

Fr Michael Halsall writes: Vocations painted on a wider canvas



Fr Halsall opens up a wider use of the word “Vocations”

WHENEVER THE word ‘vocation’ is used in the Christian context, then instinctively one thinks of the need for more priests. This is entirely understandable, and is an urgent matter, where the fall in vocations to the priesthood – alongside the age-group of many priests – are reaching critical numbers in dioceses throughout England and Wales.

However, the word ‘vocation’ comes from the Latin verb ‘to call’, and the Lord does that – calls us - into a variety of contexts and service. We must not let the urgent need for more priests undermine the other important lives that are at the heart of the Christian community, and life itself.

I am thinking also of the permanent diaconate, religious life, marriage, the single life, and widowhood. All these states of life have their origins in the New Testament, and emerged in the earliest days of the primitive church. Saint John Henry Newman wrote extensively on vocations. We are not in this journey of discernment alone: God calls us through our baptism to be a ‘living cell’ in the Body of Christ, the Church – to be an active member of this community and so to learn from each other as fellow pilgrims on our journey through life. In *‘Parochial and Plain Sermons’*, Newman considers what the ‘Call of Christ’ is and how we can discern what Christ is calling us individually to do:

“All through our life Christ is calling us. He called us first in Baptism; but afterwards also; whether we obey His voice or not, He graciously calls us still. If we fall from our Baptism, He calls us to repent; if we are striving to fulfil our calling, He calls us on from grace to grace, and from holiness to holiness, while life is given us”.

When God calls us to some state of life, or to some aspect of ministry and service, then this is an extension of our baptismal calling in our own families and our Christian communities. He never calls us without giving us the graces necessary to fulfil the task, and that grace always adds to our nature – the raw material – the person whom he chooses.

As a distinct Christian community within the

Catholic church, the Ordinariates are committed to supporting their people in all these states of life. The *Vocations and Formation Committee*, which meets quarterly and reports to the Governing Council, is expanding its vision and scope. Alongside myself and the Ordinary, we are joined by Deacon Richard Cerson and Ms Antonia Lynn, in order that we can support vocations and formation to the permanent diaconate; lay vocations and spiritual direction. Fr Neil Chatfield will continue to attend in an advisory capacity.

The Vocations pages on the website are currently being revised, with some very good resources for groups to use in discussion and/or prayer. Vocations do not happen in a vacuum, but within a context of prayer, arising out of our baptismal calling. To that end, for Our Lady’s month of May, I have developed a *Rosary for Vocations*, which will go online and be sent to group pastors. Please use them throughout your devotions in May and beyond, praying that God will call each of us to the life that he desires for us: “... *that we may have life, and have it to the full*”. (John 10:10)

I glorify you, God, in all that I do.
In mind, body, and spirit I give my best to you.
Help me to follow your will, no matter what the call:
sister, brother, deacon, or priest,
I promise my all.
If you call me to marriage,
I promise to love, and to teach my own children
to seek grace from above.
Glory be ...
Jesus, I trust in You. 🙏

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