

DIOCESE OF LIMERICK

VOCATIONS



APRIL 2021

Joseph, Most Obedient

Pray for Us.

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Patris Corde

An Excerpt from the Apostolic Letter by Pope Francis

An obedient father

As he had done with Mary, God revealed his saving plan to Joseph. He did so by using dreams, which in the Bible and among all ancient peoples, were considered a way for him to make his will known.^[13]

Joseph was deeply troubled by Mary's mysterious pregnancy. He did not want to "expose her to public disgrace",^[14] so he decided to "dismiss her quietly" (Mt 1:19).

In the first dream, an angel helps him resolve his grave dilemma: "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:20-21). Joseph's response was immediate: "When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Mt 1:24). Obedience made it possible for him to surmount his difficulties and spare Mary.

In the second dream, the angel tells Joseph: "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him" (Mt 2:13). Joseph did not hesitate to obey, regardless of the hardship involved: "He got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod" (Mt 2:14-15).

In Egypt, Joseph awaited with patient trust the angel's notice that he could safely return home. In a third dream, the angel told him that those who sought to kill the child were dead and ordered him to rise, take the child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel (cf. Mt 2:19-20). Once again, Joseph promptly obeyed. "He got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel" (Mt 2:21).

During the return journey, "when Joseph heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. After being warned in a dream" – now for the fourth time – "he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth" (Mt 2:22-23).

The evangelist Luke, for his part, tells us that Joseph undertook the long and difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered in his family's town of origin in the census of the Emperor Caesar Augustus. There Jesus was born (cf. Lk 2:7) and his birth, like that of every other child, was recorded in the registry of the Empire. Saint Luke is especially concerned to tell us that Jesus' parents observed all the prescriptions of the Law: the rites of the circumcision of Jesus, the purification of Mary after childbirth, the offering of the firstborn to God (cf. 2:21-24).^[15]

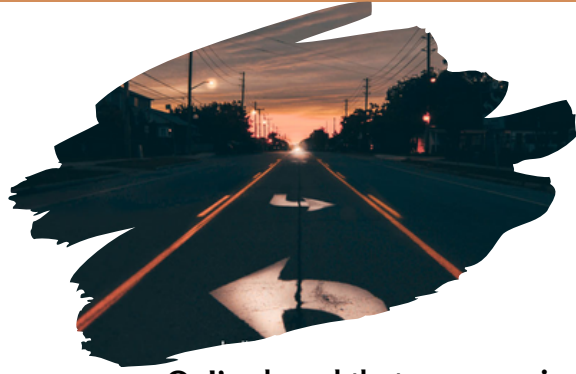
In every situation, Joseph declared his own "fiat", like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In his role as the head of a family, Joseph taught Jesus to be obedient to his parents (cf. Lk 2:51), in accordance with God's command (cf. Ex 20:12).

During the hidden years in Nazareth, Jesus learned at the school of Joseph to do the will of the Father. That will was to be his daily food (cf. Jn 4:34). Even at the most difficult moment of his life, in Gethsemane, Jesus chose to do the Father's will rather than his own,^[16] becoming "obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews thus concludes that Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8).

All this makes it clear that "Saint Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood" and that in this way, "he cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation and is truly a minister of salvation."^[17]

DISCERNING YOUR VOCATION



Fr. Mike Schmitz

Father Mike Schmitz is the chaplain for Newman Catholic Campus Ministries at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He also serves as the Director of the Office of Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Duluth. You can listen to Fr. Mike's homilies in iTunes.

Accessed on 15.4.2021:

www.bulldogcatholic.org/2015/05/01/discerning-your-vocation/

Q: I've heard that everyone is called by God to some vocation. How do I find my vocation?

A: Fantastic. This is one of my favorite questions because a) it indicates that you realize that your life is not your own...it belongs to God, and b) it indicates that you care what God thinks about your life. I can give you a guaranteed strategy for discovering God's plan for your life. It basically involves asking yourself three questions each day. I promise you that, if you ask these questions of yourself regularly, you will never miss out on God's plan for your life. But before we get to these (apparently) golden questions, there are two principles that must be clearly expressed. You've known them since you were in Second grade. The first is this: God knows you better than you know yourself. This means that God knows why you are alive. He knows how you think. He knows what you love. He knows exactly what will make you happiest in this life. The second principle is this: God loves you better than you love yourself. So the thing that you were made for? God wants that for you. The thing that will make you the most happy? You can trust that God wants this for you. Those two principles add up to this reality: you can trust God. Period. Knowing this, let's get to the three questions.

Am I in a state of grace? If not, get to Confession and get reconciled with God. This is critical. If I am trying to discern what God wants for my life, but I am disconnected from God, what are the chances that I am going to be able to hear Him clearly? You know how we sometimes can't see things clearly when we are in the middle of a situation? If I am in serious sin, it is very unlikely that I will be able to see God's will with any sense of clarity. If there is serious sin in my life, I can be easily deceived, so get to Confession.

Am I doing my daily duty? This is extremely concrete. If I am a student, am I doing my best to get my work done and to class on time? If I am a husband, am I loving my wife and doing my best to serve my family through my work? Basically, look at your calendar (the things you have to do) and ask yourself, am I doing these things to the best of my ability? If I am not doing the basics that my current state of life requires, it is highly unlikely that I will respond when God asks me to respond in a more dramatic way. Put it like this: think of the tasks on your calendar as God's will for your life today. If you are saying yes to God's will in these little things, you are training yourself to say yes to God in big things.

Did I pray today? This should be a no-brainer. I mean more than, "Bless us O Lord..." and "Now I lay me down to sleep...". Really pray. Talk to God. It doesn't make any sense to say, "What does God want me to do...?" and never take the time actually talk to God and ask Him the question. And then wait for Him to respond.

I absolutely promise that you will know God's plan for your life if you follow this simple plan. How can I be so confident? Because I remember the first two principles and I trust that God wants you to know why you are alive. Now you can be patient and never worry that you might miss out on God's plan. He will not be one moment too late. But if you are getting impatient, remember that He won't be one moment too early, either. If He isn't revealing His plan just yet, it is only because you aren't supposed to know just yet. Just trust God and ask the three questions.

DIOCESAN VOCATIONS SPOTLIGHT

*Fr. Raphael
Ikechukwu
Okanumeh*



Archdiocese of
Abuja, Nigeria

Studying Computer
Technology in Limerick

HOW DID YOU DISCERN THAT YOU HAD A VOCATION TO THE DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD?

Being born into a family that cherish Christian (Catholic) values and morals; prayers were an integral part of my childhood. My day usually begins very early in morning with family prayers followed by the early morning Mass then other activities of day which included more prayers in the evening and late at night. When I was much younger, I remember vividly on so many occasions mimicking the celebration of the Holy Mass with my peers. I felt so bad when I was not chosen to be acting priest. Looking back now with the eyes of faith I guess through these acts the seed of faith to aspire to be a priest was developing.

Over time I started assisting the priest on the sanctuary as an Altar Boy. This gave me the opportunity to understand a little about the life of a priest. I got inspired by their simplicity, prayer life and readiness to help others. I decided to give it a trial. I applied to the minor seminary and was taken; thus, I began a formal discernment journey. As a minor seminarian I really did not know the difference between a diocesan and a religious priest. when I graduated from school and haven gotten a clearer picture of priestly life and the loads of other opportunities out there, I become more open minded to the prospect of being a priest. I assured myself I can be whatever I wanted to be.

After some years, my parents relocated to a new place and I moved with them. In this new location my Parish Priest was an Irish missionary. His selfless service and sacrifice evoked in me once again the desire to continue discernment. I shared these thoughts with him, and he told me to pray and follow my heart. I wanted to be a missionary like him, so I applied to the Society Missionaries of Africa. I was not accepted and felt maybe I was not called. I felt bad but he assured me that if God wants me to be a priest he will guide and give me insights. I later applied to the diocese of Abuja, I got admitted and I proceeded to the major seminary to continue the process of discernment. The process was long enough to help me decide what I really wanted, and I must say that I have never regretted my decision to be a priest. In love I have learnt to obey and every day of my life I try to follow where He leads. I personally feel therein is the essence of the priesthood. Following Jesus through **OBEDIENCE, SACRIFICE** and **PRAYERS**. I am six years now a priest and I am very grateful being God's possibility to express His Love and Word in the world.

WHO WERE INFLUENTIAL ROLE MODELS FOR YOU IN YOUR FAITH LIFE?

First on the list of those who influenced me on my faith journey were my parents. They were my first catechist and they never joked with helping understand my faith. They not only spoke to me about holy living, but they also lived it out even amid the occasional crisis inherent in family life. Till today they continue to inspire me.

Second on the list is Revd Fr Tomas Walsh SMA an Irish missionary who worked in Nigeria for many years and was my parish priest at some in point in time. He was a very selfless priest, he had a good disposition to work and, was always ready to render support. He made me understand that the priesthood is all about sacrifice and willingness to strive to be holy for the sake of the kingdom. He is my mentor, and I cannot stop thanking God for his life and his continued ministry as the parish priest of Church of the Ascension, Gurrabraher in Cork. Even as a priest he continues to mentor me.

WHAT ARE THE JOYS AND CHALLENGES OF THE DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD?

The joy of the priesthood is our possibility to express God's love to those we meet. In line with this, as a diocesan priest I feel happy and satisfied when I can fulfil this expression of love. The joy I have as a diocesan priest is having to work in a familiar terrain and minister to a familiar community, staying in proximity with old friends and family member and maybe, eating familiar food, etc.

Having come to see the priesthood as a call to selfless service in obedience and humility there are really no challenges that come to my mind. Most time God's grace helps me to see them as opportunities to make myself and the world a better place. I always draw strength from the words of Saint Paul letter to the **Philippians 4:12-13**.

WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE SAINTS AND WHY?

St Paul and Saint Charles Lwanga will top the list of my favourite saints. I choose Saint Paul because of his unwavering zeal to spread the Gospel amid persecution and threat of death after his conversion and Saint Charles Lwanga of Uganda who at the time of his death was a new convert but was strong enough to hold and defend his faith until he paid the ultimate price. There are so many others but let me just stick to this two.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

In my spare time I usually take a silent walk to appreciate creation, sometimes I play PUBG (Player Unknown Battleground) on my mobile phone; other times I read, brush up my coding skills and maybe listen to music.

WHAT ADVICE WILL YOU GIVE TO YOUNG MEN WHO FEEL THAT THEY MIGHT BE CALLED TO THE DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD?

The phase of discernment can come with a lot of confusion and fear of the unknown. It is normal. At this stage, pray for more spiritual insights and if possible, speak to a priest. Please, do not stifle that voice speaking to you to embark on a discernment journey and always remember that **IT PAYS TO SERVE JESUS IN SERVICE TO HUMANITY BEING A PRIEST**.

FILMS OF INTEREST



To The Altar Of God | From Desolation to Priesthood - The Vocation Journey of Fr. Gerard Quirke.
"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." - 1 Peter 2:9 Visit our website: <https://www.immaculataproductions.org>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXooJvtgzeA&t=323s>

Holy Family Mission on Nationwide 2021



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnAsb5LP748>

UPCOMING
events

DATES FOR MEN'S
DISCERNMENT
GROUP:
APRIL 20
MAY 18

Vocation Music Award



SONG WRITING
COMPETITION

Calling all young adults
aged 18-35 to participate
in a songwriting/
composition competition
on the theme of vocation.

KEY DATES:

31st July 2021 Final date for submission of songs
22nd August 2021 Professional judging
11th September 2021 winners announced in a Live Stream



VOCATION
MUSIC AWARD

For further information
Web: www.vocation-music-award.com
Facebook: <https://bit.ly/2Ywe60S>

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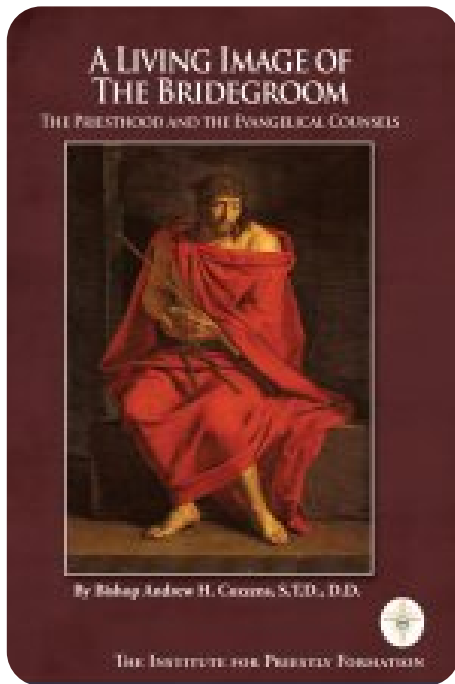
MEN'S DISCERNMENT GROUP

Meets Monthly on Tuesdays
7.30-8.45pm
Hosted by Priests of the
Diocese

Please contact vocations@limerickdiocese.org

for the zoom link

RECOMMENDED READING



A Living Image of The Bridegroom: The Priesthood and the Evangelical Counsels

By Bishop Andrew Cozzens

This book aims to study and explain the fundamental insights of Saint John Paul II—that the priest is called to be a living image of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church. The book studies the nuptial image in the whole Tradition, starting with the Scriptures and paying special attention to the Fathers of the Church. In this book, one can see the nuptial nature of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and come to understand how the image of Christ the Bridegroom inspires the priest to total self-gift.

<https://cedarhouse.co/a-living-image-of-the-bridegroom-the-priesthood-and-the-evangelical-counsels-by-bishop-andrew-cozzens/>

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!

DIOCESE OF LIMERICK
VOCATION OFFICE

www.limerickdiocese.org
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vocations@limerickdiocese.org