

4 Easter A-B-C Vocations Sunday

Today is Vocations Sunday and the Church invites us to consider our own call from God. God has a task for each individual one of us to perform.

There is a **vocation that we all have in common** – which we received from God at our Baptism: namely, to be a sign of God's love in and for the world; to make that love present in our own persons, in our words and actions.

Within that general call to which we pledged a response when we were baptised there are specific vocations within the Christian family. There is the call to the ministerial priesthood, the vocation to marriage, the invitation to serve others in the single life, and the call to live out the Gospel in the fellowship of a community in religious life or in a secular institute.

We should develop our own sense of vocation: to recognise that our lives are directed by God towards the care of others. We should each and all ask: what is God wanting of me? Who am I called to serve?

Mother Theresa of Calcutta used to speak of 'the call within the call'. For each of us in our different states of life there are specific responsibilities to undertake, and particular forms of service we are asked to give. We must discern which way God wants us to go, which way the Lord is leading us.

Thus within the vocation of **ministerial priesthood** an individual may discover that God is calling him for a while – even long term - towards a particular area of concern. So there are priests who are teachers at secondary or tertiary level. There are those who feel called by God to work with young people, or with the terminally ill, with the destitute, or for issues of social justice.

Every diocesan priest who is involved in parish work must find out how best he may use the personal gifts of mind and heart and body with which he is endowed. He has to take account of his shortcomings and make the best use of his strengths, and in every way be true to himself so that he may be an instrument of God's grace in his own individual way. It would be wrong for one priest to try to copy another, or for people to expect all priests to be the same in their thinking, their capacities, and their priorities.

Within the vocation of the priesthood there are many demands and challenges. This is part of the attraction, the excitement of the ministry. Life is very full and very worthwhile. The priest experiences daily a share in the Crucifixion of Christ – and daily shares in the joy of his Resurrection. Today the Church invites all young men in our community to 'consider their calling' – perhaps God is asking you to share in this sublime form of service at the heart of the church's life?

Others from our community of faith are drawn by Divine Providence into **married life**. Within this vocation there are further calls from God:

Some married people are challenged with the demands of parenthood; others by the needs of their sick partners, relatives or in-laws. Others again are invited by God to care for children who have been abandoned or bereaved by their natural parents, or who have some special needs.

Some married couples exercise a ministry of hospitality, and their homes become refuges for many who experience trials and difficulties of all kinds. Others feel they can give support to those preparing for marriage, or perhaps give encouragement to those whose relationship is under stress.

All married people are called to reveal by their own loving something of the compassion and largesse of almighty God.

Within the Christian community there are many who are not called to marriage, or to the priesthood, or to the religious life. The ministry of the **single person** has always been of enormous importance in the pastoral care demonstrated by the Church. We should afford this role its true value.

Those who, in the providence of God, are free from the particular demands of intimate relationships can be rich in good works for the benefit of the wider community, or for particular groups within it. The single life should not be regarded as an affliction, or as a failure, but as an opportunity for largeness of heart. It could so easily give rise to self-centredness, self interest, selfishness – but it should evoke a spirit of generous service. There are, of course, many single people who are in this state of life precisely because of the care they are offering to someone in need.

On this Vocations Sunday the church exhorts all single people to reflect upon their responsibilities in the community and to seek ways of serving that are appropriate.

There are many ministries in this parish that need extra support – the reading of the Scriptures at Mass; the important role of singers and musicians, ministers of the Eucharist and servers in our Liturgy; the preparation of children and young people for the Sacraments; the care of the sick, housebound and those who are struggling to make ends meet; the upkeep and development of our buildings.

Help is needed in the raising of funds to support the pastoral work of the parish, and to promote good social relations among us, and to make the best use of the facilities we possess.

Assistance is needed in preparing couples for marriage, of parents for the baptism of their children, and in responding to those who are inquiring into our Catholic beliefs and practices.

The management of our schools; the care of the dying; the support of the bereaved; befriending any who are undergoing some crisis in their life – all these are areas of service which are always in need of additional helpers.

Everyone has something to offer our community and everyone should offer what they have. **Vocations awareness** is not only about the call to the priesthood and religious life but about what God is wanting of each of us, here and now!