

HOMILY FOR VOCATIONS SUNDAY 2023

This Sunday is designated as a day of prayer for Vocations.

The stirring of priestly vocations

However, I would like this morning to speak specifically about priesthood. As the family is the primary location for transmitting the Christian faith, it is hardly surprising then that many priestly vocations originate in families where the example of a Christian life is being lived generously and in a self-giving manner. In other situations quite frequently the spark of vocation to priesthood is ignited in young men as a result of the joyful witness of priests who are happy in their relationship with Christ, work with and support one another and are dedicated in their service of the people of God. Many discover the call to priesthood after they have had the experience of becoming involved in voluntary, charitable work.

Experiences of Priesthood

People have very varied experiences of priesthood, depending on the priests that they have met on life's journey. I am very conscious of the fact that, as priests, we all have our faults and failures. Availability for God and the people of God defines the priest. Such priests are ardent ambassadors for priesthood.

Priesthood in the prevailing culture

In the Western world there is a prevailing culture of indifference to Christian faith and this contributes to an inability to understand the value of a vocation to priesthood. In this situation it will be very important to present the possibility of a priestly vocation to young men and invite Christian communities to pray to the Lord of the Harvest to raise up new vocations. The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian

community, and yet priests have a particular responsibility for proposing such a vocation to others.

Priestly qualities and characteristics

The priest ought to be a man of joy. He is present to families as couples celebrate their love in the Sacrament of Marriage. He is present with them as they share the joy of their children in the sacraments, Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. He comforts the sick and stands shoulder to shoulder with the bereaved. The priest is a man for others. Like John the Baptist, he must point people in the direction of Christ and avoid any temptation to point to himself. He must also however be a man of prayer who recognises his own limitations and is dependent on God to help and sustain him through the various situations which he encounters on life's journey.

The priest must be challenged by the people he serves. By that I mean, if as priests we are not living up to our priestly calling people must challenge and remind us of the fact that we are not glorified social workers, that they expect us to be men of prayer, focused on Christ and unconcerned about popularity.

A challenging and fulfilling life

Priesthood is a challenging life but also a very fulfilling life - a vocation on which I would encourage young men to reflect. May the voice of the Good Shepherd be heard by young men amid the noise and din of the world?