

“How to encourage Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious life”

1. **Pray, pray and pray some more.** At least remember to say *one Our Father, Hail Mary and a Glory Be* daily for this intention. Offer Masses, rosaries, chaplets of Divine Mercy, time before the Blessed Sacrament for this noble cause. There is a nice prayer in my bulletin column this weekend to cut out and say. Take a day a week and offer all of your prayers, daily duties, sacrifices and penances for this intention. Many of you are probably already doing some of these things, but we need to pray even more begging the Harvest Master to send laborers into His harvest of souls. Remember prayer, which includes uniting all our sufferings daily with the Lord, is the means by which God’s grace comes into the world and bears spiritual fruit, as I spoke about last weekend: the most important thing we do in this life is to grow in intimacy with the Blessed Trinity. In light of that, our prayers for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life will not be in vain – long term. And please remember to pray for all the sick and elderly priests and religious, and all those who have died, and might be in Purgatory.
2. **Be generous with God yourself, especially if you are in the married life.** The more generous parents and grandparents are in loving others and giving of themselves on a daily basis, the more the spiritual ground is prepared for young people to make the sacrifice of their lives to serve God and others, by showing them by word and example the path of self-giving love in following Jesus. On the other hand, if families are selfish and materialistic and unspiritual in daily life, how likely is it that one of their children is going to even consider becoming a priest or a religious? **Not great!** Tied into this is the fact that **the crisis in family life** in our society, over the last few decades, with rampant divorce and other struggles, has led to a decline in the number of priests and religious. If married couples are generous in being open to having children and not putting a limit on that generosity by giving into **the contraceptive mentality** of our world, we will see a growth in priestly and religious life vocations over time. Also we must

directly encourage our young people to consider **in thought and prayer** whether God might be calling them to make a gift of their young lives to Him as a priest or a religious. Surveys have shown *that upwards of 70% of Catholic families in our day DO NOT encourage their children to consider the priesthood or religious life.* That is not a good sign of the vibrancy of Faith life in a family: because if a family loves the Catholic faith they would naturally encourage their children to consider the priesthood or religious life. Realistically too some of the reluctance is also because of the evil of the clergy sex abuse scandal in the Church over the past few decades in which a few bad priests have tarnished the rest of the good priests and made the priesthood seem a bad option. All these factors are serious challenges to be looked at and hopefully changed over time with God's help, so that we can turn the tide and more young people will say **Yes** to the Lord. All our recent Popes, have said repeatedly over the last few decades, *God is not calling less people to the ordained priesthood and religious life, we are just hearing less His quiet voice amid the constant noise of the modern world.* There is a desperate need for more quiet and reflection in all our lives, but especially in the young, to be in tune with the Lord as He is trying to show them the vocation He wants for them: to give them ultimate meaning and purpose, and to make a difference for good in this world, but even more so in light of eternity, serving God and other people in self-giving love to help the Lord save as many souls as possible!

3. Finally a word of encouragement to our young and single people in the Parish: **don't be afraid.** If you feel a stirring in your heart and mind that the Lord may be calling you to the priesthood or religious life, don't bury it; but seek out an answer. I am here as your Pastor to help you discern and most of all the Holy Spirit will assist you if you open your heart to Him in prayer, esp. at Mass and in the Rosary (my life). There is no shame in visiting a seminary/ religious house of formation, or even joining up and later on discovering it is not for you. **Remember it is a wonderful life to be a priest or a religious, if you are called to it:** *to share in Jesus's mission to help save souls, as you yourself grow in intimacy with the Trinity thru the special graces that God gives to His servants. God bless you.*