



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday is "World Day of Prayer for Vocations." A lot of times, we think that Vocations are just for priest and religious. The truth is that each of us has a vocation. There is not a person God has called to Himself. There is not a person for whom God doesn't have a *great* plan! Each of us has a calling from God.

However, when we speak about Vocations in the Church, most often we are speaking about a specific form of life – a way of living love for others. Today we are invited to pray for Vocations to these states in life. So, what are these Vocations? We'll focus primarily on the big three: **Marriage, Priesthood, and Religious Life.**

A lot of times we forget that Marriage is a Vocation, a calling. While it is part of the natural order, God has raised it to a Sacrament (a sign that gives *grace*). It is a call for spouses to help each other get to heaven. It is a call to die to self and live for another. It is an incredible call where, it seems, all of the faults, flaws and failings are on display to the other (in addition to all the good stuff, too). It is a call to love as God loves – seeing all of that brokenness and loving through it, helping each other to seek holiness despite those weaknesses. It is also a call to raise others (any children that happen to be part of that marriage) to be saints. And those children do help us to be saints, as well, as they call us to die to ourselves in all of the little and big things in our lives. From the start, children force us to turn outward from ourselves, as they deprive us of sleep and energy, without giving anything back (except throw-up, poopy diapers, and those ever important and delightful *smiles!*). Marriage and family life are a call to self-donation.

In the grand scheme of our Faith, we know that, since "God wants to marry us," Christian marriage is a *sign*, a vision of God's love for us. I believe this is why marriage is so much under attack today: Satan hates God and us, and He hates the things that are visions of the love of God.

Priesthood is not a vocation for itself. As I've said before, priests can't look in the mirror and absolve themselves of our own sins. Priests are *always* called to be priests for others. We are meant to be an image of God that Father's love for His people. The priest stands at the Altar in the person of Christ the head, and shares the life of God with the people (the Body of Christ). He is ordained to give the Sacraments to the people of God, to share the Word of God, and to serve. Ordinarily, priesthood is celibate, but I'll get into what that means in the next section.

Religious Life – both religious brothers and sisters – are a call to show the eternal love of God. They are celibate (not married) not because marriage is bad, but rather because marriage is a sign of something greater. Marriage points to the reality of how God wants to marry us, that the end of the story is the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (see Revelation 19). The celibate vocation is a sign to the world that we believe this is so real, we are willing to give up the (very good) *sign* of it (in marriage), and live its reality (the marriage to God) in this world here and now. Often Brothers and Sisters take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience (and sometimes others, depending on the religious order). They live these out as a sign of contradiction to the world's overreaching grasp at money, sex and power – that these things are not God.

Please take time today to pray for those who have not yet discerned their vocation, that they may be open to God's calling. For those who have found your vocation, I invite you to pray that you may live that vocation well.