

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is characterized by the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, in the tenth chapter of St. John, which we read every year. *"My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one"* (10:27-30).

Jesus wants to establish a relationship with his friends that is a reflection of His relationship with the Father, a relationship of mutual belonging in full trust, in intimate communion. To express this deep understanding, this relationship of friendship, Jesus uses the image of the shepherd with his sheep: he calls them, they know his voice, they respond to his call and follow him.

Jesus, referring to his sheep, says: *"My Father, who has given them to me ..."* (Jn 10:29). This is very important. It is a profound mystery, that is not easy to understand. If I feel attracted to Jesus, if his voice warms my heart, it is thanks to God the Father, who has put in me the desire of love, of truth, life, beauty ... and Jesus is all this to the fullest! This helps us to understand the mystery of **vocation**, particularly the call to a special consecration. Sometimes Jesus calls us, invites us to follow him, but maybe we don't realize that it is Him, just like young Samuel.

I would like to ask you: Have you sometimes heard the voice of the Lord which through a desire, a certain restlessness, invites you to follow Him more closely? Have you heard it? Have you had any desire to be an apostles of Jesus? Ask Jesus what he wants from you and be brave! Be brave, ask Him!!! Behind and before every vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life is always the strong and intense prayer of someone: a grandmother, a grandfather, a mother, a father, a community ... That's why Jesus said, *"Pray the Lord of the harvest (that is, God the Father) to send out laborers into his harvest"* (Mt 9:38). Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer, and only in prayer can they persevere and bear fruit.

Let us invoke the intercession of Mary who is the woman who said "yes." Mary said "yes" all her life! She has learned to recognize the voice of Jesus since she bore him in her womb. Mary, Our Mother, help us to know better the voice of Jesus and follow it, to walk the path of life!

Pope Francis
World Day of Prayer for Vocations
April 21, 2013

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**Are you ready
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VOCATION QUESTIONS

What is a vocation?

A vocation is God's invitation or calling to each individual to love and serve Him and His Church in a particular state or way of life.

Can't I be whatever I want?

Yes! Each person's freedom lies in discovering his or her vocation and in generously responding to it.

What are some possible signs of a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated religious life?

- ✠ Faith in, and love for, Christ and His Church.
- ✠ The maturity to recognize, and the willingness to respond, to the needs of others.
- ✠ Possessing a regular habit of prayer and a balanced devotional life.
- ✠ Psychological readiness to pursue a sustaining lifelong commitment.
- ✠ A sense or desire to become a priest or consecrated religious; which may be something constant or momentary, long standing or new.
- ✠ Good moral character.
- ✠ A developing spirit of detachment that helps someone be *in* the world but not *of* the world.

A priest or consecrated religious is someone who ...

- ... proclaims the Gospel in its fullness with clarity and courage in word and in deed while teaching and encouraging others to do the same.
- ... prays daily, faithfully reciting the Liturgy of the Hours, and if a priest, recognizes the incredible privilege of offering Mass and the other sacraments as a normative channel of Christ's grace.
- ... strives to grow in their love for Christ regularly honoring and adoring His Real Presence in the Eucharist.
- ... has a deep love for and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- ... wants to be a "*fisher of men*" whose goal is to unconditionally love others and become a humble instrument for the salvation of souls.
- ... has a preferential option for the poor, ready and willing to assist those in need, fully embracing their call to *serve* and not to *be served*.
- ... readily seeks prayerful intercession among the Communion of Saints.
- ... maintains respect and obedience to the Holy Father, their Bishop, the Church's Magisterium and, if a religious, their provincial or religious superiors.
- ... is committed to living a chaste and celibate life.
- ... is proud to be Catholic, never shying away from publicly witnessing the faith, their priesthood or their religious vocation.
- ... has a balanced and sustained devotional life.
- ... humbly recognizes their need for Christ's mercy and forgiveness, seeking it regularly in the Sacrament of Penance.

DISCERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Pray ... asking the Lord to show you the vocation He has prepared for *you* and invited *you* to embrace.

Listen ... to God and have the courage to respond to him freely and generously.

Recite ... the rosary daily, asking Mary, the Mother of Christ and the Mother of us all, to intercede with her Son on your behalf.

Make ... Eucharistic Holy Hours, placing yourself in the Real Presence of the One who calls, the One who invites.

Attend ... Mass and receive Holy Communion as often as your state in life and current responsibilities will allow.

Go ... to confession frequently and consistently.

Serve ... your parish, and elsewhere as needed and as you are able.

Talk ... with a priest or religious about your vocation questions and concerns, seeking spiritual direction and guidance.

Contact ... the Diocesan Vocation Office so we may assist you in any way we can.