

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

This week we celebrate National Vocation Awareness week. At the heart of this celebration is remembering that God has a plan for each of us! God did not create anyone to be worthless, useless, discarded, but each person is loved, and has a purpose, a mission in this world. Every single one of us is called to be with God forever in Heaven. When we focus our awareness on Vocations, what we are doing is recognizing that God's plan for our life is knowable and attainable. This starts by asking the question: "What does God want of me?" Do we do this with our children? Most often we ask them, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Do we ever ask, "What do you think **God** wants you to be when you grow up?" Every Vocation is a call from God to self-denial, and generosity of heart.

Let's look first at the Vocation to Marriage. This Vocation is a call to committed love in a lifelong relationship. The Vocation of Marriage has been falling off in recent years, as fewer and fewer people are getting married. Even those who do get married rarely ask, "Is this what **God** wants for me? Is this the person **God** has chosen for my life?" God has a wonderful plan for marriage – for joy-filled marriage for all those called to this vocation. Yet divorce is all over our society, and even those who stay married often are not filled with joy. Let's start submitting our relationships – especially the relationship of marriage – to the Lordship of God, who *is love itself*, who *wants* our joy even more than we want it.

There is also the Vocation to Religious Life. Many men and women are called to give themselves to the Church through poverty, chastity and obedience. Their gift of self to the Church, while promising celibacy (a form of committed love to God and His Church, as opposed to a particular person), brings about the freedom of being able to serve and pray for the Church in ways that are not available to most married people.

The Vocation to Priesthood, is a calling to give yourself to the Church as a bridegroom to a bride. The priest takes on the role of acting in the person of Christ the head, so that he may feed the Church (the Bride) with the Body and Blood of Christ, wash her clean through Baptism and Reconciliation, and give her the other Sacraments of God's love.

Sometimes young people balk at the thought of giving themselves to the Church through priesthood or religious life, fearing that it is a boring or lonely life. I can attest that the adventure of following Christ has never left me bored. I can also attest that while there are points of loneliness in my life (but then again, even married people get lonely, too), my life has been filled with love. I never want for "having children" as I count 1,600 families as my children (that's a lot of kids!). Boring?! Lonely?! Anything but!!!

Let us pray this week for a great outpouring of vocations in our Church – that young people may listen for and be open to the call of God, that they hear it, and respond with the generosity of a profound "YES" to God's call for their lives. Let us also pray for those of us who "have" their vocations – that we may live out our vocations in generosity of heart and joy of spirit.

A LITTLE VOCATION PRAYER

At dinner each night this week, after you say grace, add this short prayer, "**Jesus, help me to be who You want me to be. Let it be done to me according to Your word.**"

USING GPS TO NAVIGATE LIFE

After Mass today, have a conversation with your children, asking, "what do you want to be when you grow up?" After a few moments of discussion, ask,

"Who do you think *God* wants you to be when you grow up?" Emphasize to your children that God has a specific plan in mind for them, and that following God's plan is the surest way to happiness. Every life decision – which college to attend, whom to date, which job to pursue, whether to enter seminary, whom to marry – should be undertaken only after praying for God's guidance. In other words, encourage kids to navigate life using GPS – God's Positioning System.