

CTK Mission Principle: Vocations

We the people of Christ the King, called by God our Father to be surrendered to the Lord Jesus, in the power of His Holy Spirit, in the heart of His Church.

- **to be a people committed to supporting all vocations, especially the priesthood, since “Parishes are communities of the baptized who express and affirm their identity above all through the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. But this requires the presence of a priest, who alone is qualified to offer the Eucharist *in persona Christi*.” (Saint John Paul the Great, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, #33)**

First, a word of clarification. Our mission statement cited above refers to all vocations—this necessarily includes vocations to priesthood, diaconate, religious life, married life, consecrated virginity, living single for the Lord, etc. The reflection here, however, will focus on priesthood. The reason for this quite simple and is eloquently stated in the title of St. John Paul the Great’s encyclical above: **Church from the Eucharist**. It’s a simple progression: no priesthood, no Eucharist; no Eucharist, no Church. It would be a great loss if there were not ongoing responses to the other vocations listed above, but the Church would not end. (Obviously, it would also end if there were no marriages but that vocation currently is not in jeopardy in the same way numerically.) In point of fact, the Church has, for all practical purposes, ended for many people whose parishes have been shut down due to a lack of clergy. This has been going on for some time and so now there is clear evidence of the catastrophic statistics that occur when you close, i.e. ‘merge’ a parish: approximately 80% or higher of the people just stop going, or go to a Protestant congregation instead. Many dioceses have closed up to a third of their parishes, and that’s what they experience happening. They lose all these people who were formerly practicing Catholics. So here we will focus on vocations to the priesthood.

It might strike some as odd that we give a push for vocations to the priesthood at Christ the King. After all, we have more vocations to the priesthood coming from this parish alone than two thirds of the American dioceses have as a whole diocese. Or, as a rector friend of mine pointed out once, we have more seminarians than any other parish in the Western Hemisphere, maybe even the world. We are about to have ordained one of our seminarians as a deacon, David Fons, and two of our deacons, Jim Rolph and Dan Westermann, are about to be ordained priests. Isn’t that enough? Well, actually, no, it’s not enough, because it is not some kind of number’s game. It’s about us as a people doing all we can to facilitate the ability of our young men to hear a call to the priesthood.

The Holy Father describes what is necessary for that call to happen; how it is crucial that we listen to the voice of the One Who loved us first. Our wonderful, faithful families have provided that nourishing environment in which our kids, raised to know Jesus in the power of His Holy Spirit, have come to be able to listen to that still

small voice calling them. The Holy Father addresses this in his message for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, World Day of Prayer for Vocations:

Today too, Jesus lives and walks along the paths of ordinary life in order to draw near to everyone, beginning with the least, and to heal us of our infirmities and illnesses. I turn now to those who are well disposed to listen to the voice of Christ that rings out in the Church and to understand what their own vocation is. I invite you to listen to and follow Jesus, and to allow yourselves to be transformed interiorly by his words, which “are spirit and life” (*Jn* 6:62). Mary, the Mother of Jesus and ours, also says to us: “Do whatever he tells you” (*Jn* 2:5). It will help you to participate in a communal journey that is able to release the best energies in you and around you. A vocation is a fruit that ripens in a well cultivated field of mutual love that becomes mutual service, in the context of an authentic ecclesial life. No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love. Did not Jesus say: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*Jn* 13:35)?

He also warns of the difficulties involved:

This “high standard of ordinary Christian living” (cf John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 31) means sometimes going against the tide and also encountering obstacles, outside ourselves and within ourselves. Jesus himself warns us: the good seed of God’s word is often snatched away by the Evil one, blocked by tribulation, and choked by worldly cares and temptation (cf *Mt* 13:19-22). All of these difficulties could discourage us, making us fall back on seemingly more comfortable paths.

But he shows us how to respond:

However, the true joy of those who are called consists in believing and experiencing that He, the Lord, is faithful, and that with Him we can walk, be disciples and witnesses of God’s love, open our hearts to great ideals, to great things. “We Christians were not chosen by the Lord for small things; push onwards toward the highest principles. Stake your lives on noble ideals!”

Let us encourage our single brothers to prayerfully consider this great vocation, that the People of God would not be denied the most crucial gift the Father has for them, the Eucharistic Lord!

Reflection Questions:

For the individual: What am I doing to encourage vocations, especially to the priesthood?

For the family: How can we as a family encourage vocations to the priesthood?

For the parish: How can we as a parish encourage more vocations to the priesthood?