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God bless you,

The vocation.com Team

Holy Father

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"Co-responsible for the Church's Being and Action"
excerpt from Benedict XVI's Message to Rome Conference on Laity
Pope Benedict XVI

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In the first place we must renew our efforts for a formation which is more attentive and focused on the vision of the Church, of which I spoke and this should be both on the part of priests as well as of religious and lay people to understand ever better what this Church is, this People of God in the Body of Christ.

At the same time, it is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People of God in their entirety is gradually promoted, with respect for vocations and for the respective roles of the consecrated and of lay people.

This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as "collaborators" of the clergy but truly recognized as "co-responsible", for the Church's being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity.

This common awareness of being Church of all the baptized in no way diminishes the responsibility of parish priests. It is precisely your task, dear parish priests, to nurture the spiritual and apostolic growth of those who are already committed to working hard in the parishes. They form the core of the community that will act as a leaven for the others.

Although these communities are sometimes small, to prevent them from losing their identity and vigour they must be taught to listen prayerfully to the word of God through the practice of lectio divina, as the recent Synod of Bishops ardently hoped. Let us truly draw nourishment from listening, from meditating on the word of God. Our communities must not lack the knowledge that they are "Church", because Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, convokes them and makes them his People. Indeed, on the one hand faith is a profoundly personal relationship with God but on the other it possesses an essential community component and the two dimensions are inseparable.

Thus young people, who are more exposed to the growing individualism of contemporary culture, the consequences of which inevitably involves the weakening of interpersonal bonds and the enfeeblement of the

sense of belonging, will also taste the beauty and joy of being and feeling Church.

Q & A

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"Do It Out of Love"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

I'm a high school senior who feels called to Sisterhood. In the midst of assignments, projects, scholarship applications, etc., plus other things going on in my life, things get hectic. How do I keep my relationship with God in the center of things in the midst of all this chaos?

-Allison

A. Dear Allison,

Fortunately, it is not as difficult as it might seem to keep God at the center, because it is a gift that he himself wants to give us.

I would put what you can do in this way: choose what you are going to do, and do it out of love.

First, choose. If our life seems chaotic at times, it is because of the number of things we have to do or the way we do them. Life seems to sweep us along, rather than something we live and control. Sure, there is much we don't and cannot control, but there is also much we can.

Choose your priorities. If you want to place God at the center, one of your priorities is going to be to carve out time for him alone: time to go to Mass besides Sundays, time to pray when you get up, time to say a decade of the Rosary or more, time to read useful things. Recreational and fun things should always be part of our lives as well, but not to the degree that we neglect the important things: our duties as students, duties in the home, what our conscience tells us we should do.

Second, do all things out of love. Some people think there is only one way to speak to God and that is by saying prayers. Not true. You can tell God you love him by developing your talents. You can tell him you love him by helping out your neighbor, being a good influence on others, serving him in others, enjoying the good things he gave us in life and thanking him for them, accepting suffering and disappointments when they come... In the morning and now and again during the day simply tell him that all you do is for him, and then do it as best you can because you want to give him only the best. Our day very easily becomes a "conversation" with him and, in this way, you will find yourself trying to avoid what would hurt him and spontaneously offering up small sacrifices for souls.

God bless.

-Fr Anthony

Q & A

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"The Family's Spirit"

Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

I returned recently from a short stay with a contemplative religious order. I seek your advice on how much attention I should pay to things like the members of the order not wearing their habits all the time at the monastery (and never wearing any clerical dress in public); slight aberrations in the liturgy (joint offering of gifts: "The Lord is [not be] with you", etc.); and members of the community not always attending communal prayer and not always wearing their habits when they do. The vocations director there told me not to pay too much attention to the little things, as it is Christ I should be focused on, not the other members of the community. He says no religious order is perfect and that there will always be aberrations when people are living together. He said I will know if I'm meant to join them quite apart from these little external things it will be a mysterious inner conviction. Part of me understands and agrees with this, but I'm a bit disturbed by the laxity of some parts of the community. Any advice?

Thanks and God bless,

-Rob

A. Dear Rob,

What the vocations director said is true; you should be focused on Christ. However, in a community each member should additionally be a help to the others to focus on Christ, making the whole community as such focused on him. A religious community is not a collection of individuals who just happen to live or function in the same place; it is more like a family and has its family spirit. The superiors, for their part, have the obligation towards each and every member, of guiding that family so it lives its particular charism faithfully and provides each member with all he needs in order to live and grow in that charism, in the spirit of its founder. To know if a religious community is good, you don't compare it with other religious communities; you compare it with the idea and inspiration its own founder had and which was approved by the Church.

So if the things that disturb you are deviations from what the founder intended for that particular order, or if they show a lack of concern for the unity of the Church, it should give you pause.

God bless,

-Fr Anthony

Meditation - 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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"A Willing Heart"
Mk 5:21-24

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When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So he went with him. And a large crowd pressed in on him.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, you come close to us in life's difficult challenges to support us you're your supernatural gifts of faith, hope and love. In this prayer I want to follow the example of Jairus, and come to

you with all I am and all my concerns, to place them at your feet. I know that every prayer is answered in the way that is ultimately best for us.

Petition: Lord, increase my faith, increase my trust, increase my love.

1. A Great Crowd Gathered. Jesus had by now been preaching and healing in many towns of Galilee, his name had spread; he had worked miracles, some visible to all while others like the calming of the storm were just for his disciples. The people sought him for two reasons that are common to all people: their physical, material needs, and their spiritual hunger and thirst. They came because Jesus took care of both. Being human, the cures were a powerful attraction for them, but they also recognized that "no-one else teaches like him", and when he taught they listened and opened their minds and hearts to God. Even today, Jesus tells us that if we seek first the Kingdom of God, everything else will be taken care of; we will do what is right and know that we are in our Father's hands. Jesus still speaks his word to us, but even more so he has given us his word so that we can pass it on to others. We should not doubt the need the world has for his truth. Just below the surface, there is always that longing for truth and for meaning. If people are going to die of hunger and thirst, or receive the nourishment of truth depends on us.

2. The Leader of the Synagogue Seeks Jesus. Jairus was an important man, a religious leader. It required great humility to admit his need in front of everyone else, but his love for his daughter was stronger than whatever pride and self-importance he might have had. He had the honesty and faith to see in Jesus someone superior to himself, and there is something very compelling in his repeated begging for help. Maybe it was the noise all around that didn't allow him to be heard the first time, or maybe Jesus wants him to affirm his faith over and over so as to deepen it, but in any case Jairus had to insist and he did not get disheartened or give up. He declares to Christ and before everyone else his utter helplessness and his pain. "My little daughter." Jesus is moved. Jairus teaches us a great lesson as regards prayer, and we can examine our own prayer in the presence of Christ in the light of his example. He went to Jesus, to the spot he was really, individually present –prayer before the Eucharist is particularly fruitful. He went in humility, knowing that he was giving Jesus his place that Jesus "did not need him" but he desperately needed Jesus. He was clear, honest in his request. Jesus might not have needed him, but his daughter did need him to approach Jesus for her, and he asked not for himself but for her; he was not the center of his own prayer. And in a sense, Jesus did need him, as he needs us to approach him for those who cannot do so themselves.

3. Jesus went with him. If Jairus had to leave aside his own sense of importance to approach Jesus in his need, Jesus had already left aside all "sense of importance" as God to become man and save us. He continues to do so, following Jairus as he leads him to his house. He has come to serve and not to be served. The same virtue of humility practiced in two very different ways: the humility of God who becomes man, and the humility of man taking his proper place before God. And if we learn the lesson of both we will not only take our proper place as creatures before God, but we will also be more God-like (Christ-like) by being more willing to serve our neighbor without looking for anything in return.

Conversation: Lord Jesus, like Jairus, I ask you to come into the home of my heart and to heal what needs to be healed. I also ask you to help me to learn always to go to you in my need, and always to serve my neighbor as you serve me.

Questionnaire:

1. To what extent can I say I really believe the world (my family, my friends, my associates) needs Christ, or is it just words to me?

2. How does my prayer compare to Jairus'?

3. Am I willing to go out of my way to help others?

Spirituality

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"The God of the Cross"

A major challenge to our faith is to accept that the one, true God in which we believe is also "The God of the Cross", the one who redeemed us on a Cross, and who tells us that in order to follow him we must take up our own cross daily. If we are going to be consistent with our faith we must seek to identify ourselves with his teachings, and accept the "narrow way" of which he spoke. If he says we have to be humble to enter his Kingdom, we must strive to become humble in spirit, despite its difficulty. If he says we must take up our cross we have to strive to do so and not look back. It is not a question of putting on a pretense, acting as if we were someone else, but of truly striving to become what he has called us to be.

Special

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"Year for Priests Website Highlights International Celebration"
courtesy of the USCCB

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WASHINGTON—The U.S. Bishops' Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations has set up a Web site to mark the Year for Priests, to be celebrated June 19, 2009-June 19, 2010, throughout the world.

Pope Benedict XVI has designated the year-long celebration to begin on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a day of prayer for the sanctification of all priests. The pope also has designated St. John Vianney as the Universal Patron of All Priests on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the saint's death. The saint, who also is known as the Cure of Ars, is the patron of parish priests.

The Year for priests Website can be found at http://www.usccb.org/yearforpriests/index.shtml.

Elements of the site include Pope Benedict's message for the occasion and the announcement of the plenary indulgence in both English and Spanish in conjunction with the celebration. Additional elements include prayers that have been commissioned for both priests and laity. PDF documents of these prayers (English/Spanish) can be downloaded and printed for diocesan and parochial use.

During the year, the Secretariat will provide monthly articles by prominent Catholic women who will write about their faith and trust in the priesthood.

Other activities for the Year for Priests will include a gathering of priests in Rome for the culmination of the Year for Priests, as well as retreat on the national level. Information on the retreat will be provided through the Web site.

Dioceses and organizations may link the Year for Priests website. Instructions under the tab for "Promotional Materials" http://www.usccb.org/yearforpriests/promote.shtml indicate how to link to the site.

Upcoming Events & Retreats

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((Listed here are retreats directed by the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi members. For a listing of diocesan activities and other events, click here to go to the vocation.com website))

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- Retreats for Men
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LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST

Mark Your Calendars! Test Your Call Weekends for the 2009 Calendar Year. Experience the novitiate in Cheshire, CT with retreats for young men ages 16-27 sponsored by the Legion of Christ. These weekend retreats combine time for personal reflection, preached meditations, conferences, and opportunities for confession and spiritual direction with the experience of the day to day life of the seminarians. For more information, please call Br. Francois at (800) 420-5409 or email vocation@legionaries.org. Dates in 2009: July 3-5, July 24-26, August 14-16, September 4-6, October 23-25, November 25-29, December 19-23, and December 26-30.

REGNUM CHRISTI consecrated women

Come and See Weekends. Spend a weekend with the consecrated women of Regnum Christi, learning about their life, spirituality and mission within the Church. Activities include: Talks/conferences about the Church, Regnum Christi, the Spiritual Life, and consecrated Life in Regnum Christi; a half-day retreat; opportunities for confession and Spiritual Direction; daily Mass and time for prayer, silence and reflection; sports and meals with the consecrated women; vocational panel: Questions & Answers with consecrated women. Ages 16-30. For more information, contact Jill Swallow at vocation@inteducators.org or 401-949-2820. 2009 date: July 10-13.

ShoreLines welcomes your questions and comments at questions@shorelines.org. If you do not specify otherwise, your question may be posted in the Vocations Q&A section.

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