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- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [About Us](#)

Holy Father »

Q & A »

Q & A »

Meditation - 6th Sunday in Easter »

Spirituality »

Special »

breaking news Vatican »

breaking news USA »

the Church worldwide »

this week in ShoreLines

On the Significance of Christ's Resurrection

Vulnerable Hearts

To Call

Intimate Friendship with the Lord

The Life of Grace

Novena to the Holy Spirit for the Seven Gifts

this week in the Church

Benedict XVI Requests Prayers for Holy Land Trip (Zenit)
Pope to Kids: Now is the Time to Be Missionaries (Zenit)

Confession Questions from the Pew (Zenit)
US Prelate Urges Patriotism in Sacramental Life (Zenit)
Coadjutor Takes Leadership of Winona Diocese (Zenit)

Number of Diocesan Priests Going Up (Zenit)
On Mary's Example of Womanly Virtue (Zenit)
Madrid Launches World Youth Day Logo Contest (Zenit)
Augustinian Bishop to Lead Lancaster Diocese (Zenit)

Holy Father

[«« Return to top](#)
[Jump to next segment »»](#)

"On the Significance of Christ's Resurrection"
excerpt from April 19, 2009 address
Pope Benedict XVI

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In the Pascal mystery the words of Scripture are fulfilled, that is, this death realized "according to the Scriptures" is an event that carries a "logos" in itself, a logic: Christ's death testifies that the Word of God became human "flesh," human "history," without reserve. How and why this happened, we understand from the other addition Paul makes: Christ died "for our sins." With these words the

Pauline text takes up the prophecy of Isaiah contained in the fourth song of the Servant of God (cf. Isaiah 53:12). The Servant of God -- the song says -- "surrendered himself to death," bore "the sins of the world," and interceding for the "guilty" was able to bring the gift of reconciliation among men and between men and God: his is a death therefore that puts an end to death; the way of the cross leads to the resurrection.

In the verses that follow, the Apostle pauses over the Lord's resurrection. He says that Christ "rose on the third day according to the Scriptures." Again: "according to the Scriptures!" Not a few exegetes see in the expression "[he] rose on the third day according to the Scriptures" a significant reference to Psalm 16, where the Psalmist proclaims: "You will not abandon me in the netherworld, nor let his faithful one undergo corruption" (16:10). This is one of the texts of the Old Testament that was cited by early Christians to prove Jesus' messianic character. Since, according to the understanding of Judaism, corruption began after the third day, the word of Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus who rises on the third day, that is, before corruption set in. St. Paul, faithfully transmitting the doctrine of the Apostles, stresses that the victory of Christ over death happens through the creative power of God's Word. This divine power brings hope and joy: this is the definitive liberating content of the Easter revelation. God reveals himself and the power of the trinitarian love that annihilates the destructive forces of evil and death in the events of Easter.

courtesy of Zenit

Q & A

«« Return to top
Jump to next segment »»

"Vulnerable Hearts"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

I had a call 6 months or so ago to become a Priest. I have quite a bit of time before I actually am going to go to the seminary. But lately I have been fighting with this question in my head, so my question for you is: "Is it OK to date in high school when you are looking into the priesthood?" Well, Father Anthony, if you could help me on this question it would put my mind at one big rest and help me continue to be a holy man and get closer to God.

-Brendan

A. Dear Brendan,

I think it all depends on what you mean by dating. If you mean "getting into a serious relationship", then I would not only not recommend it to a high-schooler thinking of the priesthood, but to any high-schooler. It is too soon, and in most cases it becomes more than one can handle.

Some kids call normal friendships dating, well I think normal friendships are OK and good, but they are not dating; you just have several friends among them girls and you do things together, maybe even there is one you like more than the others.

If you mean by dating zeroing in on a particular person and giving her most of your attention, trying to spend time with her, etc then I think you have to ask yourself what is going to happen. Our hearts are very vulnerable. You can very easily create false expectations for you and her, and it can easily lead to the "serious relationship".

Remember too, that if God is calling you to be a priest he needs you to be human, so he won't change your

nature. And that means that you will always have in your nature as regards girls, initially an interest and curiosity, which can become friendship, which discovers complementarities, which encourages desire, our heart makes itself felt, and our instincts as well... Which all means that if you discover you are called to the priesthood you are going to have to learn to relate to girls in a different way, exercise some caution and restraint.

God bless.

-Fr Anthony

Q & A

[«« Return to top](#)
[Jump to next segment »»](#)

"To Call"
with Fr Anthony Bannon LC

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Q. Dear Fr Anthony,

A friend of mine has defined "vocation" to mean "the deepest desire of your heart". I believe that this definition speaks to one aspect of what a vocation is, but it seems inadequate. She argues that since the deepest desire of her heart has always been to be married and have children, and she hasn't any inclination to any other vocation, that she couldn't possibly have a vocation to the consecrated life or the religious life. I am unsure of how to answer her, as I see signs that she might be called to the consecrated life. Any thoughts? Thank you very much!

-Michelle

A. Dear Michelle,

Your friend is right in a way, ("You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our souls are not at rest until they rest in you." St Augustine), but this does not specifically address the essence of a vocation, which is a "call". The word comes from the Latin for "to call". It is God's doing in our souls.

Our deepest longing is not the defining element of the vocation; as a matter of fact it often turns out the other way around: we discover the real longings of our heart and soul when we discover our vocation. I know many who longed for marriage, but on perceiving a possible vocation and answering it, giving it a chance, they discovered a dimension to themselves that they didn't know was there, the profound spiritual dimension, and a capacity to correspond with total spiritual and practical love to a total call God was giving them.

God bless.

Meditation - 6th Sunday in Easter

[«« Return to top](#)
[Jump to next segment »»](#)

"Intimate Friendship with the Lord"
John 15:9-17

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Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you

keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I desire to spend this time with you and to be present with you in the Upper Room to experience the depth of your personal love for me. I believe in your love for me, I trust in the redemption you gained for me, and I pledge to never abandon you, and to dedicate my life to showing you my love in the way I treat others.

Petition: Lord, I ask for the grace to remain in your love, fulfilling your command of charity. Send your Holy Spirit into my heart to enable me to grow in my love for you.

1. The Depths of Jesus' Love. Jesus makes a startling revelation: He says that the love he has for us, his disciples, is the same as the love the Father has for him. Here is the remarkable thing: the Father "cannot help" loving the Son, for the Son is full of perfection, he is the perfect image of the Father, he is God and Goodness... So the Father's love for the Son is explicable. But we are sinners, and yet Jesus says he loves us as intensely, as sincerely as the Father loves him. Before even the world came to be, the Father and the Son were immersed in boundless, mutual love. The Holy Spirit is this bond of love. The intimacy of the union and self-giving of the Blessed Trinity surpasses any human comparison, and yet Our Lord tells his disciples he loves us in the same way. This shows the depth of Jesus' love for us. It is not a passing feeling, it is not superficial, it won't ever end. It is the one thing we can always depend upon in life.

2. The Cost of Love. The circumstances and timing when Jesus chose to let his disciples in on his great truth are striking. It was not a moment in which everything was going fine. On the contrary, he is just a few hours away from giving his life for them, he is a very short time away from the moment in which his love for them and the Father will be severely put to the test –in Gethsemane every human fiber in him will cry out to his Father if there is not some other way to save us. He will then be abandoned and betrayed by those he now calls friends. Yet Jesus will say to his Father, "not my will but yours be done." With his actions Jesus shows us that when he says he loves us he means he will be faithful to us, no matter what the personal cost to him, and no matter how weak we are. Love is what Jesus gives us freely, it is not a repayment for some great thing we have done for him. Jesus also offers me his friendship. He invites me to remain in his love. I am not called to be a spectator, but to learn from him and "do likewise".

3. Bear Fruit, Love One Another. Jesus says that he has appointed us to go forth and bear abundant fruit. Our following of Christ is not something to be hidden. Love can't be hidden, it has to express itself. And he tells us that the way to bear fruit is by loving one another as he has loved us. But how could he ever love in the same way? How could we ever be as generous with our enemies? How could we ever be as faithful to our friends? Yet that is the command, not suggestion but command that Christ gives us. How can he make such a demand and hope for it to be fulfilled? Because he sent us his very own Spirit. The first Christians, the martyrs down through the ages, our suffering brothers and sisters today, the missionaries and the Mother Theresa's, so many faithful spouses and parents and spouses, all show us that self-sacrificing love is possible, and not only possible but the secret to happiness and the source of hope for the world. This is the challenge that Jesus lays down for me, "love as I have loved." Love is the badge of every true Christian.

Conversation: Jesus, I pray that I will never cease to be astonished by the depths of your personal love for me. You call me your friend even though I have not always lived up to the demands of this calling. I want to be a better and truer friend of yours.

Questionnaire:

1. Can I say I really appreciate the gratuity of Christ's love for me? Do I really believe he "didn't have to" love me?
2. Have I reflected enough on what it cost Christ to love me? How does my one love for him and the souls God has entrusted to me compare with his?
3. Is "love" still a mushy, abstract idea for me, or does it mean something real and tangible? What can I do to improve my love for God and my love for my neighbor?

Spirituality

[«« Return to top](#)
[Jump to next segment »»](#)

"The Life of Grace"

The life of grace is God's own life living and breathing in us, a life won by Christ when he destroyed sin by dying on the cross and which he has communicated to us from his resurrection on. Our whole Christian life consists in growing more and more as children of God, until we achieve the maturity of Christ's disciples.

But we should not regard our Christian life as a totally private matter. It is given to us to spread to those among whom we live, like a torch radiates its light about it. St. Peter reminds the first Christians of their obligation to give light from their place in the world like torches in the dark.

Special

[«« Return to top](#)
[Jump to next segment »»](#)

"Novena to the Holy Spirit for the Seven Gifts"
to begin Friday after Ascension or Friday of 6th Week of Easter
courtesy Catholic.net

FOREWORD

The novena in honor of the Holy Spirit is the oldest of all novenas since it was first made at the direction of our Lord himself when he sent his apostles back to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost. It is still the only novena officially prescribed by the Church. Addressed to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, it is a powerful plea for the light and strength and love so sorely needed by every Christian.

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

To be recited daily during the Novena

On my knees I before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses I offer myself, soul and body to You, Eternal Spirit of God. I adore the brightness of Your purity, the unerring keenness of Your justice, and the might of Your love. You are the Strength and Light of my soul. In You I live and move and am. I desire never to grieve You by unfaithfulness to grace and I pray with all my heart to be kept from the smallest sin against You. Mercifully guard my every thought and grant that I may always watch for Your light, and listen to Your voice, and follow Your gracious inspirations. I cling to You and give myself to You and ask You, by Your

compassion to watch over me in my weakness. Holding the pierced Feet of Jesus and looking at His Five Wounds, and trusting in His Precious Blood and adoring His opened Side and stricken Heart, I implore You, Adorable Spirit, Helper of my infirmity, to keep me in Your grace that I may never sin against You. Give me grace O Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Father and the Son to say to You always and everywhere, "Speak Lord for Your servant heareth." Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To be recited daily during the Novena

O Lord Jesus Christ Who, before ascending into heaven did promise to send the Holy Spirit to finish Your work in the souls of Your Apostles and Disciples, deign to grant the same Holy Spirit to me that He may perfect in my soul, the work of Your grace and Your love. Grant me the Spirit of Wisdom that I may despise the perishable things of this world and aspire only after the things that are eternal, the Spirit of Understanding to enlighten my mind with the light of Your divine truth, the Spirit on Counsel that I may ever choose the surest way of pleasing God and gaining heaven, the Spirit of Fortitude that I may bear my cross with You and that I may overcome with courage all the obstacles that oppose my salvation, the Spirit of Knowledge that I may know God and know myself and grow perfect in the science of the Saints, the Spirit of Piety that I may find the service of God sweet and amiable, and the Spirit of Fear that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God and may dread in any way to displease Him. Mark me, dear Lord with the sign of Your true disciples, and animate me in all things with Your Spirit. Amen.

The Novena begins on the day after the Solemnity of the Ascension, Friday of the 6th Week of Easter, even if the Solemnity of the Ascension is transferred to the 7th Sunday.

FIRST DAY (Friday after Ascension or Friday of 6th Week of Easter)

Holy Spirit! Lord of Light! From Your clear celestial height, Your pure beaming radiance give!

The Holy Spirit

Only one thing is important -- eternal salvation. Only one thing, therefore, is to be feared--sin• Sin is the result of ignorance, weakness, and indifference The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Light, of Strength, and of Love. With His sevenfold gifts He enlightens the mind, strengthens the will, and inflames the heart with love of God. To ensure our salvation we ought to invoke the Divine Spirit daily, for "The Spirit helpeth our infirmity. We know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit Himself asketh for us."

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, Who hast vouchsafed to regenerate us by water and the Holy Spirit, and hast given us forgiveness all sins, vouchsafe to send forth from heaven upon us your sevenfold Spirit, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of Knowledge and Piety, and fill us with the Spirit of Holy Fear. Amen.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts

SECOND DAY (Saturday of 6th Week of Easter)

Come. Father of the poor. Come, treasures which endure; Come, Light of all that live!

The Gift of Fear

The gift of Fear fills us with a sovereign respect for God, and makes us dread nothing so much as to offend

Him by sin. It is a fear that arises, not from the thought of hell, but from sentiments of reverence and filial submission to our heavenly Father. It is the fear that is the beginning of wisdom, detaching us from worldly pleasures that could in any way separate us from God. "They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and in His sight will sanctify their souls."

Prayer

Come, O blessed Spirit of Holy Fear, penetrate my inmost heart, that I may set you, my Lord and God, before my face forever, help me to shun all things that can offend You, and make me worthy to appear before the pure eyes of Your Divine Majesty in heaven, where You live and reign in the unity of the ever Blessed Trinity, God world without end. Amen.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts

THIRD DAY (7th Sunday of Easter or transferred Ascension)

Thou, of all consolers best, Visiting the troubled breast, Dost refreshing peace bestow.

The Gift of Piety

The gift of Piety begets in our hearts a filial affection for God as our most loving Father. It inspires us to love and respect for His sake persons and things consecrated to Him, as well as those who are vested with His authority, His Blessed Mother and the Saints, the Church and its visible Head, our parents and superiors, our country and its rulers. He who is filled with the gift of Piety finds the practice of his religion, not a burdensome duty, but a delightful service. Where there is love, there is no labor.

Prayer

Come, O Blessed Spirit of Piety, possess my heart. Enkindle therein such a love for God, that I may find satisfaction only in His service, and for His sake lovingly submit to all legitimate authority. Amen.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts

FOURTH DAY (Monday, 7th Week of Easter)

Thou in toil art comfort sweet, Pleasant coolness in the heat, solace in the midst of woe.

The Gift of Fortitude By the gift of Fortitude the soul is strengthened against natural fear, and supported to the end in the performance of duty. Fortitude imparts to the will an impulse and energy which move it to under take without hesitancy the most arduous tasks, to face dangers, to trample under foot human respect, and to endure without complaint the slow martyrdom of even lifelong tribulation. "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved."

Prayer

Come, O Blessed Spirit of Fortitude, uphold my soul in time of trouble and adversity, sustain my efforts after holiness, strengthen my weakness, give me courage against all the assaults of my enemies, that I may never be overcome and separated from Thee, my God and greatest Good. Amen.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts

FIFTH DAY (Tuesday, 7th Week of Easter)

Light immortal! Light Divine! Visit Thou these hearts of Thine, And our inmost being fill!

The Gift of Knowledge

The gift of Knowledge enables the soul to evaluate created things at their true worth--in their relation to God. Knowledge unmask the pretense of creatures, reveals their emptiness, and points out their only true purpose as instruments in the service of God. It shows us the loving care of God even in adversity, and directs us to glorify Him in every circumstance of life. Guided by its light, we put first things first, and prize the friendship of God beyond all else. "Knowledge is a fountain of life to him that possesseth it."

Prayer

Come, O Blessed Spirit of Knowledge, and grant that I may perceive the will of the Father; show me the nothingness of earthly things, that I may realize their vanity and use them only for Thy glory and my own salvation, looking ever beyond them to Thee, and Thy eternal rewards. Amen.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts

SIXTH DAY (Wednesday, 7th Week of Easter)

If Thou take Thy grace away, nothing pure in man will stay, All his good is turn'd to ill.

The Gift of Understanding

Understanding, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, helps us to grasp the meaning of the truths of our holy religion BY faith we know them, but by Understanding we learn to appreciate and relish them. It enables us to penetrate the inner meaning of revealed truths and through them to be quickened to newness of life. Our faith ceases to be sterile and inactive, but inspires a mode of life that bears eloquent testimony to the faith that is in us; we begin to "walk worthy of God in all things pleasing, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Understanding, and enlighten our minds, that we may know and believe all the mysteries of salvation; and may merit at last to see the eternal light in Thy Light; and in the light of glory to have a clear vision of Thee and the Father and the Son. Amen.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts

SEVENTH DAY (Thursday, 7th Week of Easter)

Heal our wounds--our strength renews; On our dryness pour Thy dew, Wash the stains of guilt away.

The Gift of Counsel

The gift of Counsel endows the soul with supernatural prudence, enabling it to judge promptly and rightly what must be done, especially in difficult circumstances. Counsel applies the principles furnished by Knowledge and Understanding to the innumerable concrete cases that confront us in the course of our daily duty as

parents, teachers, public servants, and Christian citizens. Counsel is supernatural common sense, a priceless treasure in the quest of salvation. "Above all these things, pray to the Most High, that He may direct thy way in truth."

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Counsel, help and guide me in all my ways, that I may always do Thy holy will. Incline my heart to that which is good; turn it away from all that is evil, and direct me by the straight path of Thy commandments to that goal of eternal life for which I long.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts

EIGHTH DAY (Friday, 7th Week of Easter)

Bend the stubborn heart and will, melt the frozen warm the chill. Guide the steps that go astray!

The Gift of Wisdom

Embodying all the other gifts, as charity embraces all the other virtues, Wisdom is the most perfect of the gifts. Of wisdom it is written "all good things came to me with her, and innumerable riches through her hands." It is the gift of Wisdom that strengthens our faith, fortifies hope, perfects charity, and promotes the practice of virtue in the highest degree. Wisdom enlightens the mind to discern and relish things divine, in the appreciation of which earthly joys lose their savor, whilst the Cross of Christ yields a divine sweetness according to the words of the Saviour: "Take up thy cross and follow me, for my yoke is sweet and my burden light.

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Wisdom, and reveal to my soul the mysteries of heavenly things, their exceeding greatness, power and beauty. Teach me to love them above and beyond all the passing joys and satisfactions of earth. Help me to attain them and possess them for ever. Amen.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts

NINTH DAY (Saturday, Vigil of Pentecost)

Thou, on those who evermore Thee confess and Thee Adore, in Thy sevenfold gift, Descend; Give Them Comfort when they die; Give them Life with Thee on high; Give them joys which never end. Amen

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect the supernatural virtues by enabling us to practice them with greater docility to divine inspiration. As we grow in the knowledge and love of God under the direction of the Holy Spirit, our service becomes more sincere and generous, the practice of virtue more perfect. Such acts of virtue leave the heart filled with joy and consolation and are known as Fruits of the Holy Spirit. These Fruits in turn render the practice of virtue more attractive and become a powerful incentive for still greater efforts in the service of God, to serve Whom is to reign.

Prayer

Come, O Divine Spirit, fill my heart with Thy heavenly fruits, Thy charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity,

goodness, faith, mildness, and temperance, that I may never weary in the service of God, but by continued faithful submission to Thy inspiration may merit to be united eternally with Thee in the love of the Father and the Son. Amen.

Our Father and Hail Mary ONCE. Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES.

Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts.

Upcoming Events & Retreats

«« Return to top
Jump to next segment »»
Browse similar texts on the Web

((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))

the very latest

Select a region of the United States or Canada.

Northeast

- 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: 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.

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

ShoreLines

«« Return to top

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