



Into the Depths

Setting Out Into the Deep

The purpose of this newsletter is to deepen the interior life of every single Catholic in the Diocese. We have a lot of media dedicated to informing you about our seminarians, including our website (comeandfollowme.org), Facebook page (facebook.com/FollowMePeoria), posters, and seminarian trading cards. We want to continue these efforts because they raise awareness of the culture of vocations. These media show young men that our seminarians are ordinary people with an extraordinary call, while also giving hope to the faithful people of the diocese who desire an increase of holy, energetic priests. The media let everyone know whom to pray for, which is easier with specific names and faces.

As necessary as these efforts are, it has become my conviction, through prayer and speaking to wise spiritual people, that we also need to make great efforts at increasing the interior life of every Catholic in the Diocese. God doesn't ordinarily hit a person over the head with a vocation. He reveals himself without forcing his way into a person's heart. In order for more young men and women to hear their call, whether it is to priesthood, religious life, marriage, or a dedicated single life consecrated to God, they need to set out into the depths of the interior life, into that mystery of love between God and man. This is not an easy habit to learn, especially given our cultural climate that emphasizes the superficial over that which is deep, and which tells us to give in to immediate pleasures rather than persevere in virtue.

So a "culture of vocations" *must* be accompanied by a "culture of the interior life," in which all people — young, old, married, religious, clergy, single — learn the art of setting out into the depths of the presence of God in

prayer. This includes "practicing the presence of God," wherein a baptized person in a state of grace acknowledges the great gift of God's presence in his soul and habitually increases his attentiveness and responsiveness to this presence. "Prayer," says Dr. Ralph Martin in *The Fulfillment of All Desire*, "is, at root, simply paying attention to God." This attentiveness extends beyond one's soul to the other "presences of God": the scriptures, our neighbor (especially those who are poor and vulnerable and whom we find less attractive), our priests and bishops (especially when they teach or give advice in the context of a sacrament), the community of the faithful when they are gathered to pray, and the sacraments by which God's power is poured out into our souls.

But, above all else, our gaze must turn to the Eucharist: "The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as 'the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend.' In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist 'the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church). The Eucharist is our source and summit. Or, to put it another way, it is our deepest encounter with God's presence, since we enter into him, and he enters deeply into our souls.

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How You Can Help

Looking for ways to build a culture of vocations in your family, parish, school, or community?

Peter was an expert fisherman. He, of all people, would know where to find fish. Yet when Christ commanded him to go back to a place that he had fished all night without catching anything, he obeyed. He did not follow human wisdom, but was faithful and obedient to Jesus.

We can easily look at our families, parishes, schools, and

communities and say, "Lord, vocations just don't seem to be coming. Maybe young people just can't hear your call. Maybe we'll never experience an abundance of vocations."

We have to abandon this way of thinking, and, like Peter, set out

into the depths of these familiar places. But we don't do so alone. We must take Jesus with us.

We do this by intentionally offering prayer and sacrifice for vocations. These prayers and sacrifices need not be long or arduous, they just have to be offered persistently and in union with Jesus. We've listed some ideas below. If you would like to pray and sacrifice for

vocations to the priesthood of the Diocese of Peoria, please contact us by email, phone, or mail. We will also have a form on our website for you to fill out, listing your prayers and sacrifices.

Discernment of Spirits & Pope Francis by Dan Burke

In Pope Francis' interview with *America* magazine, he frequently references "discernment." Though many are aware of what he means by this, those who have never been exposed to Ignatian spirituality might need a little more information. Here are a few of the ways he illustrated or used the idea of "discernment" in this interview:

"He also speaks about the moment during the conclave when he began to realize that he might be elected pope. At lunch on Wednesday, March 13, he felt a deep and inexplicable inner peace and comfort come over him, he said, along with a great darkness. And those feelings accompanied him until his election later that day."

Question: What element of Ignatian spirituality helps you live your ministry?"

The Pope answered, "Discernment," he replies. "Discernment is one of the things

that worked inside St. Ignatius. For him it is an instrument of struggle in order to know the Lord and follow him more closely.

"This discernment takes time. For example, many think that changes and reforms can take place in a short time. I believe that we always need time to lay the foundations for real, effective change. And this is the time of discernment. Sometimes discernment instead urges us to do precisely what you had at first thought you would do later. And that is what has happened to me in recent months. Discernment is always done in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to the things that happen, the feeling of the people, especially the poor. My choices, including those related to the day-to-day aspects of life, like the use of a modest car, are related to a spiritual discernment that responds to a need that arises from looking at things, at people and from reading the signs of the times. Discernment in the Lord guides me in my way of governing."

We can see from these quotes, that the



What to Offer Ideas for small sacrifices to be made in union with the cross of Christ

Giving up meat on Fridays



Waking up immediately in the morning, without hitting the snooze alarm.



Going a day without internet (making exceptions for work or school).



Offering to the Lord aches, pains, or illnesses (after seeking to cure them).



Being silent when tempted to speak.



Giving up sweets or salt.

"What Value is there in faith without works? And what are they worth if they are not united to the merits of Jesus Christ, our only good?"

~St. Theresa of Avila

Passage to Pray With:

THE GREAT CATCH: LUKE 5:4-6

After Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. ~Luke 5:4-6



Francis cont'd

Pope is a deeply spiritual man who is constantly striving to be attentive to the God's leading. But what exactly does the Holy Father mean by "discernment"?

Discernment, or to use the full expression "discernment of spirits" is the attentive interpretation of what St. Ignatius called the "motions of the soul." These interior movements consist of thoughts, emotions, inclinations, desires, repulsions and attractions. Discernment of spirits involves learning to be sensitive to these movements, reflecting on them and understanding where they come from and where they lead us.

St. Ignatius calls the two sources of these movements the "good spirit" and the "bad spirit." The interior movements initiated by these spirits are called "consolations" or "desolations." You might be surprised to note that God is not always the cause of consolations and that the bad spirits are not always the cause of desolations.

In his Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius sets forth 14 rules for discerning how and under what circumstances consolations and desolations arise in our souls, and these are called the "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits."

It is obvious that Pope Francis is a deeply spiritual man who has learned to listen to the voice of God. This approach to listening is informed by a great tradition from a great saint who can teach us much about what it means to hear the voice of God.

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Quote of the Month

"There is urgent need, especially nowadays, for a more widespread and deeply felt conviction that all the members of the Church, without exception, have the grace and responsibility to look after vocations."

~ St John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*

THE LIFE OF PRAYER

"Those who aspire to sanctity by giving themselves completely to the active life while neglecting the life of prayer may just as well forget about Christian perfection. Experience proves that there is absolutely nothing that can supply for the life of prayer, not even the daily reception of the Eucharist. There are many persons who receive Communion every day, yet their spiritual life is mediocre and lukewarm. The reason is none other than the lack of mental prayer, either because they omit it entirely or they practice it in a mechanical and routine fashion. We repeat that without prayer it is impossible to attain Christian perfection, no matter what our state of life or the occupation to which we dedicate ourselves."

—Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, Chapter 12

As we practice the habits of a good interior life, we are naturally able to recognize and respond more fully to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. We have a deeper desire for Eucharistic adoration. Our Sunday Mass experience is more meaningful, and we receive more graces from reception of the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist becomes the center of our vocation, because every vocation is, at its core, a way of self gift in union with the cross of Christ. In this way it becomes more natural for young people to respond to their vocations, since they can more easily recognize Christ's presence in the Eucharist and hear him calling them to a unique participation in his self-offering. This is how the great adventure of one's vocation begins.

We cannot give what we do not have. If we as Catholics want our young people to find their vocations, and if we want to continue to have priests to give us the sacraments, religious to serve the people of God and

witness the life of charity to them, and faith-filled families to carry the beauty of Catholic life into the future—if this is our desire, then the interior life must be our task, for ourselves and for everyone else. This newsletter is dedicated to helping with that task with articles, quotes, and book recommendations. This is not a newsletter for cloistered monks or nuns, it is for ordinary people in the midst of the active life who want to grow in the depths of prayer and thereby promote vocations.

Please keep this effort in your prayers and spread the good news of what we are doing. If you would like to financially support us (ink, paper, and time all cost money), we would be grateful. But even if you don't, please know that it is our joy to go deeper into the life of intimacy with God. When that goal is accomplished, our joy will be "made complete" (John 3:29).

~Fr. Timothy D. Hepner, Vocation Director of Recruitment

FOLLOW ME.

Everyone is called to something. **What's your calling?**

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Office of Priestly Vocations
Catholic Diocese of Peoria
419 NE Madison Avenue
Peoria, IL 61603

