

DIOCESE OF LIMERICK

VOCATIONS



OCTOBER 2020

"Be sanctuaries of respect for life, proclaiming the sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death."

~ Pope Francis

Mass with Families, Jan. 16, 2015

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ST. THÉRÈSE AND THE PRIESTHOOD

Fr Raymond Seitz, ORC

If the Church would ever declare a saint to be the Patron of Spiritual Motherhood for Priests, after Our Lady no one would more fittingly deserve this title than St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus. In Heaven we have a model and most powerful collaborator in our vocation to be spiritual mothers, sisters or brothers in the Crusade for Priests. As she promised, in Heaven she is even more actively working for the sanctification of priests as she was while living on earth. She most certainly desires to unite all her efforts from heaven to ours for the good of the priesthood. Let us often invoke her and follow her example, so that—in the love of Jesus Christ and His Mother—may we grow ever more in our sublime vocation of being "apostles of the apostles" for the salvation of souls. St. Thérèse, help us and pray for us!

THIRST FOR SOULS -

Her mission in the Church began at the age of fourteen when, at the end of a Sunday Mass, a picture of Our Lord on the Cross had slipped half out of her prayer book, showing one divine hand pierced and bleeding. The sight of Our Lord's bleeding hand caused her great sorrow. She wrote, "My heart was torn with grief to see that Precious Blood had fallen to the ground, and no one was caring to treasure It as It fell." It was a decisive moment in her life. Deeply marked by this "waste" of divine grace, she resolved to spend the rest of her life in spirit at the foot of the Cross, [to] receive the Divine Dew of Salvation and pour it forth upon souls. "From that day the cry of my dying Savior—"I thirst!"—sounded incessantly in my heart, and kindled therein a burning zeal hitherto unknown to me. My one desire was to give my Beloved to drink; I felt myself consumed with thirst for souls, and I longed at any cost to snatch sinners from the everlasting flames of hell." (Story of a Soul, chapter V; hereafter Story). Soon thereafter, while offering the merits of Our Lord with all the strength of her being for the salvation of the soul of the notorious criminal, Pranzini, she asked God for a sign, a confirmation that this desire came truly from God. Her request was marvelously granted; just moments before his execution Pranzini seized the crucifix offered him by a priest and kissed it three times.

APOSTLE OF THE APOSTLES -

Up to this point the thought of praying for priests never came to Thérèse's mind, because the souls of priests "seemed pure as crystal" to her. Her view changed when she participated in 1887 in a pilgrimage to Rome—about 75 of the pilgrims were priests. Living side by side with so many priests for a month it struck her deeply, that "even though the sublime dignity of Priesthood raises them higher than the Angels, they are still but weak and imperfect men." Thus, she realized that even the good and holy priests whom Christ calls "salt of the earth" are in need of much prayer. And if "holy" priests need much prayer, "what must we think of the lukewarm? Has not Our Lord said: 'If the salt loses its savor with what can it be salted?'" (Matt 5:13)" (Story, VI).


PRIESTLY HEART -

She herself had an immense desire to be a missionary priest. Though she could not actually become a priest, she had nevertheless a "priestly" heart: "I feel the vocation of a Priest! With what love, my Jesus, would I bear You in my hands, when my words brought You down from Heaven! With what love would I give You to souls! ... I would travel to every land to preach Your name. ... One mission alone would not satisfy my longings. I would spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, even to the most distant isles. I would be a missionary, not for a few years only, but, were it possible, from the beginning of the world until the consummation of time" (Story, XI).

SPIRITUAL ADOPTION OF PRIESTS -

Since childhood Thérèse had the longing to have a "priest brother" (Story, XI). Her physical brothers had all passed away in young age and thus she regretted being deprived of the joy of "seeing them at the Altar." But God, Who answers the fervent desires of a pure soul, went even beyond her dream and gave her two priest brothers: Fr. Belliere and Fr. Roulland, missionary priests, who had turned to the Carmelite convent asking for prayers. Mother Superior chose St. Thérèse as their spiritual mother. Thus began a new chapter in her ecclesial mission which filled her with overwhelming joy and gratitude. Affectionately she wrote to Fr. Belliere, "My gratitude is not less great than yours to Our Lord, who has given me a little brother whom He destines to become His priest and His apostle. ...It is only when you get to Heaven that you'll know how dear you are to me" (LT 220).

DAILY PRAYER FOR PRIESTS BY ST. THÉRÈSE



O Jesus, I pray for your faithful and fervent priests;
for your unfaithful and tepid priests;
for your priests laboring at home or abroad in distant mission
fields.
for your tempted priests;
for your lonely
and desolate priest
for your young priests;
for your dying priests;
for the souls of your priests in Purgatory.
But above all, I recommend to you the priests dearest to me:
the priest who baptized me;
the priests who absolved me from my sins;
the priests at whose Masses I assisted and who gave me Your Body
and Blood in Holy Communion;
the priests who taught and instructed me;
all the priests to whom I am indebted in any other
way (especially ...).
O Jesus, keep them all close to your heart,
and bless them abundantly in time and in eternity. Amen.

POPE FRANCIS' FIVE VOCATION PITFALLS TO AVOID

Did you know that the Holy Father gave a talk in which he delivered some inspiring insights into discovering one's vocation? These points, from a refreshing talk by Pope Francis, will give you valuable insights about your God-given vocation! In this talk, given to seminarians and novices in Rome as part of events celebrating the Year of Faith, our Holy Father shared wisdom and practical advice on a variety of matters relating to one's vocation, and religious life.

1. Culture of the Temporary

I heard a seminarian, a good seminarian, who said that he wanted to serve Christ for 10 years, and then he would think about starting a different life.... This is dangerous! However, listen carefully: we are all, even the older people among us, we too, are under pressure from this "culture of the temporary"; and this is dangerous because one does not put one's stakes on life once and for all. I marry as long as love lasts; I become a woman religious, but only for "a little while...", "a short time" and then I shall see; I become a seminarian in order to become a priest, but I don't know how the story will end. This is not right with Jesus! I am not reproaching you, I reproach this culture of the temporary, which hits us all, since it does us no good: because it is very hard today to make a definitive decision. In my day it was easier, because the culture encouraged definitive decisions, whether for married life, consecrated life or priestly life. However, in this day and age it is far from easy to make a decision once and for all. We are victims of this culture of the temporary.



2. Don't Chase After Stuff

Some will say: joy is born from possessions, so they go in quest of the latest model of the smartphone, the fastest scooter, the showy car.... but I tell you, it truly grieves me to see a priest or a sister with the latest model of a car: but this can't be! It can't be. You think: "so do we now have to go by bicycle, Father? Bicycles are good! Mons. Alfred rides a bicycle. He goes by bike. I think that cars are necessary because there is so much work to be done, and also in order to get about... but choose a more humble car! And if you like the beautiful one, only think of all the children who are dying of hunger.

3. Not Primarily Our Decision

Becoming a priest or a man or woman religious is not primarily our own decision. I do not trust that seminarian or that woman novice who says: "I have chosen this path". I do not like this! It won't do! Rather it is the response to a call and to a call of love. I hear something within me which moves me and I answer "yes". It is in prayer that the Lord makes us understand this love, but it is also through so many signs that we can read in our life, in the many people he sets on our path. And the joy of the encounter with him and with his call does not lead to shutting oneself in but to opening oneself; it leads to service in the Church.

4. Don't Hide Your Sins

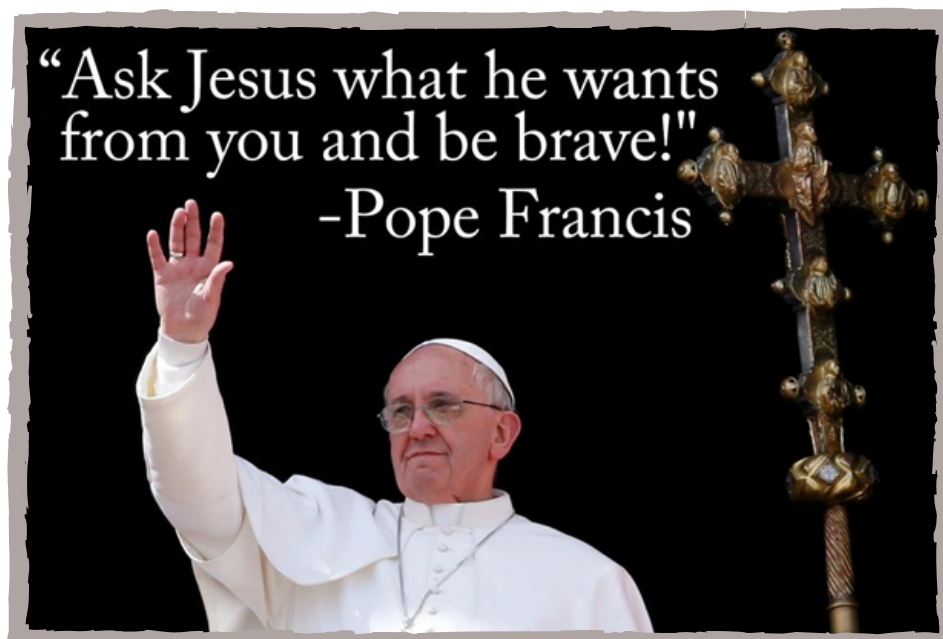
However, it is in our life that others must first be able to read the Gospel! Here too, without fear, with our shortcomings which we try to correct, with our limitations which the Lord knows, but also with our generosity in letting him act through us. Faults, limitations and I add a little more with sins....I would like to know something. Here, in this hall, is there anyone who is not a sinner, who has not sinned? Put up your hand! Put up your hands! No one? No one. From here to the back... everyone! Yet how do I carry my sin, my sins? I want to recommend this to you: be honest with your confessor. Always. Confess everything, do not be afraid. "Father, I have sinned!" Think of the Samaritan woman who, to test him, in order to tell her fellow citizens that she had found the Messiah, said to him: "you have told me all that I have ever done", and everyone knew about this woman's life. Always tell your confessor the truth. This transparency will do us good, because it makes us humble, all of us. "But father, I have got stuck in this, I have done this, I have hated"... whatever it may be. Tell the truth, without hiding anything, without mincing your words, because you are talking to Jesus in the person of the confessor. And Jesus knows the truth He alone always forgives you!

5. Don't Lock Yourself Within

I would like to tell you: come out of yourselves to proclaim the Gospel, but to do this you must come out of yourselves to encounter Jesus. There are two ways out: one towards the encounter with Jesus, towards transcendence; the other towards others in order to proclaim Jesus. These two go hand in hand. If you only take one of them, that is no good! I am thinking of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She was a fantastic sister.... She was not afraid of anything. She went about on the roads.... This woman was not even afraid of kneeling for two hours before the Lord. Do not fear to step out of yourselves in prayer or in pastoral action. Be brave, in order to pray and in order to go and proclaim the Gospel. I would like a more missionary Church, one that is not so staid. This beautiful Church that makes progress.

From: <https://vocationpromotion.com/2018/06/pope-francis-five-vocation-pitfalls-to-avoid/>

Original Address by Pope Francis https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130706_incontro-seminaristi.html



DIOCESAN VOCATIONS SPOTLIGHT

SISTERS OF LIFE

The Vocations Office recently had the opportunity to connect with Sister Naomi Maria Magnificat, SV. Sister is from Abbeyfeale, Limerick and recently professed her final vows with the Sisters of Life in New York. Sister offers us some beautiful insight into vocations and how to discern.

How did you discern your vocation?

I was blessed to grow up in a faithful Catholic family where Sunday Mass and family rosary was part of our lives. We moved back to Ireland (from England) when I was 11 years old, and gradually became even more involved in the practice of our faith, going to daily Mass and when I was in college I became involved in Youth 2000. This was a great blessing to be with other young people who were practicing the faith, to meet religious brothers & sisters, and I came to love spending time with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration. It was in these times of silence, close to the Heart of Jesus, that I gradually came to know and love Him more and more and eventually knew that He was calling me to His alone.



Sister Naomi in the middle with two women & their daughters who lived with the Sisters at Sacred Heart. Rita, the woman next to Sister was received into the church on Sept 5th 2020 and her daughter Miah (in front of Sr. Naomi, with the rosary around her neck) was baptized! Praise God!

You entered a community that has its base many miles from home, how did you find them? How did your family and friends respond?

It was Our Blessed Mother who led me to the Sisters of Life. I had known for a number of years that I was called to religious life but was finding it hard to actually take the next step. The spring of 2011 I read True Devotion to Mary by St. Louis DeMonfort and that August went to WYD in Madrid. On Aug 15th, the Feast of The Assumption, I consecrated myself to Jesus through Mary and the next day we had "the wrong directions". We were supposed to be going to the Youth Defense conference but ended up at the Love & Light site – which the Sisters of Life were helping to run. The funny thing is that I didn't actually meet any sisters there, but was handed a booklet by a volunteer, on the last page was a Sisters vocation story. When I returned to Ireland and looked up The Sisters of Life website, the more I read the more my heart said yes – I knew this was where Jesus wanted me.

I'm not going to lie, it was difficult to leave my family and go all the way to the USA. I have a big family, 10 sisters, 2 brothers & many nephews & nieces, and we are very close as a family. I remember saying to Jesus "why did you give me such a great family if you wanted me to leave them?" It was particularly hard to leave my mum. Jesus reassured me that He loved my family even more than I did and that He would take care of them, that He is never outdone in generosity, and if I put Him first He would bless my family also. He has been true to His promise. 😊

Jesus does have a funny sense of humor though, one of the reason it had taken me so long to take the next step in pursuing my vocation was that I didn't want to leave home and then He called me half way across the world! I never had any desire whatsoever to even visit NYC and now I live there and have spent all of my professed life in Manhattan!

Have you experienced any unexpected joys?

There are so many! A very literal experience of the hundredfold is that I thought I had a big family with 10 sisters and now I have well over a hundred Sisters! The love of my sisters in community truly is such a joy and blessing and one that I hadn't anticipated.

I have been fortunate to spend all of my professed life so far in our missions directly serving pregnant women. My first year was at our Visitation Mission (the crisis mission for women who are pregnant & vulnerable) and I am now in my 6th year at our Holy Respite Mission, where we invite women to live with us during their pregnancy and for 6-10 months after they have given birth. It is really beautiful to walk with these courageous women, to be with them at such a special, and one could say, sacred time, and most of all to watch how Jesus transforms their lives when they open their hearts to Him. I get to see first-hand His unfathomable love & mercy for each individual soul.

What does it mean to be a religious; a Sister?

I think Mother Teresa of Calcutta puts it most simply i.e. "To be only all for Jesus"

It means I am a spouse of Christ – which sounds crazy, and truly it is incomprehensible, yet I know that it is true. It is a pure gift, a gift of the Father, and a gift that is eternal. When I professed my first vows in 2015, in his homily Archbishop Charles Brown, said that religious life is more than a sacrament because sacraments are for this life but a religious consecrated by vows has entered into a spousal relationship which continues straight on into heaven uninterrupted!

Do you have any advice for discerning a vocation?

I would say that Jesus wants you to discover your vocation even more than you do, so seek to do His will now in your daily life & open your heart to Him, then He will lead you on the right paths.

Go to Mass, daily if possible, spend time just being with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration – in silence giving Him space to speak, go to confession regularly, pray to Our Lady - especially the rosary, she will lead you to Jesus.

What can people do to support vocations to the priesthood & religious life?

I think we as religious & priests have the responsibility to live our vocations faithfully. As in all areas of life witness is powerful and we will attract others by the authenticity of our love for the Lord and the joy with which we live our vocations.

Any thoughts for those discerning in Limerick or Ireland in general?

Don't be afraid, if the Lord is calling you and wants you as His own, this is a beautiful, wonderful thing!

Don't be afraid to receive Gods love. He desires so much to love us and for us to receive His love fully, yet we often reject His love out of fear. If we open our hearts and receive His love, receive Him, then like Mary we can bring Him to others.



FILMS OF INTEREST



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LsmD2z6SDk&feature=emb_logo

Fr. Martino Choi
Archdiocese of Washington
Homily for the 2018 March for Life Rally Mass
Father gives his personal pro-life testimony!

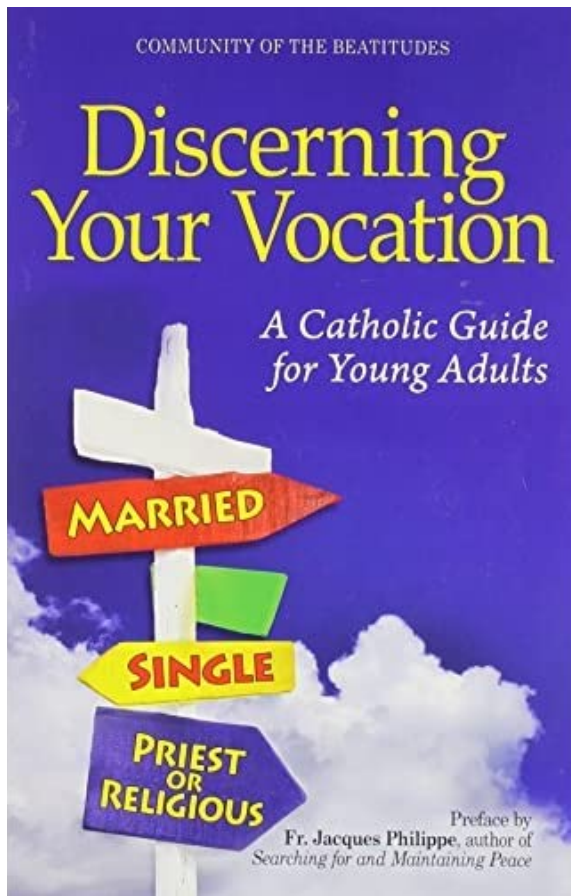


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZhosIq0-vQ&feature=emb_logo

Newly Ordained CFR Priest
Fr. Oisín is from Dublin and currently
serves in Moyross, Limerick

RECOMMENDED READING

Book Review



Discerning Your Vocation: a Catholic Guide for Young Adults. By the Community of the Beatitudes. New York: St. Pauls, 2014.

This short and easy-to-read book provides a great framework for anyone at the beginning of the discernment process. The content includes information on how to dispose yourself to hear God's plan for your life, pitfalls to avoid, and practical steps to take.

Available to purchase from
<https://amazon.co.uk>

SUPPORTING VOCATIONS IN YOUR PARISH?

Please pray for holy vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life regularly. Would you consider having regular Adoration for this intention? Do you currently have any events or initiatives in your parish or schools to support the understanding and promotion of vocations? Would you like to? If we can help to organize something for you, please be in touch!

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VOCATION OFFICE

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