

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday  
6/18/2023

## PRAYING TO THE LORD OF THE HARVEST

Jesus was moved with pity. This isn't just feeling sorry for someone. It's something more earthy, a stirring in the gut, even a stirring in the womb. Jesus sees the masses of people who are troubled and abandoned and he uses two images. The first is pastoral, they are like sheep without a shepherd and the second agricultural, the harvest is abundant. Either way, Jesus realizes that the great need requires helpers and Jesus tells us not only to pray but what to pray for, more workers for the harvest.

We're all called to a common vocation, we share a common calling: to follow Jesus, to be Christians. To let the light of Christ shine through us no matter who we are no matter where we are, and no matter what we are doing. We need people living the Christian life in classrooms, boardrooms, court rooms, operating rooms, market places, within their families and wherever they may find themselves.

Now the word vocation also refers to something unique and specific. God has entrusted to everyone here a specific job, a specific task that he hasn't entrusted to anyone else. We have a job to do. We may never know for sure in this life what it is but we have it.

Hovering between the two of these there's a third understanding of vocation and that is vocation as our state in life, in what has been called the bridge between heaven and earth. Obviously, for most people this will be in marriage and family life while for others it may be as a generous single person. At the same time there are those who Jesus called and still calls to dedicate themselves specifically and totally to his work. There are those called to serve as priests, deacons and in the many forms of consecrated life.

Those Jesus called weren't necessarily the most likely. Peter was impetuous. James and John at least once had an anger issue. Matthew was a tax collector cooperating with the foreign occupying power while Simon was a Zealot, which means he was working to overthrow the same occupying power. And yet with these others, Jesus chose them, worked with them and sent them on mission.

Jesus desires human cooperation in his work and we all have a role to play. And I ask a few things of you. If you have made your decision about your state in life, I ask you to rededicate yourself to living that vocation well. The first seminary I attended was my family and it was my parents' dedication in their marriage that laid the foundation for my commitment as a priest. If you are married, I ask you to make your home a place where a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life would seem like a normal choice. If you haven't made that decision about your state in life, I ask you to prayerfully consider if God might be calling you to serve him and the Church as a priest, deacon, brother or sister.

I also ask you to do two further things. To pray for vocations, for all vocations because no matter what our vocation is, there will be challenges and difficult moments. We all stand in need of prayer. I especially ask you to pray for vocations to the to the priesthood, diaconate or consecrated life.

I also ask you to encourage such vocations here in our own parish or wherever you may be. The harvest continues to be great and workers continue to be few. Look around and when you see someone who has qualities you would like to see in a priest, deacon, brother or sisters, calmly encourage that person.

Decades ago, I was walking out of church one Sunday at St. Thomas More where I grew up and a woman I know calmly asked if I had ever thought about being a priest. Now what she didn't know was that I was already thinking about that very seriously but her asking that question helped confirm what I was already thinking. I ask you to do the same.

One of my dreams is for our parish to be a place where people strive to live lives of intentional faith. Another dream is that our parish would become a fountain of healthy vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. Presently, two young men are seminarians for our diocese and in the last few years four other young men or women have entered different religious communities. We're not a fountain yet, but hopefully someday through prayer, encouragement and the grace of God, we will get there.