

WHAT IS A VOCATION?

Why poverty? By this vow, we forever give up the pursuit and accumulation of personal wealth as our life's purpose. Instead, our congregations will support us in all that we do to free us up to be fruitful workers for God.

Believe me, it is a much more interesting way to live. It relieves you of a huge burden. Remember the rich young man? He was a good kid who wanted to know how do you enter the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus simply told him to keep the commandments. But he said he has done that and wants to know what more he ought to do. I think that more is very important. Somewhere deep inside of us we want to give more of ourselves. We're not just satisfied being good people, we want to make an even greater sacrifice of ourselves. So Jesus understands the young man and tells him 'If you wish to be perfect then, sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.' What do we see there? It is a radical invitation to a new kind of freedom, a new kind of following. And this invitation is the basis of the vocation to consecrated life.

So the second vow we make is to chastity which is the natural process of begetting and raising children to a more literal imitation of Jesus who did not marry and raise a family, but who called his closest apostles followers to a similar way of life, even those who might have been married earlier in their lives. About chastity, Jesus says, 'For those who have ears, listen.', as if to say that this is not for everybody, but some will hear this call deep within them. Chastity is not just a sacrifice, but an invitation to a different kind of fatherhood or motherhood to beget a multitude of spiritual children to whom you dedicate your life to nourish and support and to whom you prepare for eternal membership in the family of God. Whenever you think you might be giving up for God, He gives it back to you in unexpected ways – thirty-fold, sixty-fold, hundred-fold. We can't outdo God in generosity, although we can try.

The third vow is obedience. It is an imitation of Christ

who is perfectly obedient to the Father. Lay people have to be obedient to a whole bunch of people too. To their bosses at work, to their spouses and to each other. Consecrated people are primarily obedient to God and we are freed up by that holy obedience answering usually to a designated superior in our communities which in our life means someone who shares our vocation and who has our best interests at heart.

So poverty, chastity and obedience, they define this vocation. They give character to our lives and they are life-giving. In conclusion, those who have responded to a call often look at their vocation, in the words of John Paul II, both as a gift and a mystery. I myself thank God everyday for my vocation which is such a source of grace and consolation and it has fulfilled me on a level that the world never could, although it tried. At the same time, my vocation remains a little bit beyond my grasp. It is a mystery, there is something mysterious to it – it never gets old, it never gets stale, it continuously challenges me to grow and reach new heights and for that reason I love my vocation.

So in the end, Jesus did establish vocation. He called a number of people, men and women, to a more direct and radical way of imitating Him. He said the harvest is great, but the labourers are few and that might explain why there never seems to be enough people in consecrated life. But the great summons in the great harvest goes out in all times and all places. I truly hope these words may find a way into your hearts. If at first you hear God's voice, do not be afraid. Do not say you are too young. Do not say you are not holy enough, smart enough, good enough. God laughs at our objections and says it is enough that I have called you.

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