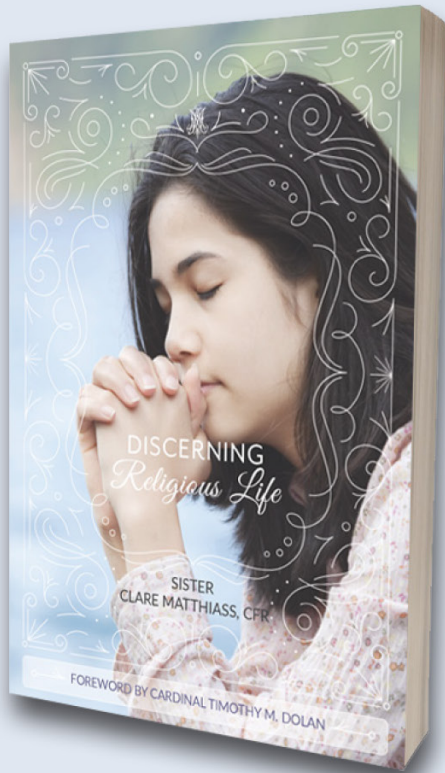
been a Rogationist pastor guiding its activities and always willing to work with the community. With the generous donation of individuals and organizations from California Central Valley and the Rogationists' fundraising efforts, the Rogationists built a new church in 1999. In addition to the Rogationists' activities to promote vocations such as retreats and seminary experiences, the Rogationists' apostolate is latent through their work at the Fr. Hannibal House. A thrift store and social services center, the Fr. Hannibal House serves 50 families per week by helping them with food and clothing.

St. Jane de Chantal Parish and School, North Hollywood, California

On July 1, 2015, the Rogationists took over the leadership of St. Jane de Chantal Parish and School. They now serve over 1,633 registered families through their parish apostolate and vocations promotion ministry. At St. Jane, the Rogationists manage "El Pan de Vida" ministry that serves 80 families in need by providing food twice a month.

Seminario de Tonalá, Guadalajara, México

The Rogationists' Seminary in Tonalá, Guadalajara is a vibrant and young community of priests and seminarians. Founded in 2008, this newly built seminary welcomes young seminarians, teenagers, and families from the impoverished neighborhood of Tonalá. The Rogationists Fathers in Tonalá collaborate with many parishes, especially with the parishes of Guadalupe and Divino Rostro, and the Daughters of Divine Zeal in the promotion of vocations. In addition, the Fathers organize community building events and missionary trips to Oaxaca. To empower the neighborhood community, the Rogationist Fathers offer sewing workshops, and guitar and English lessons. With the support of our generous donors, the Rogationists Fathers oversee an Adoption-at-a-Distance program in favor of the poorest children in the community. ■



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Pastors, Teachers, and Youth Ministers are a Key to Discerning and Promoting Vocations

A Conversation with Most Rev. Thomas Tobin, Bishop of the Diocese of Rhode Island

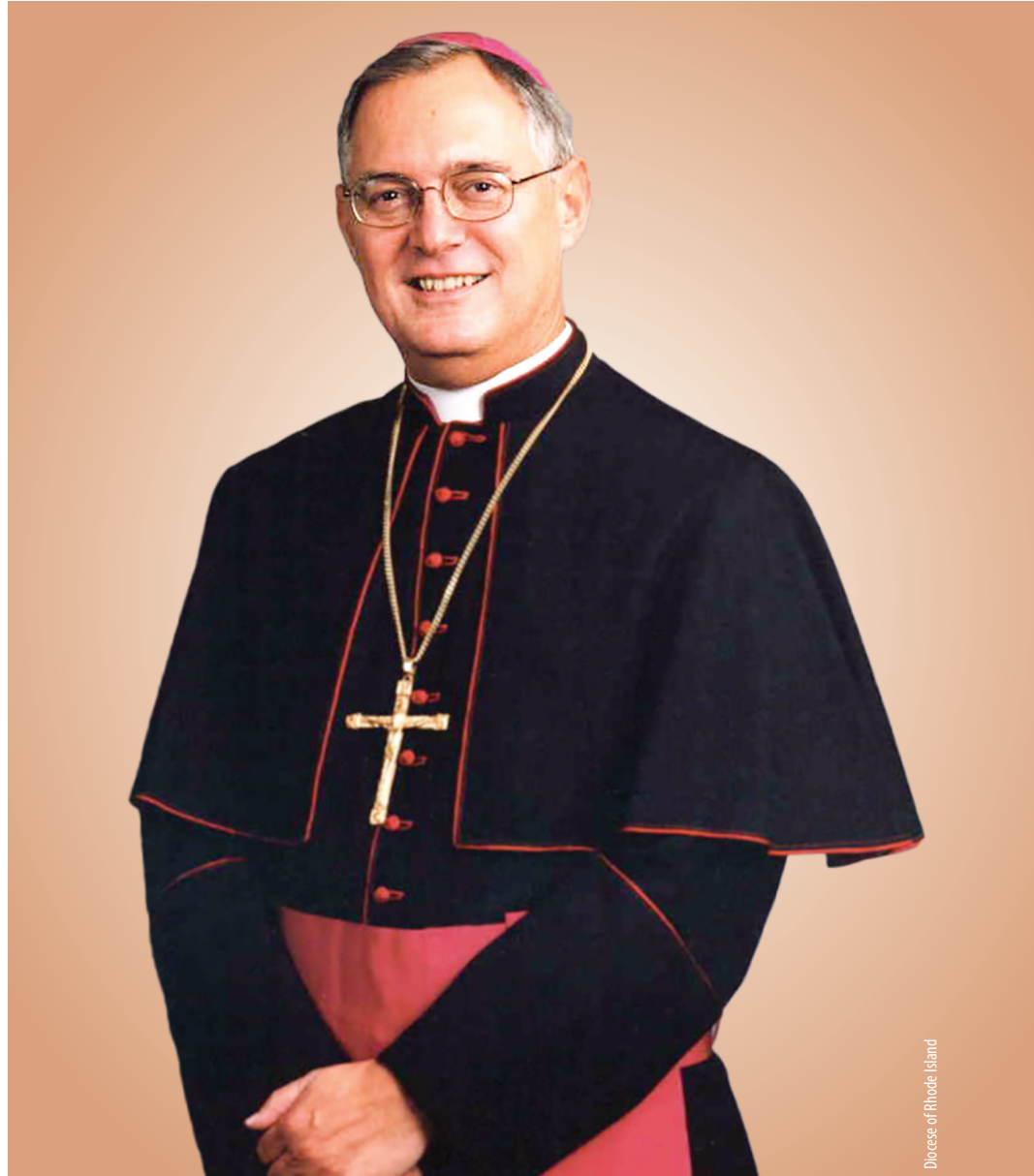
By PAMELA SELBERT

Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Thomas Joseph Tobin was ordained a priest in July 1973. Born twenty-five years earlier, he began his seminary studies at Saint Mark Seminary High School in Erie, PA, continued at Gannon University in Erie, then St. Francis University in Loretto, PA, from which he graduated in 1969. He continued seminary formation in Rome at the Pontifical North American College studying at the Pontifical Gregorian University, then pursued graduate work at Rome's Pontifical Liturgical Institute of San Anselmo.

After his ordination, Bishop Tobin served as assistant pastor at several parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and was named administrative secretary to the former Bishop of Pittsburgh. Later Vicar General and General Secretary, he was named Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh by Pope John Paul II in November 1992, and ordained to the Episcopacy the following month. In March 2005 Pope John Paul II named Bishop Tobin the eighth Bishop of Providence, Rhode Island. He was installed in the office in May that year at the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul.

The Diocese of Providence, which “officially” celebrates its 145th anniversary this year, was originally part of the Diocese of Boston, created in 1808 to encompass all of New England. By the 1840’s, due to population growth, the diocese was divided, with the new seat located in Hartford, Connecticut. Financial issues soon prompted a transfer of the seat to Providence, a move supported by American bishops and sanctioned by Pope Pius IX, although the name, Hartford, was retained.

Just less than three decades later, another division was made. The bishop re-



Diocese of Rhode Island

turned to Hartford, and in 1872, a bull of Pope Pius IX erected the new Diocese of Providence, which would span all of Rhode Island plus four counties in Massachusetts (in 1904 the four counties became the Diocese of Fall River). The Diocese of Providence, suffragan to the Archdiocese of Hartford (an archdiocese since 1953), now comprises 141 parishes,

with 180 churches, seven missions and 679,000 registered Catholics.

The diocese’s current head, Bishop Tobin, is perhaps best known for his solid pro-life stance, for which he has received honors that include Defender of the Faith Award from Legatus, the Proudly Pro-Life Award from the National Right to Life

Committee, and the Cardinal von Galen Award from Human Life International. He has extended the charitable outreach of the diocese with initiatives such as “Keep the Heat On” heating assistance program, Emmanuel House emergency shelter for the homeless, by providing bus passes for those in need of transportation services, and as an advocate for the refugee and immigrant community in Rhode Island.

The bishop received an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, St. Francis University. He has served on the board of trustees for Salve Regina University in Newport, RI, Catholic University in Washington, DC, and currently for Providence College. He has published two books and writes a popular and award-winning bi-weekly column “Without a Doubt” in the diocesan newspaper, THE RHODE ISLAND CATHOLIC.

Bishop Tobin recently answered the following questions about vocations in his diocese:

Is there an increased interest in vocations (to the priesthood or religious orders) in your diocese?

I hope so. As diocesan bishop it has been one of my top priorities to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life, especially for the priesthood in our diocese. Yet, frankly, it has been very slow going. For many reasons, it has become really difficult for a young man to hear God’s voice, to understand that the Lord might actually be calling him to this wonderful way of life, and to respond with courage and trust.

Nonetheless, there are hopeful signs and I think we are making some progress. This year we have five new seminarians entering our program, the most we have had for a long time. I hope, and I expect, that it’s a beginning of a new wave of vocations in the Diocese of Providence.

If yes (an increased interest), why do you think this is?

First, we have been working very hard to promote vocations in the diocese and

I think our perseverance has started to pay dividends. The seeds we have planted for several years are just now beginning to bear fruit. Secondly, I think our people are beginning to understand the urgent need we have for priestly vocations; they’re talking about it and praying more about it. And, finally, I think this year has been particularly successful because in the Diocese of Providence we have committed this year to special devotion to our Blessed Mother, a “Year with Mary our Mother,” I’ve named it. I believe that Mary is really close to us, is hearing our prayers, and is assisting us.

What do you do to encourage a person’s interest in pursuing a religious vocation?

“The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community”

We have done everything we can to promote vocations. We have two fine priests especially dedicated to recruiting and nourishing vocations; they regularly visit our parishes and schools to talk about the priesthood. We have retreats and programs of discernment. We have had Eucharistic Holy Hours across the diocese. We have an active Serra Club. And we use every form of media to reach out to the diocese, especially to young people, to talk about vocations, and to encourage young men to “come and see.” As a diocesan church we have certainly done our part. Now, it’s God’s turn to help us!

How do pastors and youth ministers help a person discern God’s call?

I think that pastors, teachers and youth ministers are key to discerning and promoting vocations to the priesthood. As I’ve often said publicly, although the diocese can help promote vocations, I don’t know of anyone who has become a priest because of the bishop! Almost every priest, though, can point to another priest who influenced him, inspired him. Pastors, teachers and youth ministers are on the front lines; they know their young people, they work with them every day, and they can discern their spiritual inclinations, their abilities and talents.

How does your Office of Vocations work? What sort of spiritual direction do you offer?

As noted above, our Vocation Office is staffed by two priests whose primary ministry is to recruit, encourage and support vocations -- before and after a man enters the seminary. These two priests are also chaplains in two of our Catholic high schools. The Vocation Office provides discernment retreats, programs and resources to promote vocations. Very importantly, our vocation directors spend a lot of time individually with potential candidates, getting to know them, their backgrounds and experiences, as well as their families. They accompany potential candidates and seminarians at every step along the path of discernment.

What is the role of parents and other family members in helping a young person discern a call, and should parents (or others) actively encourage a vocation?

As St. John Paul II reminded us so clearly in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, “The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community.” It is obvious, then, that parents and other family members have a key role to play in encouraging their sons to think about the priesthood as a viable and valuable way of life. In living out the grace of their own vocation in holy matrimony, by forming a loving home, and by providing a strong foundation of faith, parents create an atmosphere in which a young man is predisposed to hear God’s voice and respond with courage, faith and trust. In short, parents are the first vocation directors. As St. John Paul explained in the document cited

above, "The family is the domestic church which has always offered favorable conditions for the birth of vocations."

Unfortunately, that idyllic picture is not always what we experience today. So many families are fractured. So many parents are not practicing the faith. And a few parents for a variety of secular motives, actually discourage, even forbid, their sons from thinking about entering the seminary. It takes a great deal of courage for a young man, especially if he is relatively young, just out of high school for example, to enter the seminary if his parents oppose him.

Do you think Pope Francis is influencing interest in vocations?

"Is Pope Francis influencing interest in vocations?" Quite honestly, I haven't witnessed a "Francis effect" on vocations yet. As I mentioned above, no one becomes a priest because of the bishop, and similarly, I don't think many make a serious life-changing choice to enter the seminary because of the pope either.

Having said that, however, I think in the long run our Holy Father's persona and ministry will have positive impact on the relevance of the Church in the world today and, accordingly, will create an environment that is conducive to priestly vocations. With the Pope's emphasis on the "Joy of the Gospel," with his desire to return to the basics of the Christian faith, with his commitment to serving the poor and accompanying people in their journey, I believe that our Holy Father is inspiring the Church to be active and alive, is helping the Church to be relevant to our age, and if that happens, it will certainly attract young people to consider serving Jesus and His Church in the priesthood and consecrated life. ■



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Is a freelance writer who lives just outside St. Louis. Over the past 30 years, Pamela has had nearly three thousand articles published in more than 75 newspapers and magazines.



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The Sacraments of Penance, Confirmation and Eucharist

A Fountain for Vocational Discernment

By Fr. MARCO DURAZO

In the Letter to Philemon, we find St. Paul saying “I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me” (Phil 4:13). This phrase teaches us that the fulfillment of happiness requires an effort to conform all the dimensions of human life to the theological and moral virtues, making them become means of union with Christ. This is not generated by the human being nor can it be sustained with human effort alone. Therefore, discernment to religious or priestly life requires the principal means, sacramental and non-sacramental, through which it is possible for any Christian person to pursue happiness.

According to the sacramental character of the economy of salvation, the initial gift of the Christian life and vocation is received *ex opere operato* with baptism and confirmation. These two sacraments, along with holy orders, can only be received once in a person’s life. Marriage and the anointing of the sick, even if they sometimes can be received more than once (if the first spouse dies or when the Christian finds himself in the peril of death again), are ordained toward completely special effects; while the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist are the means of sanctification *par excellence*.

The Sacrament of Confirmation and the Sacrament of Holy Orders

The sacrament of confirmation in conjunction with the sacrament of baptism is a gift by which we are incorporated more profoundly into one Body of the Church and thus, into the life in Christ. What this means is that the grace of divine filiation received in baptism is only a beginning, the seed of a new life animated by an intrinsic dynamism toward development and growth until attainment of “mature



Photo by Josh Applegate

Say Yes with Mary

1. INTRODUCTION

Brothers and sisters, this holy hour of Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations is a time for us to come together before our Lord Jesus who is truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, to ask him to bless his Church with many holy vocations. We join together in prayer at this time with our Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, asking her to intercede for us. We pray in a special way for more vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life and that those whom the Lord is calling will have the courage to respond generously, especially among our families and friends.

2. EXPOSITION

Another eucharistic hymn may be sung

O saving Victim, open wide the gate of heaven to us below.
Our foes press on from every side;
your aid supply, your strength bestow.
To your great name be endless praise,
immortal Godhead, One in Three;
O grant us endless length of days
in our true native land to be. Amen.

3. ADORATION

V. O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine,

R. All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.

Lord Jesus Christ, who in the Blessed Sacrament is present in the midst of this praying community gathered in your name. We glorify you, O Lord, as we contemplate you with love and we offer our lives in following you. We thank you for not leaving us to our fate in the midst of this merciless and heartless world. You accompany us always as we move forward. You lift us up when we fall. You carry us when our strength fails us.

(Please repeat after me)

- Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ!

- Glory and praise be to you for ever.

Lord Jesus Christ, we ask you to open our minds and hearts to your Spirit. Help all of us to be open and ever discerning of your will for our lives. We pray that all of us may respond generously and lovingly to a state of life that you have planned for us. We pray to have hearts like that of Mary, always freely and joyfully saying "yes" to you in all your plans; that we may say with Mary: "Be it done unto me according to your will."

4. SONG

Other songs may be chosen

Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All, how can I love you as I ought?
And how revere this wondrous gift, so far surpassing hope and thought.

Refrain: Sweet Sacrament, we thee adore,
O make us love thee more and more,
O make us love thee more and more.

Had I but Mary's sinless Heart, to love you with, my dearest King.
O with what bursts of fervent praise, our goodness Jesus, would I sing. Ref.

5. SCRIPTURE READING

Choose one of the readings from daily Mass or from the following list:

Luke 1:26-38 Announcement of the birth of Jesus
Luke 1:39-45 The visitation

Luke 11:27-28

John 19:26-27

Acts 1:13-14

Rev. 11:19a; 12;1-6a, 10ab

True blessedness

Behold, your mother

The first community in Jerusalem

Mary and the Dragon

6. HOMILY/SHARED REFLECTION**7. SILENCE****8. HOLY ROSARY**

Rosary Mysteries with vocation intentions are found at the end of this section.

9. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

O Lord Jesus Christ, help us to know your will for us.

Let your light shine in the depths of our hearts

that we may know what you want us to do with our lives.

Help us believe that you have a special plan for each of us.

Lord, we know we pass through this life only once;

help us decide how you want us to make a difference.

Like our Blessed Mother, give us the wisdom

to hear your voice and the courage to answer your call.

Above all give us peace of mind and heart.

We love you, Lord Jesus. In you we trust.

Fill us with your blessing.

10. BENEDICTION

Down in adoration falling, this great Sacrament we hail.

Over ancient forms of worship newer rites of grace prevail.

Faith will tell us Christ is present when our human senses fail. To

the everlasting Father and the Son who made us free,

And the Spirit, God proceeding from them each eternally,

Be salvation, honor, blessing, might and endless majesty. Amen.

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. Having all sweetness within it.

Let us pray.

Lord our God, in this great sacrament, we come into the

presence of Jesus Christ, your Son, born of the Virgin Mary

and crucified for our salvation. May we who declare our faith

in this fountain of love and mercy drink from it the water of

everlasting life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

11. REPOSITION

Blessed be God. Blessed be his holy name.

Blessed Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed is the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be his Heart filled with love.

Blessed be Jesus, present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the Mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Blessed

be Saint Joseph, chaste and responsible spouse.

Blessed be God in the glory of all his saints.

May the Heart of Jesus in the most blessed Sacrament

be praised, adored and loved with grateful affection

at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world,

even to the end of time. Amen.

Offering our Sufferings for Vocations

1. INTRODUCTION

From Pastores dabo vobis:

The redemptive sacrifice of Christ, which the Church celebrates in mystery, accords a particular value to suffering endured in union with the Lord Jesus. The synod fathers invited us never to forget that “through the offering of sufferings, which are so frequent in human life, the Christian who is ill offers himself as a victim to God, in the image of Christ, who has consecrated himself for us all” (cf. Jn. 17:19) and that “the offering of sufferings for this intention is a great help in fostering vocations.”

2. EXPOSITION *Another Eucharistic hymn may be sung*

O salutaris Hostia quae caeli pandis ostium bella premunt hostilia da robur fer auxilium. Uni Trinoque Domino sit sempiterna gloria qui vitam sine termino nobis donet in patria. Amen.

3. ADORATION

We adore you, Lord and Creator, hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament. We adore you for all the works of your hands, that reveal to us so much wisdom, goodness and mercy.

Optional response: “We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

You have spread so much beauty over the earth and it tells us about your beauty, even though these beautiful things are but a faint reflection of you, incomprehensible Beauty.

Optional response: “We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

And although you have hidden yourself and concealed your beauty, our eyes, enlightened by faith, reach you and our souls recognize its Creator, its Highest Good, and our hearts are completely immersed in prayer of adoration.

Optional response: “We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

4. SONG

Other songs may be chosen

1

O Jesus, we adore you, who in your love divine,
conceal your mighty Godhead in forms of bread and wine.

Refrain

O Sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine,
All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine!

2

O Jesus we adore you, our victim and our priest,
Whose precious blood and body become our sacred feast.

5. SCRIPTURE READING

Choose one of the readings from daily Mass or from the following list:

Job 1:13-22	The first trial and Job’s reaction
Isaiah 53:1-5	By his wounds we were healed
Matthew 8:5-17	The healing of the centurion’s servant and other healings
Mark 10:46-52	The blind Bartimaeus
James 5:7-12	Patience and oaths

6. HOMILY/SHARED REFLECTION

7. SILENCE

A song such as “You are Mine” may also be sung in response to the Scripture reading and reflection.

8. HOLY ROSARY

Rosary Mysteries with vocation intentions are found at the end of this section.

9. PRAYER FOR THE SICK AND FOR VOCATIONS

Dear Lord, hear our prayer for those who are suffering, especially for the sick members of our community. Amid mental and physical suffering may they find consolation in your healing presence. Show your mercy as you close wounds, cure illness, make broken bodies whole and free downcast spirits. May these special people find lasting health and deliverance, and so join us in thanking you for all your gifts. Above all things, help them to love and accept your holy will. Lord Jesus, in giving them this cross of their illness, it was your desire to bring them nearer to your Divine Heart.

Knowing that good and holy vocations are necessary, may they offer their cross, united with yours, for vocations to the holy priesthood and consecrated life, that others may be brought also to know you better, and to love you even more. We ask your blessing for ourselves and for all those who are suffering.

10. BENEDICTION

Tantum ergo sacramentum veneremur cernui
Et antiquum documentum novo cedat ritui
Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui.
Genitori genitoque laus et jubilatio
Salus, honor, virtus quoque sit et benedictio
Procedenti ab utroque compar sit laudatio. Amen.

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. **Having all sweetness within it.**

Let us pray. Lord our God, you have given us the true Bread from Heaven. In the strength of this food may we live always by your life and rise in glory on the last day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

11. REPOSITION

Blessed be God. Blessed be his Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be his most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints.

May the Heart of Jesus in the most blessed Sacrament be praised, adored and loved with grateful affection at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. Amen.

12. CLOSING SONG

God's Gift of Vocations

1. INTRODUCTION

From Pastores dabo vobis:

The Church should daily take up Jesus' persuasive and demanding invitation to "pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt. 9:38). Obedient to Christ's command, the Church first of all makes a humble profession of faith. In praying for vocations, conscious of her urgent need of them for her very life and mission, she acknowledges that they are a gift of God and, as such, must be asked for by a ceaseless and trusting prayer of petition. This prayer, the pivot of all pastoral work for vocations, is required not only of individuals but of entire ecclesial communities.

2. EXPOSITION *Another Eucharistic hymn may be sung*
 God, with hidden majesty, lies in presence here, I, with deep devotion, my true God reverent:
 Whom this outward shape and form secretly contains, Christ in his divinity manhood still retains.
 All my other senses cannot now perceive, But my hearing, taught by faith, always will believe:
 I accept whatever God the Son has said:
 Those who hear the word of God, by the truth are fed.
 Blest reminder of the death suffered for mankind, Sacrament of living bread, health to every mind, Let my soul approach you, live within your grace, Let me taste the perfect joys time shall not efface. Amen.

(Adoro te devote - St. Thomas Aquinas)

3. ADORATION

Oh Most Holy Jesus, who are truly hidden here; grant us to desire ardently, to search prudently, to know truly and to carry out perfectly in praise and glory of your holy Name everything that pleases you.

Optional response: Blessed be Jesus Christ both now and forever.

May we dislike all joy without you, and may we not be ambitious about anything outside of you. Make us, Oh Jesus, obedient without contradiction, poor without going low, chaste without corruption, patient without dissipation, mature without affliction, diligent without inconsistency, fearful of you without desperation, true without bending.

Optional response: Blessed be Jesus Christ both now and forever.

Grant us, Oh Lord our God, understanding to know you, diligence to search for you, wisdom to find you, behavior that you will be pleased with, perseverance that hopefully will wait for you, and hope, that finally will embrace you.

Optional response: Blessed be Jesus Christ both now and forever.

4. SONG

5. SCRIPTURE READING

Choose one of the readings from daily Mass or from the following list:

Jeremiah 29:10-14	God's plans for our welfare
Matthew 10:5-15	The commissioning of the Twelve
2 Cor 8:1-15	Generosity in giving
Ephesians 4:7-16	Diversity of gifts

6. HOMILY/SHARED REFLECTION

7. SILENCE

8. HOLY ROSARY

Rosary Mysteries with vocation intentions are found at the end of this section.

9. PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the model of all perfection. He does not only urge souls to strive toward this lofty goal, but also moves them by the power of his grace to follow him in this exalted path. Let us humbly call upon him, saying:

"Lord of the harvest, listen to our prayer."

- That many may hear and willingly obey his loving inspiration and embrace their vocation to priesthood, diaconate or consecrated religious life, we pray.
- That there may never be lacking devoted men to take his place at the altar proclaiming his Gospel and offering his Body and Blood for the salvation of the world, we pray.
- That there may never be lacking devoted servants to guide the orphan, to console the sick and suffering, and to comfort the old and infirmed, we pray.
- That in classrooms the voices of those who teach may echo his own, pointing out the way to heaven and the duties incumbent on each and all, we pray.
- That in every part of the world choice souls may flourish, souls that by contemplation and penance offer reparation for the sins of humankind and draw down God's infinite mercy and forgiveness, we pray.

Do not take away your presence from us your Church, Lord Jesus. You are our Brother, our Savior, the Son of the living God. Remain with us, O Lord, and grant us your blessing.

10. BENEDICTION *(Eucharistic Hymn)*

Come adore this wondrous presence, bow to Christ the source of grace. Here is kept the ancient promise of God's earthly dwelling place. Sight is blind before God's glory, faith alone may see His face. Glory be to God the Father, praise his coequal Son, Adoration to the Spirit, bond of love, in Godhead one. Blest be God by all creation joyously while ages run. Amen.

V. You have given them bread from heaven,

R. **Having all sweetness within it.**

Let us pray. Lord our God, teach us to cherish in our hearts the paschal mystery of your Son by which you redeemed the world. Watch over the gifts of grace your love has given us and bring them to fulfillment in the glory of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

12. REPOSITION

Blessed be God, Father and Creator. Blessed be Jesus Christ, son of God and our Brother. Blessed be his Word that endures for ever. Blessed be his Body delivered up for us. Blessed be his Blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Comforter. Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May the Heart of Jesus in the most blessed Sacrament be praised, adored and loved with grateful affection at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. Amen.

Holy Hour Supplemental Materials

LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Baptism of the Lord

In our Baptism God has given each of us a unique vocation. Through Mary's intercession, may we live lives of holiness and dedication to God. May we always seek to do his will and be found worthy to hear that he is well pleased with us.

2. The Wedding at Cana

At Cana Jesus blessed marriage as a reflection of his love for the Church. Through Mary's intercession, may those who are called to this vocation of love be found chaste and faithful in their vows, and may those who are called to be the Lord's brides and bridegrooms in vocations of service remain single-hearted in their dedication to him and his Church.

3. The Preaching of the Kingdom

God's Word reaches to the ends of the earth. Through Mary's intercession, may the Lord of the harvest send more ministers of that Word into the world to share the richness of God's life with a world that so desperately needs it.

4. The Transfiguration of the Lord

In Jesus we see the fullness of God's revelation to the world. Through Mary's intercession, may we remain fixed on God's light, and help those whom he calls to the priesthood and consecrated life to reflect that light to the world.

5. The Institution of the Holy Eucharist

In the Eucharist we receive the fullness of God's life and love; we taste heaven and are promised eternal life. Through Mary's intercession, may God send more faithful servants of this mystery into his Church and raise up new priests to renew this Sacrament of love.

GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Resurrection of the Lord

The resurrection of Jesus brought hope of new life to the world. Through Mary's intercession, may those who are called to make disciples of the nations draw their strength and hope from the assurance that God lives and reigns forever.

2. The Ascension of the Lord

Jesus has promised to remain with his Church until the end of time. Through Mary's intercession, may those who are called to continue her Son's work through the sacraments and holy witness be strengthened to carry out God's will for the Church.

3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God descends in tongues of fire on the apostles and they are filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Through Mary's intercession, may the Lord continue to send forth his Spirit to renew in the Church the call to serve him in the priesthood and consecrated life. May that Holy Spirit always be active in our lives.

4. The Assumption of Mary

Mary now enjoys the fullness of God's life in heaven. Through her intercession, may we realize that God has a plan for each of our lives and that our happiness lies in discovering and following that plan.

5. The Coronation of Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth

It is in humility that we discover how truly great our vocations are. Through Mary's intercession, let us ask the Lord to help us to serve him in humble ways so that others may see his light, rather than our own.

The following may be said after each decade:

V. O Mary, Mother of the Church,

R. Pray for us and obtain for us many and holy vocations.

PRAYER BEFORE BENEDICTION

O Jesus, who are about to give your blessing to us, and to all who are assembled here, we humbly ask you that it may impart to each and every one of us the special grace that we need. But more than this, we ask: Let your blessing go far and wide. Let it be felt in the souls of the afflicted who cannot come to receive it in your Presence. Let the weak and the tempted feel its power wherever they may be. Let the poor sinner feel its influence and be drawn to your goodness. Let it cross the seas and animate and comfort your missionaries far from their homes and families, toiling for the salvation of souls so dear to your Sacred Heart. We humbly beg your blessing and may it affect that salutary purpose for which, O Lord, you do so lovingly impart it. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR VOCATIONS

1. O God, who chose the apostles to make disciples of all nations and who by baptism and confirmation have called us to build up your Holy Church, we earnestly implore you to choose among us, your children, many priests and religious who will love you with their whole hearts and will gladly spend their entire lives making you known and loved by all. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

2. Lord Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father and Mary Immaculate, give to our young people the generosity necessary to follow your call and the courage required to overcome all obstacles to their vocation. Give to parents that faith, love and spirit of sacrifice which will inspire them to offer their children to God's service and to rejoice whenever one of their children

is called to the priesthood or religious life. May your example and that of your Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph encourage both young people and parents and let your grace sustain them. Amen.

3. Lord God, we pray for our brothers and sisters who have responded yes to your call to the priesthood, consecrated life and the missions. Renew their strength and enthusiasm from day to day that they may become living Gospels. Merciful and Holy Lord, continue sending new workers into the harvest of your Kingdom! Help those whom you called to follow you in this our time. Contemplating your face, may they respond with joy to the wonderful mission that you have entrusted to them or the sake of your Church and of all the peoples of the earth. Grant this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

4. O Jesus, Lord of the harvest, behold us kneeling before your Eucharistic presence begging you to cast a look of mercy upon our poor world. The harvest indeed is great but the laborers are few. Send therefore, laborers into your harvest.

Repeat anew to modern youth the loving invitation to "Come follow me." Remind them, and their parents, that those who love father and mother more than you are not worthy to be your disciples. Encourage them with the promise that those who leave all for your sake will receive a hundredfold in this world, and in the life to come. Console them with the words so often spoken to the apostles: "Fear not". Place in their hearts a spark of the fire of love which you came to cast upon the earth.

Grant that it may enable them to enlighten the darkness of error and warm the coldness of sin by fulfilling your last command: "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth." Amen.

personhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ.” The followers of Christ “by God’s gift... must hold on to and complete in their lives the holiness they have received.” In other words, we receive our Christian vocation since baptism, but our vocation as single, married, religious or priestly life is a work in progress. It is a dynamic communication between God and His people. Thus, the sacrament of confirmation is no less important than baptism, but rather it works the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit and His gifts, so that any single Christian can render the bond with the Church more perfect.

Anyone who has received the sacrament of confirmation and desires to respond faithfully to God’s call should ask about the gifts God has bestowed on himself or herself. What can I do to build up Christ’s Church? How can I respond to God for such a gift? What do I desire for my life? When we are talking about religious or priestly vocation, it is important to remember what St. Paul says about the Body of Christ and its members, “some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues.” God has already chosen us before the existence of the world to be holy by living fully our personal vocation. He has enriched each of us in every way for all generosity, there is no need to afraid to exercise our vocation.

Around the world there are many wounds and sufferings. People are vulnerable, abandoned, sick and without consolation. Ministerial priesthood is the fruit of responding positively to God for the gifts a man has received through the sacrament of confirmation. The ministerial priest brings Christ’s presence, healing, comfort and strength to God’s people because his priesthood is also the life of a man in Christ, a life as a child of God through the Holy Spirit. Priestly vocation then, in substance, is a gift of God, which however requires the free acceptance and collaboration of the man who is called to participate in the mission of Christ and of the Church.

In order to participate in the apostolic mission of the Christ, the man who feels the call to the priesthood or religious life, in addition to show gratitude to God, he needs to identify himself with Christ by practicing Christian virtues, especially the virtues of humility and service. Our Lord Jesus Christ was a human like us in all things, except sin. Like us, He was born and grew up in a world of suffering and pain. But unlike us, He sought security only in God, not in possessions, nor success, not in human respect and not in exercise of power over others as personal security. To respond positively to God’s call to priestly vocation means to desire to be consecrated in order to act in the person of Christ as shepherd of God’s people. The priest is by nature a leader, but he is



“Jesus waits for us in the Eucharist.”



a leader only because he participates in the pastoring of the True Shepherd and Servant. A priest would be an authentic leader only if he acts after his model of that True Shepherd, whose leadership was never for himself but always for the benefit of others.

In discerning priestly vocation, we need to understand that ministerial priesthood is not about oneself; it is not for oneself. It is not a little gift that God gives me so I personally feel safe in a world of threat. Priesthood is for ministry. It is for others. It is about them and not about me, or it is not “of God.” Humility and service are virtues that mark the life and the ministry of the priest. These virtues mean knowing, accepting and acknowledging who

we are, or who we are not. Therefore, configuration to Christ requires that a person who discerns priestly vocation must “enter profoundly into the contemplation of the person of Jesus Christ, Shepherd and Servant, so that, united to Him, he can make his life a gift of self to others.”

The Sacrament of Penance and Priestly Vocation

Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. Even for those who receive it without having committed a grave sin, the sacrament of Penance produces an increase of grace, builds up the spiritual forces for Christian combat, progressively heals concupiscence and the wounds caused by sins of one’s past life, contributes to the formation of our conscience and is an occasion of effective spiritual direction. It is for these reasons not only a means of healing, but also an important means of sanctification and union with Christ: applying to the Christian the merits of the Redeemer, it is very effective for the moral and spiritual development of the faithful, such that it constitutes a true “personal encounter with the crucified forgiving Christ;” for this reason, the Church insistently recommends the practice of frequent confession.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation has a special place in the life of the Church and in the life of the priest. Both as healer of souls in persona Christi and as sinner, the priest experiences the embrace of the Father who comes to his encounter to restore his human dignity and grace of being God’s child. Furthermore, through the sacrament of penance the priest generates new life. This priestly mission makes evident God’s unlimited love for those who look for him with a contrite and humble heart. Through the ministry of Confession, the priest is called to be a witness of paternal tenderness, no matter how grave the sin might be; he helps

to discern on the evil it has been done; he is an advisor in the formation of conscience and generous during the moment of providing God's forgiveness. The joy of the priesthood derives in great part from receiving and imparting the Sacrament of Reconciliation

It is essential, therefore, that during the discernment of priestly vocation a man places the Sacrament of Reconciliation as integral aspect of his life. How can we experience mercy if we are not in touch with our misery? The love of God the Father needs to be experienced in this world and there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and destroy in a repented heart that looks for reconciliation.

To be generous with God's call to priestly or religious life is not only a "yes" that we say the first time we attend a spiritual retreat. Vocation requires nourishment. This means that in light of the Sacrament of Penance, the mercy and grace of God cancel sin and confer the strength to sin no more. Nonetheless, He asks of the Christian a penitent disposition: "To acknowledge one's sin, indeed-penetrating still more deeply into the consideration of one's own personhood-to recognize oneself as being a sinner, capable of sin and inclined to commit sin, is the essential first step in returning to God." The most employed Greek word in the Bible for this human disposition is that of metanoia or conversion.

Conversion entails a radical reorientation of one's entire life: a return to God with all one's heart, a rupture with sin and repentance for disordered acts that were committed; at the same time, it requires a desire and a resolution to change one's life with the hope of God's mercy and trust in the help of His grace. In fact, the Lord always concedes grace to those who do what they can, though we should not forget that it is also Him who moves human freedom in its dispositions to convert.

The full understanding and acceptance without reservation of the divine call to priestly or religious vocation happens with difficulty when there is no previous experience of sin and conversion. On one

hand, only for those who feel the necessity of being saved, and understand in a sufficiently clear way from what it is that they have need of being liberated, is it possible to have an authentic encounter with Christ Jesus, "who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

The Sacrament of the Eucharist and the Vocation to Holy Orders

Not less important for the Christian life is the sacrament of the Eucharist. The love of Jesus for men manifests itself clearly in his passion and death; in fact, "no one has a greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." It is this same love that leads the Lord to seek to draw close and have more intimate union with us. Such a love led Him to institute a sacrament that would be a memorial of His passion, presence among people and a special kind of nourishment: "At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us." Thus priestly vocation is strictly connected to the Eucharist because in it are contained all of the spiritual goods of the Church and it is placed as the center and root of evangelization and of priestly life. It is the center and summit of the priestly life because to it is directed all that the Church and the faithful must accomplish; and it is also the root and source in that it contains not only grace, but the very Author of grace. Consequently, the life of priestly holiness must be an eminently Eucharistic life.

The Holy Sacrifice, not only a memory of an event, but rather a memorial, a representation –or even better, a re-presentation—of the salvific event of the Cross that renews it and applies it throughout history. The Mass, therefore, in its connection with the redemptive Sacrifice, is

the culminating act of the history of salvation and for each person it is the culminating act of his own salvation and holiness. The effort for holiness is found intimately connected with the participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice; therefore, to discern properly a religious vocation, the Church recommends frequent attendance at the Mass and asks the faithful that they participate at it, at least, every Sunday.

A second aspect of the Eucharist is Communion, whereby the priest unites himself intimately to Jesus and identifies with Him: because such identification coincides with the goal of holiness, it is evident that Priestly holiness cannot prescind from assiduous reception of Communion. The Eucharist reinforces the priest's energy in the path toward holiness, prevents perils, difficulties and sins, facilitates one's ascetic battles, it is a pledge of eternal life, and it strengthens the union between the priest and the community he serves. A person in discernment of religious vocation must be well disposed to receive communion fruitfully and to thank the Lord with deep fervor.

Finally, it should be remembered that Jesus is found truly, really, and substantially present in the Eucharistic species. This explains why the Church has multiplied the acts of Eucharistic worship: visits to the Blessed Sacrament, expositions and benedictions, processions, Eucharistic congresses, etc.; "the Church and the world have a great need of Eucharistic worship. Jesus waits for us in this sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him in adoration and in contemplation that is full of faith and ready to make a reparation for the great faults and crimes of the world [...] May our adoration never cease." ■

FR. MARCO DURAZO

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Is the Lord still Calling Young People?

The Changing Vocations Promoter Today



Photo courtesy of Fr. Joe Kim

By Fr. JOE KIM

There used to be a time in the Church when Sr. Marie Elizabeth would send Johnny, her 8th grade star at St. Mary's Catholic Elementary School to the pastor Msgr Jim McNulty. Msgr Jim would then invite Johnny, whose family of six would encourage him to enter high school seminary. Johnny would join a class of 250, some of whom would then move on to college seminary, then to major seminary. Johnny may be one of 30 to be eventually ordained. Those days are gone and will never return. Today Sr. Marie is replaced by lay teachers and Msgr McNulty replaced by Fr Hernandez of Fr Nguyen. The Johnny's are no longer from families of six and parents on the large part are not encouraging their children to consider religious life. Does this mean the Lord is no longer calling young people to priesthood and religious life? As the Vocations Director of San Jose and a (once) young person growing up in the 80s, I believe the Lord is still calling but he is challenging the entire People of God to foster vocations—not just the religious and clergy.

In our diocese as in others across the

country, more retreats and small groups are forming to help young people with healthy, Catholic environments. These are called Quo Vadis, Fiat, discipleship and discernment groups. This past June, the seminarians of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the Diocese of San Jose put on a 3-day Quo Vadis retreat for high school boys at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park. Many of the 32 thirteen to eighteen-year-old young men were encouraged by the fraternity, depth of faith, open discussions on common struggles to practice faith. In 3 days, the boys prayed together, ate together, played together and supported each other. They experienced profound community, prayer, spiritual direction and silence. By the end, they wanted more.

The Diocese of San Jose Vocations Office has ongoing retreats, monthly gatherings of young adults, and annual events like the Revs vs Sems Basketball Challenge. Parishes and schools are encouraged to have a vocations coordinator to ensure that Masses are being offered for vocations, times of prayer for vocations are planned especially before the Lord of

the harvest before the Blessed Sacrament, invitations are extended to young people to these retreats and events (details at www.dsj.org/vocations).

All of these are aimed at supporting young people from their youth to their young adulthood with a Catholic environment which supports them along their way. Who knows these young people? Who will invite them? Who will pray for and with them? Who will lead them? They are parishioners, parents, godparents, grandparents, siblings, peers, and colleagues—not Sr. Mary Elizabeth, Msgr Jim, Fr. Hernandez or Fr. Nguyen. Vocations are out there and everybody has a part to encourage young people. Jesus, the Lord of the harvest, is patiently waiting. ■

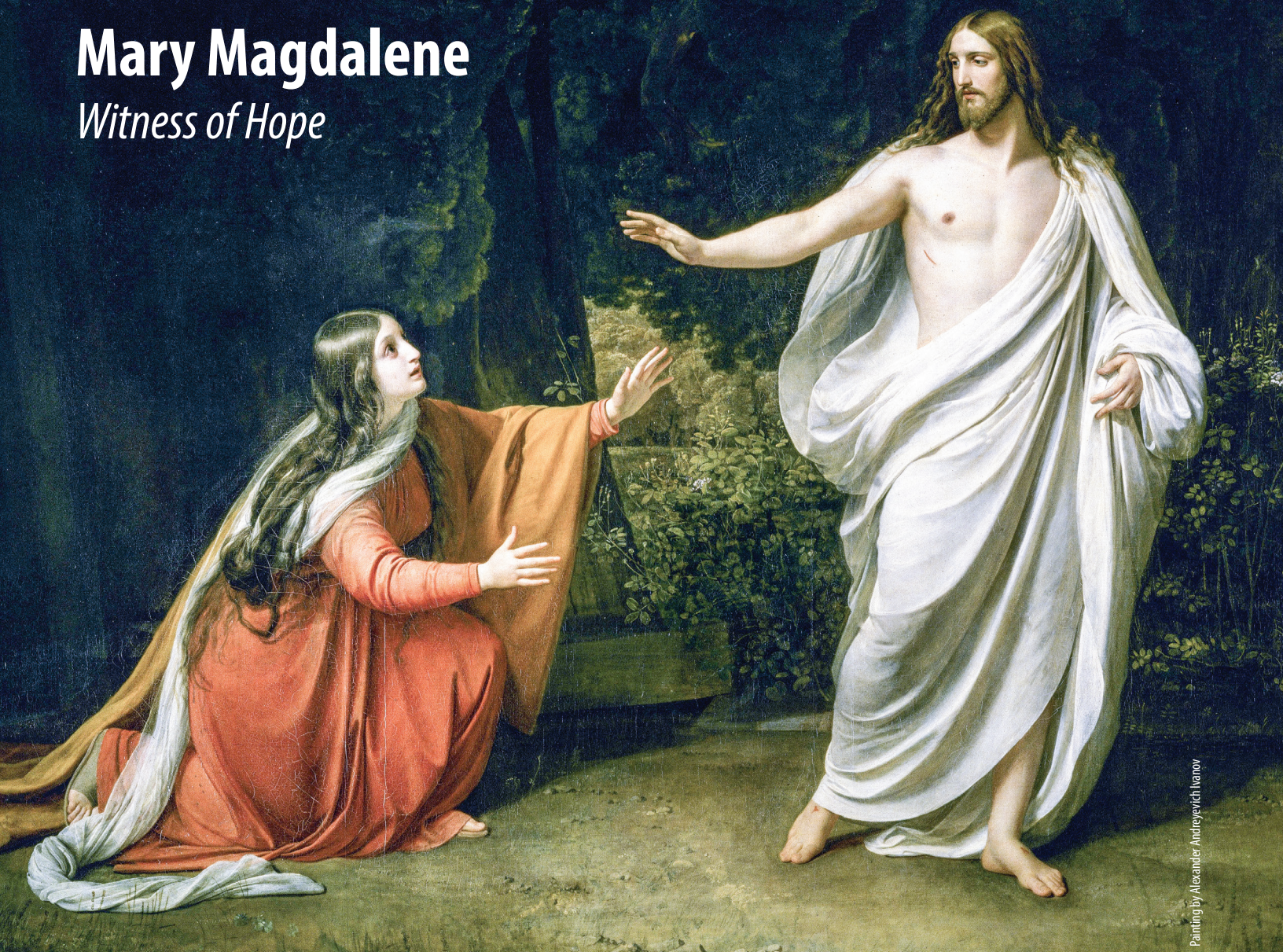


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Mary Magdalene

Witness of Hope



Painting by Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov

By Fr. GIUSEPPE DE VIRGILIO, PH.D.

Mary Magdalene is yet another figure of Church history who demonstrates commitment to her vocation. Very little is known of her and her life, contrary to everything that is proclaimed to be supposedly known and that has been invented throughout the course of the centuries (cf. the apocryphals: Gospel according to Philip, Gospel of Mary). However, this figure of the early Church continues to invite us towards reflection.

Among the disciples of the Lord

According to the writings of the evan-

gelist Luke, Mary came from the village of Magdala, which was located on the western shore of the lake of Galilee (Lk 8:2). This was the same shore of the lake where Peter, Andrew, James, and John were called by Jesus to follow him (Mk 1.16-20 and parr.). While nothing is mentioned of the context of Jesus' call, it is not a stretch to imagine that his disciple hailed from Galilee and goes on to serve and follow Jesus alongside other women all the way to Jerusalem. Mary is always identified as "Magdalene" in various parts of the evangelicals. This is done to distinguish her from other Marys, especially from Jesus' mother and the sister of Martha and Lazarus. The only indication, which is by nature

extremely laconic, offered in Luke 8:2 reveals that the women who followed Jesus "had been healed of evil spirits and sickness"; in particular, it asserts that out of Mary Magdalene "had exorcised seven demons." This background is extremely unusual, and it defines Mary Magdalene's spiritual and human story. Since this text is followed directly by the touching scene of Jesus' pardoning of the anonymous sinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7: 36-50), the connection with Mary Magdalene may indicate a connection with her so-called repugnant sin, which may have been the practice of prostitution. However, nothing has been able to confirm this intuition, which remains to this day based

off objective analysis of biblical texts. However, we know that this intuition does not prevail in the successive hagiographic tradition.

During Jesus' Passion

Nevertheless, in the gospels, Mary Magdalene appears only in the retelling of the passion story. In the synoptic lists of women present near the cross, she is always included and is frequently mentioned first. In the scene of the Virgin at the feet of the cross (John 19:25), Mary Magdalene is mentioned last. In the Gospel of Mark, she is described as being among a small group of women, of whom some are mentioned by name and until then had been absent from the retelling of the passion, observing from afar Jesus' crucifixion (Mark 15:39-41). We include from some tales of the Passion certain elements regarding the role of women: 1) They have a name, origins, or kinship with other probable disciples; 2) They have observed the crucifixion, although from afar; they are, therefore, along with the centurion, the only explicit visual witnesses of Jesus' death; 3) they are disciples: those chosen explicitly by Jesus, including Mary, who from a long time have followed and served the Lord from Galilee. Many others joined during the ascent to Jerusalem, meaning they joined during the frailest part of Jesus' walk. It is in the epilogue, however, that we discover the true role of Mary Magdalene (Mk 15:40; 16:1)

Dawn in the Garden

The synoptic gospels speak of women who approach the sepulcher and come face to face with angels. In Mark 16:6-7, a young man wearing white is mentioned, and in Luke 24:1-12 three women receive the good news from two men in flaming clothes. In Matthew 28:1-10, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary see an angel roll aside the rock blocking Jesus' tomb and are given the good news of the resurrection. Successively, they meet Jesus and they worship him. Nevertheless, it is in the fourth gospel that Mary Magdalene becomes the singular protagonist in the encounter with the Risen

Lord. In John 20:1-18, Mary Magdalene is represented as a very active person, who returns to and from the sepulcher more than once. This sepulcher, in the beginning, is the center of her thoughts and obsessions. Mary, who goes there by herself, has death in her heart (the darkness of 20:1), and when she discovers the rock rolled away, she fears a theft of the body. The possibility of having lost her Lord throws her into despair.

“Mary Magdalene reminds us that hope remains with us”

She runs to Simon Peter and the beloved disciple, screaming that they have taken her Lord. With them, she returns to the empty tomb, but does not enter; She does not share Peter's reflective gaze nor his understanding, the intuition of the faith of the beloved disciple, and she remains near the empty tomb even when the other two, in silence, depart (v. 10).

Maria! Rabbuni!

Mary remains by the sepulcher. She weeps. She bends to look inside and feels two presences, who ask her why she is crying. The love and sorrow that had driven her to the sepulcher at dawn the first day now made her want only one thing: to “hold again” her Lord in the last possible way – his body – and to relive what she had with Jesus: she wanted to know where he was. She would go herself to bring his body back. But, behold, Jesus was before her. Mary turns away without recognizing him. The Risen Lord asks her the same question, adding this time a second question that harkens

back to the disciples he first called to follow him: “Who are you looking for?”. It is the exhortation of the master to the disciple to look within, to clarify the meaning of the search and to sketch the face of the one being searched, acknowledging to oneself the identity of one's own master and Lord. Mary responds as she did to the angels: She is verbally and internally imprisoned in a past that does not let her understand. The turning point in her perception and understanding arrives only when Jesus calls her by her name: no longer “woman,” but “Mary!” The way her name is pronounced serves to remind her of her experience as a disciple. Mary turns to the one speaking to her: Rabbuni! (v. 16). Through this scene, the narrator demonstrates the conversion of the heart.

Witness of Hope

In his commentary of the fourth gospel, Saint Augustine saw symbolically in Simon Peter a figure of faith that searches and in the beloved disciple the figure of love that trusts. Both faith and love exit from the scene, even without being able to see Christ. In front of the sepulcher remains only Mary. She is hope. When it appears that in life everything is lost and that one is alone, Mary Magdalene reminds us that hope remains with us. It is only through hope that we may find what we seek and desire in our lives. For this reason, there is only one thing remaining to do: to go forth and announce a new brotherhood for her and for others, one through which Jesus' ascension to the Father will render possible. Mary goes forth full of joy: her tears and desperation exist no longer, just as the tomb has ceased to exist. ■



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Mk 3:13-19

Claimed by God

“He Appointed Twelve Whom He Also Named Apostles.” (Mk 3:14)

By Sr. Emily Beata Marsh, FSP

“He appointed twelve whom he also named apostles” (Mk 3:14).

When was the last time you thought about the importance of your name?

When we were born, most likely our parents gave us our name. But when we were baptized, our name was given anew by God, through the Church. The priest or deacon asked our parents, “What name do you give this child?” Our parents responded with our name. Then the priest asked, “And what do you ask of the Church?” “Baptism,” was the answer. In this way, our name became connected with our Baptism, that is, with our being claimed by God. Every time we hear our baptismal name, we can and should remember that we have been claimed by God.

Something similar happens when a religious priest, brother, or sister makes their vows and is consecrated to God. In many congregations, the consecrated person receives a new name; in others, they may not receive a new name, but their original baptismal name receives a new significance through their consecration. In the rite of consecration, the person is called by their name, and they respond, “Here I am.” Once again, God claims them by name, calls them by name, and loves them by name.

All through the Bible, God calls people by name. In the book of Genesis, God calls out to Abraham, known as our father in faith: “Abram! Abram!” (Gen 12, 22). God makes a covenant with Abraham by name. Likewise, God calls out to Moses in the book of Exodus, and to Samuel in the book of Samuel, and to numerous others throughout the Old Testament.

What does this tell us? What does it tell us that God uses our names to call out to us, to speak with us, and to make promises to us? God loves us personally, as persons whom He created to be loved by Him. We enter into relationship with God as unique persons, and He takes this unique-ness into account when He relates with us.

Have you ever had an experience of God providing something just for you? Here’s an example from my life. Recently, I moved to another country. Even though I could speak the language and didn’t feel lonely, I started to miss my country and my language a little bit. Two weeks after I arrived, at Sunday Mass, the choir sang “Here I Am, Lord” in English! I received this as a gift from God especially for me. God knows what we need, and even more, He knows what we like! Take a moment and think of those moments in your own life, and thank God for them.

Likewise in the New Testament, Jesus calls His followers by name. This passage from the Gospel of Mark is also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and the Gospel of John also recounts episodes when Jesus calls various apostles by name. This is significant because it shows us that Jesus did not call twelve generic men to be His apostles; He called twelve unique individuals. He knew whom He was calling. He called them and loved them in their individuality.

It is very important for us to remember and reflect on this from time to time. Part of discernment is about discovering our identity before God. Who am I, really, when I stand before God? How does God see me? How do I see myself? Praying with our name is a good starting point for this reflection. Close your eyes and hear God say your name. Hear Him say, as



He said in the book of Genesis, “I create you, _____” (Gen 1). Hear His voice whisper your name just like the still, small voice in the first book of Kings (1 Kings 19). Read the Psalms and put your name in place of “Israel” of “Jerusalem.” Read the passages of the Gospel in which Jesus calls the apostles, and add your name to the list.

Then go the next step in your prayer. Hear God say your name, and then be silent. Be still. Wait for what God wants to say next. Because He does want to say something to you. He, your God, calls you by name. He, your God, has invited you to call Him by name. And He, your God, invites you to recognize Him in every moment and in every person.

Dear Father, thank You for calling me by name. Help me to hear Your voice calling my name day by day. Help me to recognize the unique ways Your love me. Thank you for calling me to love You in my own unique way. “I will call upon your name” (Ps 116:4). Amen. ■

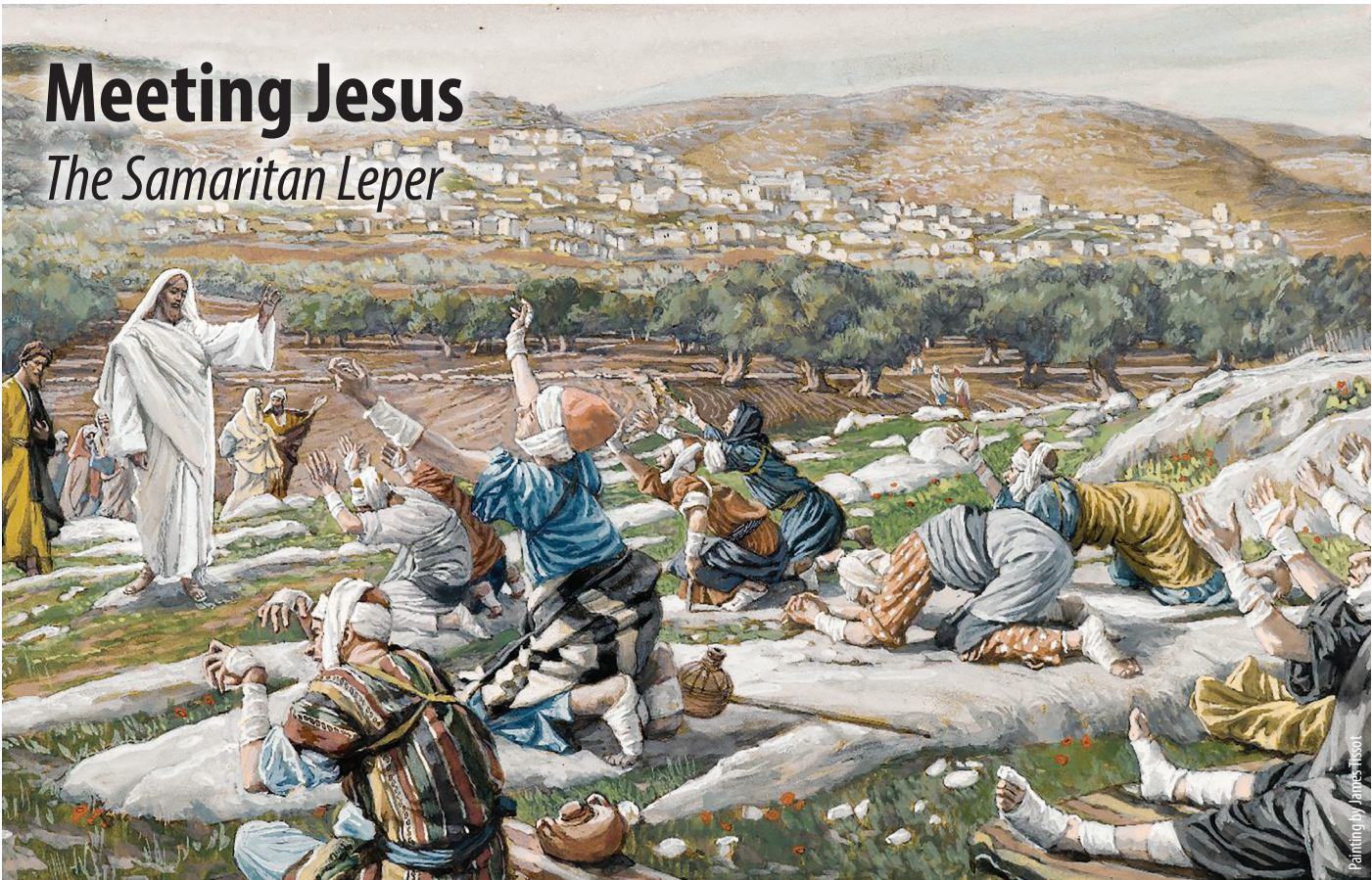


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Meeting Jesus

The Samaritan Leper



By REV. JOSEPH I CISETTI

It was a hot day and it seemed so long but then all the days seemed long, slow moving, tedious and empty. So long since anything had been right, anything had been normal. Cut off from friends, cut off from family, cut off from everything I owned, forced to beg, forced to live with other lepers, some of whom were Jews and that ever present itching of dry, flaky skin everywhere on my body.

There were ten of us and at least that day no one had thrown rocks at us. There was talk about a man named Jesus who was a great healer. I had heard of him once before but did not think much more about it. Then someone said he was passing by the road. This could be our chance. Instead of crying out, "Unclean, unclean," one of us started shouting, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us and soon we all were joining in cry." Jesus stopped, he did not do anything but said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." What was that supposed to do? I did not understand that and did not know how a

priest would treat a Samaritan who on top of that was leper but I looked into Jesus eyes and in my heart I knew I would do what he asked. I trusted him even I did not know why and could not explain it. Besides, there was not much to lose.

So we began walking. Soon I noticed something. That torturous itching feeling was not there. I did not itch. I did not itch. At first I did not know what to think but I looked at my arm and it was cleansed, perfectly healthy. So was my other arm and the rest of my body. How could this be? It did not seem real. I could not believe it. I started to cry. The leprosy was gone. No more isolation. No more separation from family and friends. No more being an outcast. I was cleansed. I was cured! God was at work.

The other nine had the same experience and soon we were all rejoicing, crying, laughing and hugging all at the same time.

I knew what I had to do. I had to go

thank this Jesus. Without waiting for anyone else I began to walk to where he was and soon I began to run. Overwhelmed by it all, I threw myself at his feet in gratitude. God was at work. He asked about the other nine but I had not even thought about them since I left. He talked about faith. He said that made the difference. He not only cured me of my leprosy, he lead me to God. He said my faith had saved me. Maybe it had to do with what I saw in his eyes earlier. I trusted him and now I believe in him what he can do for me and others. He brought new life not just to my body but to my soul, to my entire life. It is not just about what I lost, it is about what I found, about him who I had found. ■



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God's Greatest Gift to Me!

Called to be a Consecrated Religious Sister

By Sr. Agnes Holtz, CFR

It is only by God's mercy and grace that I am a Religious Sister. Despite being raised in a good Catholic family in Florida and receiving a good Catholic education, what I learned remained only in my head until I was 16. It was then that I went on my first retreat and my relationship with the Lord was kindled – I began living out my faith from my heart.

Yet, when I went to college on a tennis scholarship, this flame that had been kindled in my heart was quickly extinguished. As a freshman, I suffered a knee injury that required surgery and then was unable to play tennis for the remainder of the year. My life felt empty. I was trying to fill the void in my heart that was made for God with things of the world. I found myself asking the question, "Who are you God and who am I?" Thankfully, at the same time I met a group of Christian athletes who had joy because they had a relationship with Jesus. I wanted that joy! I began reading the Gospels each day to get to know Jesus. As I grew in my relationship with Jesus, I wanted my whole life to be a witness to Christ and I began to experience the joy I had long desired.

As I continued to search during my college years, I unfortunately left the Catholic Church. It was my parents who prayed for me and gave me Catholic books and videos that helped to bring me back to the faith. I read Scott Hahn's book "Rome Sweet Home" which opened my heart to the truth of our beautiful Catholic faith. One morning before I went to tennis practice, I was home alone and watched a documentary, "Miracles of the Eucharist" by Bob and



Photo courtesy of Sr. Agnes Holtz, CFR

Penny Lord. The miracle in Orvieto, Italy touched my heart deeply, never to be the same. In this miracle, during the Mass, the priest did not believe in the True Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. At the time of the Consecration the host began to bleed onto the altar cloth and, at that moment, the priest began to believe. When I saw this miracle I cried. Like St. Paul, it was as if scales were coming down from my eyes. The same Jesus Who I had come to know and love was the same Jesus Who is present in the Holy Eucharist and in the Catholic Church! "Where else could I go?!"

After coming back to the Sacraments, I later felt the Lord calling me to imitate His total self-gift in the Holy Eucharist by

offering my life to Him as a consecrated religious sister in the Community of the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal. For all of us, it is a daily challenge to live in imitation of our Eucharistic Lord as St. Francis says, "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally!" ■



SR. AGNES HOLTZ, CFR

Is originally from Jacksonville, FL. She entered the CFR sisters in 2001 and has served as the Novice Directress for the past nine years.

Keep Life's Beauty

Rooting Out the Five Weeds that Kill the Garden of Your Soul



By DR. BRUCE L. THIESSEN, PH.D.

*I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses...*

A garden can be a place of peace, beauty and serenity. This is true in a literal, physical sense, and it is true when applying the garden metaphor to the soul or the psyche. But the garden of the psyche/soul, like a physical, tangible garden, can be overcome with weeds, insects and weather that is not conducive to producing abundant garden growth.

Like a physical garden, the garden of the psyche-soul needs to be nurtured, tended to, and cared for, in a solicitous manner. Today, I'm going to zero in on a few pesky garden weeds, that spring up, alongside desired plants, starve them of nutrients, crowd them out of the space they require, and literally kill the would-be fruit, vegetable, or flower-producing plant.

1. The Worry Weed:

Worry makes potential problems of tomorrow become burdens of today. Worry wears you down. Worry robs one of one's peace of mind. Jesus aptly drew attention to nature in encouraging his followers to

abandon worry, and, as an alternative, walk by faith.

Consider how the lilies of the field grow: They do not labor or spin.

Matthew 6:28

The process may not be as simple as suggested in that quirky earworm of the 1980s by Bobby Ferin, "Don't Worry, Be Happy," but, it is possible to abandon worry, and Jesus offers a perfect clue as to just how to accomplish that feat---observe nature, and you'll discover that there really is nothing natural about worry. Oh sure, it's natural to care about one's future, and the future of one's loved ones, but true caring simply involves

preparation, followed by a resignation that, despite one's efforts to ensure a good outcome, one can rarely completely control the ultimate outcome.

2. The Shame Weed:

There is a widely-held myth among believers that if one has done wrong, or if has failed to live up to one's moral objectives or aspirations, one should feel ashamed. "Shame on you!" is a phrase so often used by the blamers and "shamers" of this world. Those who resort to shaming others, are often simply projecting onto others, those aspects of themselves that they find they cannot accept. Those who shame have an access of it themselves so they try to give much of it away. It helps to have someone to carry your shame for you, someone like Jesus. But some, who are drowning in shame, won't reach out and grab the life raft of forgiveness and acceptance. It's not that they refuse, it's just that feel unworthy to receive it. You can preach at such a person all day long, and quote all sorts of Bible verses. A person who cannot, or will not forgive him/herself cannot be Bible-versed into abandoning shame, or adopting divine acceptance.

It takes a willingness to invite a guest into the garden. Jesus is that perfect guest.

*And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known*

But a person who feels, deep inside, that he/she is unworthy, and is paralyzed by shame, will not have ears to listen to the words of love that Jesus offered. Such a shame-based individual, will hear only the voice of a demanding, punitive God that is the product, not of truth, but of faulty teaching. So, you'll need to set aside your inner control freak, set aside those Bible verses you long to quote at the shame-based person, and simply be "Jesus" to that person. By suggesting that you be Jesus, I'm not suggesting that any of us can fill his shoes, I'm just suggest-

ing that, by your example, you can show those aspects of the character of Jesus that were never made real to that person.

3. The Weed of Despair

Nothing kills like the absence of hope, or the resignation to its alternative--hopelessness and despair. Despair comes about when we are so used to looking at the end of a tunnel, and seeing no

"Mary Magdalene reminds us that hope remains with us"

light, that we conclude that no such light exists, and no light will ever reveal itself to the longing eye. In a garden in which the seeds of hope have never had a chance to blossom and grow, due to the deleterious week of despair, there is a desire on the part of the weary gardener to give it all up, and simply succumb to the inevitable doom and gloom that has invaded the garden. Hope can be restored, with some sort of internal effort to affirm oneself as a good human being, worthy of love, created in the image of God, but sometimes one needs an external reminder. That can be in the form of music. As a rapid-fire songwriter, I know that music often whispers in my ear, even as I reluctantly enter unexpected, unanticipated valleys, or storms in life. Music (especially the right kind of music, which can be different for different folks) can gently persuade or coax one to keep hope alive.

*(He speaks and the sound of His voice)
(Is so sweet the birds hush their singing)
And the melody that He gave to me*

Within my heart is ringing

4. The Weed of Perfectionism

*And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known*

Sigmund Freud once said something to the effect that in trying to be a good doctor, one invariably becomes the very opposite. The same could said about being anything in life--a good nurse, a good mother, a good father, a good brother, a good employee, a good Catholic... It could go on and on. When we operate according to "shoulds," we fail miserably because none of us are good at being someone else. When we operate according to a script that someone has handed to us, we are setting ourselves up to fail.

5. The Grudge Weed

It is one thing to be angry, and to own one's anger. Sometimes others do big things, to harm us. That hurts, and causes us to feel angry. Resolving anger is a struggle, it's a process, and it doesn't happen at the snap of our fingers. Forgiveness is the same. Holding a grudge chokes out plants of peace in a manner that is perhaps more effective than any other weed in the garden.

Weeds tend to come back once rooted out. These five are particularly pesky, and persistent. You must be diligent in spotting them when they re-appear, and you must grab ahold of them and pull them out by the roots. Then you can go back to watering and fertilizing your garden--and back to beholding it, in all of its beauty and splendor. ■



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Prayer in Discernment

*Adapted from the new book *Discerning Religious Life**



Photo courtesy of Sr. Clare Marie Matthiass, CFR

By Sr. CLARE MARIE MATTHIASS, CFR

Can you imagine starting a relationship with someone by taking him by the shoulders and exclaiming, “Am I supposed to marry you?” If he doesn’t break free and run away, he might respond, “How about we go out for coffee first before we start planning the wedding?” Discernment of a religious vocation sometimes starts like that! We want to throttle God for an answer to our vocation before we ever even pause to try to get to know Him. Your relationship with God is of utmost importance. You should be a friend before you become a spouse.

How do you begin a friendship with

someone you can’t see? A divine Someone? Sometimes young people are tempted to ask the question about a call to religious life (or priesthood) before they have begun this journey of friendship with God. Maybe having attended a powerful weekend retreat, or after a mission trip, the question of a religious vocation is suddenly there, urging a response. Sometimes at the suggestion of a priest or a parent, consecrated life suddenly becomes a question that needs answering.

But genuine discernment flows from relationship, just like deciding to marry someone flows from falling in love.

Do you have a relationship with God? Do you spend time with Him regularly?

Do you know that He loves you? Not just that He is Love, but that He loves you. You personally. God is looking on you with love right this minute as you read this. He sees you, He knows you and He loves you.

His gaze is always on you. It always was, and it always will be, a loving gaze. This is the starting point, not just of religious life, but of Christian life.

If, as you read this, you realize you are asking the question about vocation without a relationship with God, I recommend putting your vocational discernment on the back burner and investing your time and energy in forming a friendship with God and our Lady. Regular Mass, fre-

quent Confession, and personal prayer time, especially with the Scriptures, are pillars of a strong friendship with the Lord. Growing in your relationship with God will never be time wasted. It is from this place of personal relationship that your vocation will come. If He is calling you to consecrated life, you don't have to worry about the call going away because you set the question aside for a time. As St. Augustine famously said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." The call will be there and it will grow.

Your prayer, by the time you are considering making convent (or seminary) visits, should include longstanding sacramental practice. Along with steeping yourself in the sacraments, Eucharistic adoration is also a great means of deepening your friendship with God and preparing yourself for your vocation. "It is impossible to exaggerate the close relation between the Holy Eucharist and the vocation to the priesthood and religious life," wrote Fr. John Harden, S.J. In fact, he asserted that the Eucharist is the best way to foster vocations: "Persons who attend Mass, receive Communion, and invoke Christ in the Blessed Sacrament obtain light and strength that no one else has a claim to." Our relationship with God, like our other relationships, is meant to grow and change throughout life. Surely your relationship with your mother and father is very different today than it was when you were in second grade. Investing time and energy into your relationship with God is a needed predisposition to discernment.

In my own vocation story, the breakthrough came when I hit a wall. Suddenly the obvious truth finally occurred to me that I was getting nowhere in my discernment. I was twenty-four years old, doing work that I loved, dating on and off, and feeling called but confused. I remember that suddenly my plight seemed urgent. I was making no progress. What would become of my life? Would I ever be clear enough about anything to make a decision? I had been going to Eucharistic adoration at St. Bonaventure's

Church in Troy, Ohio, a few towns

away from where I was living. My prayer was, "Give me clarity, Lord. Please make it crystal-clear so that I can act." I knew enough to know I could not make a decision so big while still enveloped in a fog of uncertainty. I'll admit I felt a certain urgency and even desperation. I had a growing confidence that I was quite capable of ruining my life, and I knew I needed some help. Finally, I did what I should have done from the beginning: I turned to Our Lady. In my prayer, I imagined myself as an infant, utterly helpless, in the arms of Our Blessed Mother. "Carry me to the Father's will," I prayed. "I can't do this by myself." Finally a mo-

"Investing time and energy into your relationship with God is a needed predisposition to discernment."

ment of truth! I really did not know anything, and at last, I had sense enough to reach out for help from one who is ever ready and ever able to give it. Within one month of turning to her for vocational help, I had the answer to my prayer. I was attending a young adult conference with some friends. It was Pentecost Sunday, the last Sunday in May that year, and a crowd of more than a thousand was gathered for Mass. I did not have my vocation particularly in mind as Mass began; I was just trying to concentrate and do my best to pray, in spite of the handsome Italian-American attorney sitting to my left. It was the point of the Mass when the priest elevates the Host. In that moment, I looked up at Our Lord held high in the hands of His priest, and I experienced the deepest, most profound sense of know-

ing. What I knew was that Jesus was the only one who would satisfy my heart. The significance of this is hard to express adequately. The question of whether or not my heart could truly be satisfied in religious life was the giant obstacle which had prevented me from moving forward. This question was being answered in the affirmative. Not only that, but I took it as a promise. Jesus was saying to me, "I will satisfy your heart." In that moment, I knew the call that had been placed upon my life. I knew for what I had been made, for Whom I had been made. When the Father had first called me into being, He envisioned me as His, for Himself alone. And finally, I could say yes to this plan. For the first time since the thought of religious life had occurred to me, it filled me with joy. This new clarity, this new promise, changed everything. I immediately remembered my first attraction to the CFR sisters I had met on a pilgrimage to Denver to see Pope John Paul II. I called almost immediately. To my surprise, the mother superior herself answered the phone, and I blurted out my whole story to her from the beginning. Now that the chief obstacle had been removed, my joy and eagerness were boundless. Mother invited me to visit, I purchased a plane ticket for New York, and I just kept going forward from there. In three months, I joined the community as a postulant.

A religious sister's (or brother or priest's) prayer life did not begin when she entered the convent; she is in the convent because a rich prayer life led her there. For me, this longed-for grace of clarity and peace came at the intercession of Our Lady. She is the secret that all the saints have found. There is no surer way to travel safely this pilgrimage of life than with one hand in hers. ■



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SOUTH AMERICA



67 Years of the Rogationist Fathers' Presence in South America

The first Rogationists missionaries arrived in Passos (MG), Brasil on October 17, 1950. Three Rogationist priests and a brother received a warm welcome by the local community, priests, and the mayor of the city, marking an important milestone in the history of the Congregation.

From the city of Passos, the Rogationists Fathers continued their missionary journey to the city of Bauru, Sao Paulo, and years later to Criciuma. From 1959 to 2016, the

Rogationists Fathers have expanded their missionary work to cities all over Brasil: Sao Paulo, Brasilia, Curitiba, Porto Alegre, Gravatai, President Janio Quadros, Queimadas, and Vitorino Freire. In 1979, the Rogationists opened a house in Campana, Argentina and later founded a seminary in Cordoba. In 2002, the Rogationists arrived to Paraguay. The charism of the Rogationists is centered on Jesus' words:

"The harvest is rich but the workers are few. Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He may send workers into His harvest." (Mt.9:37-38/Lk.10:2)



USA



Sr. Kathleen Bryant, RSC.D.Min: Celebrating 50 Years as a Religious Sister

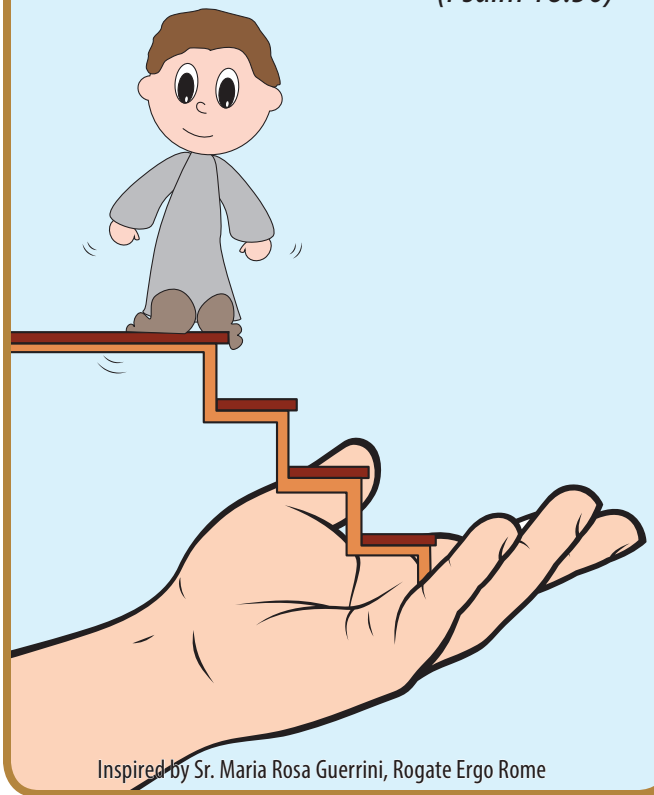
Sister Kathleen Bryant, RSC, D. Min. will celebrate her Golden Jubilee this November. For twenty-one years, Sr. Kathleen served as a Vocation Director for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She is a renowned facilitator, retreat director, spiritual director, workshop presenter, and author.

Sister Kathleen has authored numerous articles and books and has been an invaluable contributor to Vocations and Prayer magazine. According to Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, past Executive Director of the National Religious Vocation Conference, Sr. Kathleen's book *Vocations Anonymous* (Rogationist Publications, 2014), "is an indispensable resource for anyone who is discerning a vocation to priesthood or religious life." Among her passions are connecting people with God in a digital world, teaching discernment and prayer, and working for the abolition of human trafficking and slavery.

On behalf of Vocations and Prayer magazine, we congratulate Sister Kathleen on her Golden Jubilee and thank her for an extraordinary life's journey at the service of God and his people.

CORNER MESSAGE

"Your right hand has upheld me; your favor made me great"
(Psalm 18:36)



Inspired by Sr. Maria Rosa Guerrini, Rogate Ergo Rome

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