



take notice

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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"To Make the Complete Gift of Self to God"
excerpt of the Lenten Message 2009
Pope Benedict XVI

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From what I have said thus far, it seems abundantly clear that fasting represents an important ascetical practice, a spiritual arm to do battle against every possible disordered attachment to ourselves. Freely chosen detachment from the pleasure of food and other material goods helps the disciple of Christ to control the appetites of nature, weakened by original sin, whose negative effects impact the entire human person. Quite opportunely, an ancient hymn of the Lenten liturgy exhorts: "Utamur ergo parcius, / verbis cibis et potibus, / somno, iocis et arctius / perstemus in custodia – Let us use sparingly words, food and drink, sleep and amusements. May we be more alert in the custody of our senses."

Dear brothers and sisters, it is good to see how the ultimate goal of fasting is to help each one of us, as the Servant of God Pope John Paul II wrote, to make the complete gift of self to God (cf. Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, 21). May every family and Christian community use well this time of Lent, therefore, in order to cast aside all that distracts the spirit and grow in whatever nourishes the soul, moving it to love of God and neighbor. I am thinking especially of a greater commitment to prayer, *lectio divina*, recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and active participation in the Eucharist, especially the Holy Sunday Mass. With this interior disposition, let us enter the penitential spirit of Lent. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Causa nostrae laetitiae*, accompany and support us in the effort to free our heart from slavery to sin, making it evermore a "living tabernacle of God." With these wishes, while assuring every believer and ecclesial community of my prayer for a fruitful Lenten journey, I cordially impart to all of you my Apostolic Blessing.

Q & A

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"He Will Lead You"
with Fr Anthony Bannon, LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

Is it wrong for a seminarian to have doubts about his vocation to the priesthood?

-Todd

A. Dear Todd,

You have to be able to tell the difference between fear, questions, humility and doubt. When we bunch them together we can get confused, and much also depends on how we react to them.

It is quite healthy to fear the priesthood. It is absolutely necessary to know that we are not worthy of it - not just to say we know, but in our heart of hearts to be convinced that if it were not for God's grace and call it would be presumptuous for us to take it upon ourselves, and impossible for us to persevere in our commitment as priests.

As regards doubts, we have to distinguish and reflect further. Some doubts may certainly be God speaking to us and leading us elsewhere, and other doubts may be no more than temptations.

Seminary is a time of discernment. Some discernment has to have taken place before you joined the seminary, but in the seminary itself there is further discernment to be done. The bishop through his representatives has to discern if you truly are called since he is the one who will receive and ordain you for the Church. And you, for your part, have to reach the deep, internal conviction of your own vocation and learn to base your life on a set of habits, dispositions and practices that will help you persevere in your call.

Let us look first of all at some things you cannot doubt: God calls some men to be priests. When he calls them they still are men, with the weakness that is inherent to being a man, he does not turn them into angels. Priesthood always entails sacrifice. It is necessary that there be priests. You are in the seminary. Christ's enemy is always going to try to entice you away from what God wants. Grace exists; it builds on nature but does not substitute for nature.

You cannot resolve your doubts on your own. When confronting them you need to ask for outside help, in the form of your spiritual director. He is in a better position than you to ask the proper questions and help you reflect, and at some stage to give you an honest opinion whether your doubts are the usual temptations or a sign of something else. And once your doubts are cleared up, you have to realize that if the same ones surface again they are most probably temptations and you must treat them as such. It is no virtue to be constantly questioning. There must come a stage when you forge ahead in faith and thrive on difficulties rather than be disoriented by them.

Meanwhile, give yourself heart and soul to Christ in your prayer and seminary duties, and be absolutely confident that he will lead you and take care of you.

God bless.

-Fr Anthony

Q & A

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"Think, Examine, and Pray"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

Hi! I've been running away from a possible calling to religious life for quite some time, and finally God's graces have helped me honestly open up to it. (Woo hoo! Peace at last! Praise God!) Being human and all, I question how much to trust my emotions throughout this entire discernment process, which is surely far from over.

For the past month or so (until about a week ago), my dating relationship with a good, holy friend became sorta strained. We prayed over what to do (knowing that I've not yet discerned my vocation), and it became apparent that I need time & space to focus on Christ in order to listen to where He wants to lead me... Sooo, I've discovered that it's truly amazing how freeing it is to surrender oneself to God, and also puzzling that I've been running away from this peace for so long!! (Why???)

Upon objective reflection on myself & my personality, I've concluded so far that I fit religious life pretty well (or it fits me, or however that works). I get all excited when I think about bringing people to Christ/bringing Him to others (although I've been enthusiastic about this for a long time) and want to do this full time, regardless of my vocation. When I think of being forever separated from my aforementioned friend, I get all worked up again [emotional roller coaster!], but I'm learning to go to Jesus with it and ask Mary for help, too. Besides, I want to give Jesus a fair chance at my heart.

Ok, in addition to the emotional moments I just wrote about, I had some intense feelings/pullings several days ago when some sisters from a teaching (active/contemplative) order visited our Catholic Campus Center. There was this burning inside my chest I can't describe as the young, lively sisters told their vocation stories--not one of 'em didn't hit me somehow. What was this feeling? The next day, I suddenly had doubts

like, "I can't handle the contemplative part," and "what if God asks me to leave school here early to enter the postulancy there?" So I've tried giving these to Christ, too, since I know that I need to live here & now, taking care of what He's given me at this point & enjoying His gifts at this time, letting HIM take care of my future. I intend to visit this congregation within the next month or two (& live there next summer if God leads me there), but in the mean time I don't know whether to listen to any emotions/feelings I have or ignore them & let them run their course (or do something in between). Any suggestions/comments?

-Ashley

A. Dear Ashley,

The short answer on emotions is, don't trust them. When they are present and make things easier, enjoy them while you can, but don't trust them. Even when you feel great about things you have to think, examine, pray, and base your decisions on what you discover there. The premise for all your decisions must be that your feelings are going to change. What shouldn't be your reasons, your faith, your love.

-Fr Anthony

Meditation- Palm Sunday

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"I Will Never Abandon You"

Mark 14:1-15:47

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They went then to a place named Gethsemane. Sit down here while I pray, he said to his disciples; at the same time he took along with him Peter, James, and John. Then he began to be filled with fear and distress. He said to them, "My heart is filled with sorrow to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake." He advanced a little and fell to the ground, praying that if it were possible this hour might pass him by. He kept saying, "Abba (O Father), you have the power to do all things. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you would have it, not as I." When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Asleep, Simon? You could not stay awake for even an hour? Be on guard and pray that you may not be put to the test. The spirit is willing but nature is weak." Going back again, he began to pray in the same words. Once again he found them asleep on his return. They could not keep their eyes open, nor did they know what to say to him. He returned a third time and said to them, "Still sleeping? Still taking your ease? It will have to do. The hour is upon us. You will see that the Son of Man is to be handed over to the clutches of evil men. Rouse yourselves and come along. See! My betrayer is near." Even while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, made his appearance accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs; these people had been sent by the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. The betrayer had arranged a signal for them, saying, "The man I shall embrace is the one; arrest him and lead him away, taking every precaution." He then went directly over to him and said, "Rabbi! and embraced him." At this they laid hands on him and arrested him. One of the bystanders drew his sword and struck the high priest's slave, cutting off his ear. Addressing himself to them, Jesus said, "You have come out to arrest me armed with swords and clubs as if against a brigand. I was within your reach daily, teaching in the temple precincts, yet you never arrested me; but now, so that the Scriptures may be fulfilled." With that all deserted him and fled. While Peter was down in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came along. When she noticed Peter warming himself, she looked at him more closely and said, "You too were with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it: "I do not know what you are talking about! What are you getting at?" Then he went out into the gateway. At that moment a cock crowed. The servant girl, keeping an eye on him, started again to tell the bystanders, "This man is one of them." Once again he denied it. A little later the bystanders said to Peter once more, "You are certainly one of them! You are a Galilean, are you not?" He began to curse and swear, "I do not even know the man you are

talking about!" Just then a second cockcrow was heard, and Peter recalled the prediction Jesus had made to him: "Before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times." He broke down and began to cry.

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, your passion and death are a testimony of your faithful love for your Father and for us. You were faithful to the point of shedding your blood and dying on a cross. No power in heaven or on earth, not even the natural fear you felt as a man, could stop you from loving in a total, faithful and absolute way. Lord, you know how different my love is. You know my love is weak and frail, and prone to fall. I pledge to meditate on your example, asking you for the grace and strength to love you more faithfully.

Petition: Lord, may this meditation on your faithfulness and my weakness in love increase my hope and trust in you, and obtain for me the grace to grow in faithfulness.

1. Sorrowful to the Point of Death. He said to them, "My heart is filled with sorrow to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake." Jesus shares the deep sorrow of his heart with his most intimate followers. He tries to express how deep his sorrow is. His human nature is seeking loyal and faithful support from his closest friends. How many times had Jesus strengthened the apostles when they were weak and comforted them in their trials! He was always faithful. Now, perhaps for the first time, he seeks some human comfort from them. He seeks the consolation of knowing that they will be with him, close to him, helping him carry the weight of the cross. But even this joy is denied him. At the moment when he needs them most, the apostles fail him. Jesus soul is sorrowful to the point of death, and the apostles fall asleep. Contemplate the soul of Jesus stripped of every consolation, left alone by those closest to him. Thank him for his faithful love.

2. "I don't even know the man." When she noticed Peter warming himself, she looked at him more closely and said, "You too were with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it: "I do not know what you are talking about!" Just a few hours earlier Peter was making bold promises to our Lord: "Even if all abandon you, I will never abandon you. I will die with you." Peter's intentions were no doubt genuine. He desired with all his heart to live by his words and be faithful to Christ. He didn't fail in his desires, but rather in the will to carry them out. He failed because he trusted more in his own strength than in the strength that comes from God. He has underestimated his own weakness in the face of mortal danger. He was not yet ready to be a martyr. Jesus saw it coming and warned him, "Watch and pray," but to no avail. Peter had thought he himself had all the strength he needed, and ended up denying his Lord, the Lord he truly loved. How this would later break his heart and help him come to know first hand how much he depended on God! How true were the words of the Master that he was the vine and we are the branches! Our faithfulness depends on him.

3. He broke down and began to cry. Until this moment Peter's fears and self love dominated his thoughts, words, and actions. He was temporarily seized and controlled by them. His emotions reached fever pitch when the crowd recognized him as one of them. Before he realized what he was saying, he had denied the one he loved most, his Lord and Master. When the cock cried out a second time, scales fell from his eyes and he saw the crude reality of what he had done. He had publicly shown that he was ashamed of Jesus, swearing that he did not know him. He had betrayed him in such a cowardly way. Intense sorrow filled his heart, and he broke down and began to weep. He prayed like he had never prayed before, asking God for forgiveness. Heartfelt contrition is necessary for true humility, for emptying ourselves of self-sufficiency and making room for the grace of God. Only when we are empty of self can God's grace fill our souls and become the true source of our faithfulness.

Conversation: Lord Jesus, you call me, like Peter and the apostles, to share in your mission of saving the world through the virtue of faithfulness. You have shown me that the way to fidelity necessarily demands the steep and rugged road of the cross. Contemplating your passion fills my heart with love and gratitude for all you have suffered for love of me. You were faithful throughout the test and interior battle in Gethsemane, the arrest, trial, scourging, humiliation, crowning of thorns, carrying of the cross, and bloody crucifixion. You know that I am too like Peter, filled with noble ideals and heroic resolutions but stubbornly trusting in myself more than your grace. You know how easily I abandon the virtue of faithfulness in my own life. From this day forward I promise to renew my trust and confidence in you, to unite myself with you through intense prayer, and to foment a heartfelt contrition for my failings. Lord Jesus, I trust in you.

Questionnaire:

1. What goes through my mind when I see the struggle Jesus had to go through in Gethsemane, and how he resolves it? What does it tell me about myself and my own battles?
2. In what occasions do for all practical purposes say, "I do not know the man" when Christ might be expecting something else of me?
3. Compared to Peter's tears, how heartfelt is my sorrow for my sins?

Spirituality

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"Living the Essence of the Gospel"

We have to show our love for God by giving ourselves to our brother and our sister in need. We find great joy and an incentive to give ourselves when we understand that our whole commission is to live the Gospel of our Lord as faithfully and authentically as possible. Giving ourselves to the apostolate with everyone we meet is living the essence of the Gospel. We are always in danger of easily misleading ourselves and falling into a subjective piety we measure by the amount of pious practices and devotions we do, while all the time ignoring the Gospel through our insensitivity toward our neighbor. Christ gives us a golden rule to tell authentic Christianity from the sham: do I love God in my neighbor? Do I love my neighbor for God's sake? Does my love for my neighbor move me to help and serve him and live the role of the good Samaritan?

Special

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"The Power to Shape the Future Is Within You"
excerpt from the Papal Address to the Youth at Dos Coqueiros
Stadium
Pope Benedict XVI

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Meeting young people is good for everyone! You may have your share of difficulties, but you are filled with great hope, great enthusiasm and a great desire to make a new beginning. My young friends, you hold within yourselves the power to shape the future. I encourage you to look to that future through the eyes of the Apostle John. Saint John tells us: "I saw a new Heaven and a new earth ... and I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven, from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold the dwelling of God is with men'" (Rev 21:1-3). Dear young people, God makes all the difference. His special presence among us begins with his easy intimacy with the first couple in the garden of Eden; it continues with the divine glory which shone forth from the Tent of Meeting in the midst of the People of Israel during their journey through the desert, and it culminates in the incarnation of the Son of God who became inseparably one with humanity in Jesus Christ. Jesus himself traversed the desert of our humanity and, passing beyond death, he rose from the dead and now draws all humanity with himself towards God. Jesus is no longer confined to a particular place and time. His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, flows forth from him, enters our hearts and thus joins us to him,

and with him to the Father -- to the God who is one and three.

Yes, my friends! God makes all the difference ... and more! God changes us; he makes us new! This is what he has promised: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). It is true! The Apostle Paul tells us: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled himself to us" (2 Cor 5:17-18). In ascending to Heaven and entering eternity, Jesus Christ has become the Lord of all ages. So he can walk with us as a friend in the present, carrying in his hand the book of our days. In his hand he also holds the past, the foundation and source of our life. He also carefully holds the future, allowing us to catch a glimpse of the most beautiful dawn we will ever see: the dawn that radiates from him, the dawn of the Resurrection. God is the future of a new humanity, which is anticipated in his Church. When you have a chance, take time to read the Church's history. You will find that the Church does not grow old with the passing of the years. Rather, she grows younger, for she is journeying towards her Lord, day by day drawing nearer to the one true fountain overflowing with youthfulness, rebirth, the power of life.

Dear young people, the future is God. As we have just heard, "he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4). At present though, and even in our midst, I see some of the many thousands of young Angolans who have been maimed or disabled as a result of the war and the landmines. I think of the countless tears that have been shed for the loss of your relatives and friends. It is not hard to imagine the dark clouds that still veil the horizon of your fondest hopes and dreams. In your hearts I see doubt, a doubt which you have expressed to me today. You are saying: "Here is what we have. There is no visible sign of the things you are talking about! The promise is backed by God's word -- and we believe it -- but when will God arise and renew all things?" Jesus' answer is the one he gave to his disciples: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" (Jn 14:1-2). But you persist, dear young people: "Yes! But when will this happen?" The Apostles asked Jesus a similar question, and his answer was: "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8). See how Jesus does not leave us without an answer; he tells us one thing very clearly: renewal starts from within; you will receive a power from on high. The power to shape the future is within you.

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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Northeast



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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: 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: 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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