



NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK

January 9-15, 2011

HOMILY NOTES

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Cycle A

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. It marks the beginning of National *Vocation Awareness Week*. During this time the Church encourages us to recognize the truth that God calls each person to a particular life, a particular vocation. Because God is good and wants us to be happy, he calls us to follow Jesus and share our gifts through a particular vocation.

Let me share a story. A priest went over to the home of parishioners for dinner. The junior high-aged daughter met him at the door with a freshly baked apple pie. She told him, "This is the first pie I ever baked, just for the occasion!" He congratulated her on the accomplishment. Eventually they all sat down to eat. When it came time for dessert, the daughter pushed the pie over in front of him; in fact, it was so close that the pie pan was touching his plate. Then, with an innocent look on her face, she asked, "Father, what would you like for dessert?" The daughter made it clear what she wanted to give him for dessert, and thus what she wanted him to choose. She quietly begged the priest to ask her for a piece of apple pie! He did choose the apple pie.

As we bring the Christmas season to a close, let us be mindful that God offers us the greatest gift of all, Jesus. God has made it very clear what he wants to give us and thus what he wants us to desire from him: God's self, his loving presence, in the person of Jesus. And Jesus revealed to us in the Gospel, "How much more will my heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

The Catechism of the Catholic Church begins by addressing the desire for God. Every vocation begins there. A vocation begins when the person desires God more than anything else in life. The desire for the presence of God, the desire for God is the beginning of any and every Christian vocation.

When the desire for God takes hold of us and claims our heart, a celibate religious vocation makes sense. If God – not power, not money, not success, not a life that goes my way, not even a human family – is our greatest desire, then being a priest or a sister or a brother is seen as a blessed vocation. It is a life of receiving and sharing what God wishes to give us most: Himself.

One of the most basic desires of parents is to want their children to have a happy life. That's how the human heart works. We see that desire with our biological parents by recognizing the great lengths fathers and mothers are willing to go so their children can have a happy life. We see it most clearly with God the Father. He is willing to sacrifice all so that his children can find happiness.

According to surveys, those people who report being most happy and fulfilled in their life and work are clergy. In *USA Today*, a survey by the University of Chicago found clergy as the top job for satisfaction among American workers: 87% of clergy reported being very satisfied. According to a survey of 5,000 priests by the *Los Angeles Times*, the numbers were overwhelmingly encouraging. 91% of those surveyed said that they were satisfied with the priesthood. According to a survey performed by Fr. Stephen Rosetti, the Director of St. Luke's Institute, he found that 92% of priests surveyed stated that they were fulfilled ministering as a priest. Clearly, sharing in Christ's priesthood is a satisfying and happy life.

Parents, you who desire a happy life for your children, are you open to believing that being a priest, sister, or brother could be the very life by which God leads your child to happiness?

I wish to speak briefly to all of the young single adults here at Mass today. If God is calling you to be a priest, brother, or sister, the first thing he will do is plant a seed to make you think about it. In order for you to discover your vocation, God puts the thought in your mind. God invites a person to first think about it. So, if you are chosen to be a priest, brother, or sister, you think about it, even if you do not want to. And those thoughts will not go away easily. God initiates the call and places a desire within the mind and heart. And God is always there to support the person.

If that is happening, do not be afraid. God is simply trying to give you a great gift. All you need to do is simply tell Jesus that you give him permission; simply say again and again in your heart, "Jesus, I give you permission." Or "Jesus, I want whatever you want." Or "Jesus, I trust in you."

There is a story of the late John Cardinal O'Connor and Mother Teresa. Shortly after he was named the Archbishop of New York, he asked Mother Teresa for advice as he began his work as the Archbishop of New York. She said only three words, "Give God permission." Young people, I give you the same advice: Give God permission. To quote Pope Benedict, "I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! **He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything.** When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life."

Young people, God only wants what is good for you, do not be afraid to say "yes" to him.