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"RENEW YOUR FREE SHORELINES NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION"
New Issues Scheduled to Begin!

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Dear ShoreLines Subscriber,

Greetings from vocation.com!

Thank you to the many of you that already responded to our earlier notice regarding re-registering for our new ShoreLines newsletter. We are in the process of transitioning from our old format to our new format and new distribution system.

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God bless you,

The vocation.com Team

Holy Father

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"Rediscover Both the Grace and the Duty of the Priestly Ministry"
excerpt from Papal Address to Italian Episcopal Conference
Pope Benedict XVI

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The circumstance which, after the Year dedicated to the Apostle to the Gentiles, sees us prepared to celebrate a Year for Priests is therefore particularly fortunate.

We are called, together with our priests, to rediscover both the grace and the duty of the priestly ministry. This ministry is a service to the Church and to the Christian People that demands a profound spirituality. In response to the divine vocation, this spirituality must be nourished by prayer and by an intense personal union with the Lord in order to serve him among the brethren through preaching, the sacraments, an orderly community life and assistance to the poor.

Thus, throughout the priestly ministry the importance of the commitment to education stands out, in order to develop people who are free, truly free, and hence responsible, mature and aware Christians.

Q & A

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"God's Mysterious Ways"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

I was meditating on the vocation recently and this question came up: If God knows everything about us before he creates us, why does he still give a vocation to someone if he knows from the beginning that he will not accept it and follow it?

-Therese

A. Dear Therese,

Our free will and God's providence are a mystery: we find it difficult to imagine what it must be like to be God and even more so to figure out what goes on in his mind. One thing we do know but still only understand on the surface is that God is love.

So, even if he sees we are not going to cooperate, he still cannot bring himself to hold back from offering us what is best for us, which is his will. But there is something else too, we would have no opportunity to convert and repent if he cut down his will to what we are willing to do.

So it can happen that a person rejects his vocation, but then repents and turns back to God and so God is able to save his soul, even though that man did not follow God's original plan.

Sometimes we repent in time to return to God's original plan, and other times we don't. However, the path to being a saint is never closed to us unless we voluntarily and consistently reject it. God did not want Adam to sin, but once he did, God sent his Son to die for us and redeem us and that is why the liturgy goes so far as to say about Adams sin, O happy fault that merited such a savior! That certainly is a mystery!

God bless.

-Fr Anthony

Q & A

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"Love is Giving Yourself"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

I'm a 19 year old college student seriously thinking about becoming a priest. I feel the most at home when I'm in the church, and I feel comforted being in the presence of Jesus in adoration. I've been discerning my vocation and I've run into an issue concerning my dad. I told my dad that I wanted to be a priest and he insisted that I reconsider. I'm the only the son in my family and he wants me to spread my last name. His main concern is for me to have a family. He has never been too strong in the faith, and in fact none of my family members are. My dad thinks there must be something wrong with me if I have a calling, or if I enjoy having conversations with God in adoration. How can I even begin explaining my possible priestly vocation?

-Wayne

A. Dear Wayne,

Being an only son among sisters in my family, I can understand at least partially the problem. Even if you have cousins with the same last name it's not the same, for your dad is seeing his lineage dying out.

Following the vocation takes faith, and accepting all the consequences of the vocation takes faith. Not just an abstract faith, but the faith that is the backbone of our willingness to sacrifice what without faith we would be unwilling to; such as family, children, lineage.

Looking at how you describe why you think you may have a vocation, I think there is room there for much

growth, and that growth will probably make your vocation more understandable to your dad. Right now the vocation is still very much centered on yourself: You feel at home in the church, you feel comforted in the presence of Jesus in adoration, and so you think you may be called to be a priest. That is all very good, but it is still just scratching the surface of what a vocation to the priesthood is.

Through spiritual consolation our Lord can give us a hint of who he is, and draw us closer to him, but the closer we come to him the more the reality of what his priesthood really consists in has to hit us. He gave up everything, he gave himself, he died a horrible death to free us from our sins, he told us that following him was to choose the narrow and difficult path, and then he chose men, his priests, who would continue his work and give their lives in the service of their brothers and sisters, and he told them they would face persecution and misunderstandings. Read the Acts of the Apostles. He does not call us to be priests for our own delight and comfort, but in order to give our lives to feed his sheep. However, he tells us that in all our work and trials he will be with us, and what greater comfort could there be? I think that in your times of adoration you should explore with Jesus what he asks of his followers, what he hopes for from his priests.

How will that growth make your vocation more understandable to your dad? Well, one thing a man, and especially a good father, learns with life is that love is giving yourself. It's not about comfort and satisfaction and always feeling good. It's about stepping up to the plate, delivering for those who trust in you and depend upon you, no matter how you feel.

When there is more of that in your thought about the vocation, he might find it easier to process.

Be sure of my prayers, and God bless.

-Fr Anthony

Meditation - 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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"Humility and Faith"
Mk 6:1-6

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He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching.

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, you know that my hopes, desires, dreams and expectations are often too human, limited and natural, not elevated by grace, nor by your way of seeing human actions and events. In this time of prayer, I want to return to you, to reaffirm my faith in you, my hope in you and my love for you.

Petition: Father, give me the Mind of Christ. Enable me to go beyond my human, limited ways of judging circumstances, events and people. Help me to judge and think like you. Increase in me of the virtue of faith, an elevation of my thoughts, and enable me to see the world with your eyes.

1. "Many Who Heard Him Were Astounded." This gospel passages has several messages for us. These words tell us just how normal a life Jesus lived in Nazareth, and how truly he took upon himself our nature.

There were no "short-cuts" for him, no special privileges or exemptions from the laws of human nature besides his interior sinlessness, which was hidden from human eyes. Everything, from the calluses on his hands to his sweat and thirst and hunger and his aching muscles after hauling materials and working long hours were all real. He was truly one of us. His villagers saw in him a normal boy who lived a common Jewish childhood and grew up to be a normal adult. So his friends and acquaintances were utterly astonished when his true wisdom and powers become known: Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! They were surprised because previously he had lived an apparently uneventful childhood, in humility, obedience to Mary and Joseph, hard work and prayer. He experienced monotony, toil and the ordinary trials and challenges faced by us all.

The difference in our Lord was that he lived these experiences with extraordinary love for his Father in heaven. His humility and love allowed him to forge his character and his will as a man, so as to prepare himself for the formidable mission entrusted to him from above.

We too must embrace our daily duty with faith, humility and long suffering love to prepare ourselves for the mission ahead of us.

2. "And They Took Offense at Him." These words remind us how blind we can be to the obvious, how easily we can be led astray by our passions.

Once he started preaching and healing it should have been a time of joy and a motive for joy in his home villagers, but instead they could not accept that he was different, more than they had imagined. Jealousy, like all of pride's offspring, is irrational and unjust. True, Jesus exhibited superior wisdom, knowledge and power, and used these talents for the good of others - Why would those who knew him previously now take offense at these gifts? What harm has he done? What evil is there in possessing extraordinary talents and using them for others? Why the suspicion and false judgments? If another has wisdom and power together with goodness and a readiness to serve, shouldn't I see this as an advantage for me as well? Jealousy and pride refuse to rejoice in the good outside of self and to seek the help I need from others joyfully.

When I insist on being the source of all goodness I deny myself all the help God wishes to give me through other people. These attitudes are irrational, harmful and absurd.

3. "He Was Amazed at Their Unbelief." "And he could do no deed of power there..." Jesus surely went to Nazareth with the intention of doing there what he had done in so many other towns throughout Galilee. He didn't start there, but he returned when it ought to have been easier for them to accept that he was more than they imagined. And now he is unable to fulfill his intentions because their lack of faith does not allow him.

This shows us how important our own cooperation in faith is, so that God can do his work. Faith is not passive acceptance, but actively basing our actions on the truth that God reveals to us. Lack of faith can run the gamut from superficiality and lack of reflection to refusal to open my heart to the possibility of God's hand at work, to a willful and stubborn resistance to grace. We must ask God for the gift of faith and be ready to do all in our power to grow in it and live according to it.

Without our cooperation and docility, God's plans come to nothing.

Conversation: Lord Jesus, you know how fallen my nature is, how my will is weakened and my intellect numbed. This is why I struggle with pride and resistance to your grace. Increase my faith, Lord, and give me the strength to correspond to this gift with actions. Help me to die to my pride, because unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (Jn 12:34). Increase my faith, hope and love for You.

Questionnaire:

1. How much does Jesus' example influence the way I face difficulties, do I want God to take "short-cuts"

with me and solve them for me?

2. Have I boxed certain people in categories that do not allow me to recognize the true good they do?

3. What precisely would change in my life if I had enough faith to allow God to work freely?

Spirituality

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"Human Formation"

Human formation gives grace something solid to work on. "Grace builds on nature." In other words, if we invest time and attention in our human formation grace will be able to make us better and fitter instruments to spread Christ's Kingdom. And the opposite holds true, our inattention to this formation often is the cause of us pulling back and not reaching out to others. Today, when men and women are so sensitive to externals, our shortcomings in our human formation easily hinder our contact with souls, they handicap us leave us disorganized in the face of the demands of our apostolic vocation.

We ought to examine regularly on how we live and cultivate the various human virtues, each one asking himself, for example, Am I forming myself in sincerity and conviction... Am I a responsible and mature person... Am I consistent... Am I a person of character... Are my faculties in order... How do I deal with those with whom I live and work... Do I keep my belongings in order... Am I open and patient with everyone...?

These are only some of the aspects of our human formation. Most importantly, we must cultivate a greater awareness of the overall importance of our human formation, and therefore consciously and sincerely to make sure we never neglect it. This means examining our attitudes and actions to make sure they measure up to the standards Christ set for us with his example.

Special

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"The Immense Gift Which Priests Represent"

excerpt from Letter of His Holiness Proclaiming a Year for Priests
Pope Benedict XVI

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On the forthcoming Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Friday 19 June 2009 – a day traditionally devoted to prayer for the sanctification of the clergy –, I have decided to inaugurate a "Year for Priests" in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the "dies natalis" of John Mary Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests worldwide.[1] This Year, meant to deepen the commitment of all priests to interior renewal for the sake of a more forceful and incisive witness to the Gospel in today's world, will conclude on the same Solemnity in 2010. "The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus", the saintly Curé of Ars would often say.[2] This touching expression makes us reflect, first of all, with heartfelt gratitude on the immense gift which priests represent, not only for the Church, but also for humanity itself. I think of all those priests who quietly present Christ's words and actions each day to the faithful and to the whole world, striving to be one with the Lord in their thoughts and their will, their sentiments and their style of life. How can I not pay tribute to their apostolic labours, their tireless and hidden service, their universal charity? And how can I not praise the courageous fidelity of so many priests who, even amid difficulties and incomprehension, remain faithful to their

vocation as "friends of Christ", whom he has called by name, chosen and sent?

I still treasure the memory of the first parish priest at whose side I exercised my ministry as a young priest: he left me an example of unreserved devotion to his pastoral duties, even to meeting death in the act of bringing viaticum to a gravely ill person. I also recall the countless confreres whom I have met and continue to meet, not least in my pastoral visits to different countries: men generously dedicated to the daily exercise of their priestly ministry. Yet the expression of Saint John Mary also makes us think of Christ's pierced Heart and the crown of thorns which surrounds it. I am also led to think, therefore, of the countless situations of suffering endured by many priests, either because they themselves share in the manifold human experience of pain or because they encounter misunderstanding from the very persons to whom they minister. How can we not also think of all those priests who are offended in their dignity, obstructed in their mission and persecuted, even at times to offering the supreme testimony of their own blood?

There are also, sad to say, situations which can never be sufficiently deplored where the Church herself suffers as a consequence of infidelity on the part of some of her ministers. Then it is the world which finds grounds for scandal and rejection. What is most helpful to the Church in such cases is not only a frank and complete acknowledgment of the weaknesses of her ministers, but also a joyful and renewed realization of the greatness of God's gift, embodied in the splendid example of generous pastors, religious afire with love for God and for souls, and insightful, patient spiritual guides. Here the teaching and example of Saint John Mary Vianney can serve as a significant point of reference for us all. The Curé of Ars was quite humble, yet as a priest he was conscious of being an immense gift to his people: "A good shepherd, a pastor after God's heart, is the greatest treasure which the good Lord can grant to a parish, and one of the most precious gifts of divine mercy".[3] He spoke of the priesthood as if incapable of fathoming the grandeur of the gift and task entrusted to a human creature: "O, how great is the priest! ... If he realized what he is, he would die... God obeys him: he utters a few words and the Lord descends from heaven at his voice, to be contained within a small host...".[4] Explaining to his parishioners the importance of the sacraments, he would say: "Without the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we would not have the Lord. Who put him there in that tabernacle? The priest. Who welcomed your soul at the beginning of your life? The priest. Who feeds your soul and gives it strength for its journey? The priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God, bathing it one last time in the blood of Jesus Christ? The priest, always the priest. And if this soul should happen to die [as a result of sin], who will raise it up, who will restore its calm and peace? Again, the priest... After God, the priest is everything! ... Only in heaven will he fully realize what he is".[5] These words, welling up from the priestly heart of the holy pastor, might sound excessive. Yet they reveal the high esteem in which he held the sacrament of the priesthood. He seemed overwhelmed by a boundless sense of responsibility: "Were we to fully realize what a priest is on earth, we would die: not of fright, but of love... Without the priest, the passion and death of our Lord would be of no avail. It is the priest who continues the work of redemption on earth... What use would be a house filled with gold, were there no one to open its door? The priest holds the key to the treasures of heaven: it is he who opens the door: he is the steward of the good Lord; the administrator of his goods ... Leave a parish for twenty years without a priest, and they will end by worshiping the beasts there ... The priest is not a priest for himself, he is a priest for you".[6]

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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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

- Retreats for Men
- Retreats for Women

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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