



School Announcements
"You are a Priest Forever" Psalm 110

This week is *National Vocation Awareness Week* for the Catholic Church and, in following Pope Benedict XVI's declaration of the Year for Priests, we will spend this week thinking about our personal vocations as well as the importance and role of the Catholic priesthood in our world.

(Please feel free to use these announcements in any way you see fit. They may be useful as a classroom lesson or they can be shortened to fit more easily in your morning or afternoon schedules.)

Monday: What is a Vocation?

In the simplest terms, "vocation" means "a call." So, in general terms, our vocation is what God calls us to do with our life. The catechism sums up this purpose in these simple words: "to love and serve God in this life and enjoy Him in the hereafter." Individual vocations vary among being single, married, religious, or a priest. God gives each one of us a particular mission in life. As we grow and life progresses, that mission is revealed to us and we are invited by God to take it up and follow Him as his servants and witnesses. Discovering and ultimately following our vocation gives the greatest glory and praise to our Creator. It is what we were meant to do.

The Gospels inspire us: "Take up your cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34) In the one life God gave you to live, you have one overriding purpose, to fulfill the will of God, because this is the key to your true destiny and eternal happiness.

Tuesday: Diocesan Priest versus Religious Life

A priest is a man who has received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which confers on him certain powers of Christ, principally the power to consecrate bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Christ and the power to forgive sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When he does these things, he acts in the Person of Christ. A diocesan priest is one who is called to serve all people in a particular diocese. The Bishop has been placed by Christ as the head of the diocese and the diocesan priests serve in obedience to, and in collaboration with him, serving mostly in parishes.

Religious men and women are consecrated to God by publicly professing vows within a religious order approved by the Church, and they live in community. Women religious are nuns or sisters and male religious can be either brothers or priests, and they are under the authority of the superiors of their order and are obedient to the local bishop. Each has its own founder and mission. Some religious priests serve in parishes, but the majority have more specialized ways to serve, such as education, medical care, serving the poor, retreats, communications or other assignments.

Wednesday: Obedience

Today we concentrate on obedience: an attitude of openness, a spirit of dependence on the Holy Spirit, and an acceptance of God's plan for our life. In the one life God gives us to live, we have one overriding purpose, to fulfill the will of God, because this is the key to our true destiny and eternal happiness. Obedience in this sense means that we do not try to force God's plan to match our own, but instead, throw aside our own egos and desires and truly live in total dependence upon God. Discovering and ultimately following our vocation – God's plan for our lives – and saying "yes" to that plan gives the greatest glory and praise to our Creator. It is what we were meant to do and being obedient to God's plan is what will make us truly happy.

Thursday: Celibacy

Priestly celibacy is a special gift of the Holy Spirit that is profoundly connected with ordination, where a man takes on the likeness of Jesus Christ. It is a choice of a greater and undivided love for Christ and His Church. The priest identifies himself with Christ and dedicates his whole life to building up the Kingdom of God. Christ must be the ideal that permeates the priest's whole being. Just as Jesus remained celibate and dedicated His life to the service of His Father and all people, a priest consecrates himself totally to serving the mission of the Lord. He sacrifices being married to a woman and having his own family, to be "wedded" instead to Christ and His Church and to serve their needs as "father." Celibacy requires the grace of God to be lived – the grace of being able to say "yes" to our Lord each day. By being connected with the person of Jesus Christ, priestly celibacy is no longer a merely negative act of self-denial; rather it is an act of self-giving to and in union with Christ.

Friday: Life's Choices

Everybody is called by God to know, love and serve him. The difference is how each one does this. God tells us an amazing thing: that even before he created us he knew us and called us. However, this does not mean that we always automatically know for sure what we are called to do in life. God reveals His will gradually; we can always make a mistake and we can even say "no" to him. Fortunately, God is always with us as long as we keep close to Him through prayer and do our best to live up to His Will in the present moment. Being obedient and saying "yes" to Him every day will bring us the greatest joy in our lives, whether we are called to be single, married, religious or a priest. What is asked of us is our willingness to cooperate with whatever it is that God asks.