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Come Spend Your Holy Week at the Side of Christ

Join the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi for a Holy Week Come and See Retreat. April 8-13, 2009. Activities include: Eucharistic Celebration of the Last Supper, Adoration on Holy Thursday, Good Friday Ceremonies, Talk on the Seven Last Words of Christ, and more. Register by March 28, 2009. For more information, view the [flyer](#).

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Holy Father

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"Paul Lives For, With and In Christ"
excerpt from Papal Address on Day for Consecrated Life
 Pope Benedict XVI

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Another fundamental aspect of Paul's consecrated life is the mission.

He belongs wholly to Jesus in order, like Jesus, to belong to all; indeed, to be Jesus for all: "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9: 22). In him, so closely united to the person of Christ, we recognize a profound capacity for combining spiritual life and missionary action. In him the two dimensions refer to each other reciprocally. And thus we can say that he belongs to the ranks of those "mystical builders" whose existence is both contemplative and active, open to God and to the brethren, in order to carry out an effective service to the Gospel. In this mystic and apostolic tension, I would like to remark on the Apostle's courage as he faced the sacrifice of confronting terrible trials, even to the point of martyrdom (cf. 2 Cor 11: 16-33) and on his steadfast faith based on the words of his Lord: "my grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection" (2 Cor 12: 9-10). His spiritual experience thus appears to us as a lived-out expression of the Paschal Mystery, which he investigated intensely and proclaimed as a form of Christian life. Paul lives for, with and in Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ", he writes, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2: 20); and again: "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil 1: 21).

This explains why he does not tire of urging us to behave in such a way that Christ's word may dwell within us in its richness (cf. Col 3: 16). This brings to mind the invitation addressed to you in the recent Instruction on The Service of Authority and Obedience, to seek "every morning... a living and faithful contact with the Word which is proclaimed that day, meditating on it and holding it in [your] heart as a treasure, making of it the root of every action and the primary criterion of each choice". I therefore hope that the Pauline Year will nourish still more in you the determination to accept the testimony of St Paul, meditating every day upon the word of God with the faithful practice of lectio divina, praying with "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness..." (Col 3: 16). May he also help you to carry out your apostolic service in and with the Church with a spirit of communion without reservation, making a gift of your own charisms to others (cf. 1 Cor 14: 12), and witnessing in the first place to the greatest charism which is charity (cf. 1 Cor 13).

Q & A

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"First, Seek the Truth"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Father,

Since I`ve started discerning a priestly vocation, I`ve learned about the different sides that exist in Catholic theology. There are those who feel a more conservative stance is needed, others feel that a more liberal stance is required to keep up with the times.

Are these just politics within the church that I should ignore while I discern, or are these serious concerns that I should decide upon before I choose a vocation? I don`t want to worry about "which side" a parish or religious community takes, but is that important information to know?

Thanks and God Bless,

Vito

A. Dear Vito,

Above all things we first have to seek the truth. There are certain truths that derive from God's revelation in

Christ which the Church has uncovered over the centuries (the divinity of Christ, the oneness of God, the reality of the Sacraments, the place and privileges of Mary, the Popes charism of infallibility, the grave nature of certain sins, are some but not all of them). All these we must uphold if we are to be true to Christ, and so they are not a matter of Church politics nor are they optional -we must accept them wholeheartedly and unreservedly if we are to be true followers of Christ. Of course, we may have to find new ways to teach them in different societies, cultures and circumstances but we cannot change the message, only the delivery.

Besides these established truths there are other theological and doctrinal questions that have not been settled yet (for example, did Mary die or not before her Assumption) and still others that are a matter of personal preference (for example, one licit form of the liturgy over another) where of course there can be legitimate diversity of opinions among faithful Catholics.

The complications arise when a person thinks that something which is in fact settled is not, and therefore he thinks he is free to hold his own, differing personal opinion when in fact he is simply mistaken and outside the truth (for example, a person who thinks masturbation is not sinful).

So, as you discern your vocation you should definitely continue to study your Catholic faith as deeply as possible, using good sources such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the Compendium of the Catechism. Get some guidance from an informed and balanced priest or layman as to what materials to study, and fortunately today there is a wealth of very helpful recorded and written material for the serious student.

As regards worrying about which side a parish or religious order takes, a particular parish will not matter unless you are taking your religious education there, while if you are interested in a religious order or diocesan seminary you have the right to receive there a formation that is totally in agreement with the Church's teachings and what she has indelibly inscribed on the tablets of her fidelity to Christ. It is quite reasonable to discuss this point with the appropriate vocation director.

God bless.

-Fr Anthony

Q & A

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"Get a Balanced Opinion"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

I am a young woman contemplating a religious vocation. A few months ago, I was turned down for a vocation retreat when I told the particular community (contemplatives) that I had a mental illness. It is a social anxiety disorder, the effects of which are taken care of for the most part by medication, so I live a very ordinary life now. If I am being called to the religious life by the Lord, I feel that it may be to a contemplative community. Is such a call, if any call at all, impossible? Is my illness a sign by God that I am not called? I would be willing to follow God's will either way.

-Michelle

A. Dear Michelle,

There are several elements that need to be taken into consideration in searching for an answer to your

question. You have to consider the nature and depth of the illness you suffer from, the nature of the medication (and its secondary effects), your doctor's prognosis, the particular policies of individual orders, to name the most obvious.

You must also consider the fact that if you suffer from a social anxiety disorder, there is at least the possibility that the silence and prayer of contemplative life might seem like a very attractive relief to you. From the outside it is difficult to realize just how demanding the contemplative life is, and it requires pretty robust mental health.

I would recommend that you gather full information on your condition (mostly, the points I mention in the first paragraph above) and then speak over a period of time with the vocation directresses of several contemplative convents. If they all tend to dissuade you from pursuing the contemplative vocation, you can be pretty sure that this is a sign from God that it is not your calling. If any of them do encourage you, make sure to tell them that other convents have tried to dissuade you, just to be honest and get a balanced opinion.

-Fr Anthony

Meditation- 2nd Sunday in Lent

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"Finding Christ in Prayer"
Mark 9:2-10

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Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I believe in your love and I trust in your love. I want to love you as you deserve to be loved, because when I was nothing you gave me life, and when I was far from you, you redeemed me. My soul is open for you to speak to me in this prayer.

Petition: Lord, grant me the grace to know you as you are, and to realize what you want me to be. By baptism you have transformed me and called me to be an apostle of your love, but I am weak and I need your grace to be faithful to that call.

1. Perseverance in Prayer. A prophet is not recognized among his own. If this was true for Jesus all the more he needed to remind the disciples, who lived day in and out with him, of who he was. At times our relationship with Christ can unwittingly slip into this familiarity. Difficult moments arise and, sadly enough, we seek out consolation from people and other sources of comfort before we turn to Christ. Jesus never abandons us yet we sometimes forget he is there. He is not just one more friend alongside us: he is Lord and Savior.

Why do we allow fear to enter our hearts if we believe? It is because, like the disciples, we really don't know him; or what we know of the Lord is just a glimpse of his fullness. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The

disciple's experiential leap of faith in Jesus, the Nazarene, to Jesus, the Son of God, is the fruit of grace given in prayer. Like climbing the mountain, our daily perseverance in prayer brings us closer to experience the presence and power of Christ in our life.

2. Consolation in Prayer. It is good to be here. Peter manifests the joy of beholding the transfigured Christ, fruit of an arduous ascent to the pinnacle of Mt. Tabor. Peter's experience of Christ, though, was not given just to James, John and him alone. Many more saints have since seen and contemplated the face of God; some even in apparent dismal times of persecution or spiritual darkness. Intimacy with Christ is a universal invitation. Christ desires to reveal his divinity to all. The gateway is prayer.

Prayer, like ascending a mountain, comes at a high price. Perhaps this is why many times we are reluctant to pray because we know it does not come easy. Like the skilled mountain climber, we need to need to focus on the top as we pick our way forward; it makes all the effort worthwhile. When we are resolved to pray and persevere despite the tiredness or dryness, the Father delights in our efforts and sends the Holy Spirit to help us experience the intimacy of Jesus, his son. Nothing can compare with the genuine experience of Christ.

3. "They Saw No One with Them Anymore But Only Jesus." The dynamics of prayer are simple. Only God can satisfy the needs of our soul. Our hearts remain restless until they rest in you (St Augustine). The desire for prayer originates in our state as creatures aware of our dependence upon God, our Creator. No one man can call God, Abba (Father), if not by the Holy Spirit. Our prayer is made possible by the divine prompting of the Spirit. . This was the experience of the disciples. They came to Jesus to come and see who he was. Jesus invites them to now go further in this relationship by committing to accompany him up the mountain. There they experienced the marvelous sign and wonder of the Transfiguration. Peter, James and John found great consolation in it. Consolation in prayer is significant, but the true fruit of prayer is an increase in our practical faith in Jesus Christ, shown in the way we live our daily life.

After the awe of being among the greatest prophets and hearing Jesus' Sonship and Divinity proclaimed by the Father, now Peter, James and John find themselves alone with the Lord no longer transfigured, the ordinary, every-day Jesus. They head back down the mountain to their ordinary, every-day life. This is how our prayer should be. Our prayer is not to experience the consolations of God but to experience the God of consolation. When our experience of Christ is genuine in prayer, we get back into our daily life with a renewed sense of his presence, a renewed sense of what he expects of us, and with the strength and will to do it, even when it is difficult and our feelings are adverse.

Conversation: I want to see your face, Lord, and live. For me to live is Christ and therefore I resolve to seek you in prayer. Strengthen me to live your Will today so that the relationship and friendship I have sought in this time of prayer will remain unbroken and even strengthened throughout my day.

Questionnaire:

1. How well do I know Christ? Do I have a personal relationship with him, in which I speak with him habitually about my deepest desires and needs?
2. To what degree do I seek his consolation in prayer, and do I think my prayer is useless when I cannot feel his presence? What connection do I see between my prayer and they way I normally behave in my daily life?
3. What do I need to do in order to pray better and more sincerely?

You strengthen your will by accepting the reality of your vocation and the reality of who you are, with your limitations and qualities. Accept joyfully and happily the cross the Lord gives you to follow his way of the cross. The way to form your will is by coming out of yourself. Tear down the walls that isolate you. Open yourself to others! But you form your will above all when you are sincere in your daily activities. Be sincere with God at every moment of the day, tackle generously all that he asks of you, and bear the fruit he expects.

Begin the morning in prayer, really meaning what you say. This means overcoming tiredness and any adverse feelings in order to listen to what the Lord is telling you to do. Next there is your study time; renew your love here, too, be loyal to yourself, spare no sacrifice. And when it's time to relax and have fun, God wants you to be charitable and thoughtful of others..., and so on, in everything you do.

Special

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"It Took 40 Days..."
excerpt from a Biblical Reflection of Ash Wednesday
Father Thomas Rosica, CSB

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Why are there 40 days in Lent? It took 40 days for sinfulness to drown in the flood before a new creation could inherit the earth. It took 40 years for the generation of slaves to die before the freeborn could enter the Promised Land. For 40 days Moses, Elijah and Jesus fasted and prayed to prepare themselves for a life's work.

Lent invites us to turn from our own selves, from our sin, to come together in community. Self-denial is the way we express our repentance. Self-denial is threefold, advises Matthew's Gospel.

We pray: "Go to your room, close your door, and pray to your Father in private."

We fast: "No one must see you are fasting but your Father."

We give alms: "Keep your deeds of mercy secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Through the Lenten exercise of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we spring-clean our lives, sharpen our senses, put tomorrow in its place and treasure the day at hand.

One of the three Lenten practices open to most misinterpretation today is that of fasting. Fasting has become an ambiguous practice. In antiquity, only religious fasting was known; today, political and social fasting exists (hunger strikes), health and ideological fasting (vegetarians), pathological fasting (anorexia), aesthetic fasting (the cult of the body -- believing that thinner is better). There is, above all, a fast imposed by necessity: that of millions of human beings who lack the indispensable minimum and die of hunger.

These fasts in themselves have nothing to do with religious or aesthetic reasons. In aesthetic fasting at times one can even "mortify" the vice of gluttony only to obey another capital vice, that of pride or vanity. Fasting, in itself, is something good and advisable; it translates some fundamental religious attitudes: reverence before God, acknowledgment of one's sins, resistance to the desires of the flesh, concern for and solidarity with the poor. ... As with all human things, however, it can fall into "presumption of the flesh." Remember the words of the Pharisee in the temple: "I fast twice a week" (Luke 18:12).

Lent is a time for us to discover the reasons for the pious practices, disciplines and devotions of our Catholic

Christian tradition. What have we done with the important Lenten practice of fasting? If Jesus were here to speak to disciples of today, what would he stress most? We regard as more important the need to "share bread with the hungry and clothe the naked"; we are in fact ashamed to call ours a "fast," when what would be for us the height of austerity -- to be on bread and water -- for millions of people would already be an extraordinary luxury, especially if it is fresh bread and clean water.

In his message for Lent 2009, Benedict XVI writes: "At the same time, fasting is an aid to open our eyes to the situation in which so many of our brothers and sisters live. In his First Letter, St. John admonishes: 'If anyone has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need, yet shuts up his bowels of compassion from him -- how does the love of God abide in him?' Voluntary fasting enables us to grow in the spirit of the Good Samaritan, who bends low and goes to the help of his suffering brother.

Courtesy of Zenit

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
 Retreats for Women

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: March 20-22, April 8-12, April 24-26, May 22-25, June 19-21, 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.

Test Your Call Weekends, Canada! Experience the novitiate in Cornwall, ON 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. April 9-12, 2009. For more information, please contact Br. Xavier Kleinermann de Lance at xkleinermann@legionaries.org or (001) 613-203-3776.

Holy Week Missions in Mexico! Door to door evangelization missions in Guadalajara, Mexico for young men ages 15-25. Spend 10 days spreading the faith like the first apostles. Training provided. Sponsored by the Legion of Christ. Cost \$550 plus airfare. For more information please contact Fr. Daniel Wilson at dwilson@legionaries.org or (914)409-2930.

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 dates: March 20-23, May 22-25, and July 10-13

Holy Week Vocational Discernment Retreat. Greenville, RI. A vocational discernment convention featuring conferences, meditations, and opportunities for Mass, Confession and spiritual direction, for young women ages 16-30, interested in discerning a vocation to the consecrated life. Sponsored by the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi. April 8-13. For more information please contact Jill Swallow at vocation@inteducators.org or 401-949-2820.

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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