

## Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2018

### Vocation Sunday

This year in our diocese very emphatically we are reflecting on the theme of Vocation. In fact Archbishop Felix has dedicated this year from 21<sup>st</sup> January 2018 to 20<sup>th</sup> January 2019 as year of Vocation. Many programs and events in the diocese will focus on the theme of vocation. The situation in the Diocese and in the Universal Church is quite alarming there is a very less no of candidates joining the priesthood or the religious life. In our diocese in the next ten years 18 priests are getting retired and number of seminarians studying for priesthood is just 4. The Holy Father Pope Francis also said 2018 is a special year for vocations, because the Synod of Bishops will reflect on young people, especially “the relationship between young people, faith, and vocation”.

Pope Francis reminded Christians that God never ceases to call men and women to follow Him. We are not victims of chance or swept up in a series of unconnected events; on the contrary, our life and our presence in this world is the fruit of a divine vocation. In the diversity and the uniqueness of each and every vocation, personal and ecclesial, there is a need to listen, discern and live this word that calls to us from on high and, while enabling us to develop our talents, makes us instruments of salvation in the world and guides us to full happiness.

#### 1. Vocation

a) Vocation is a Precious Gift of God: Jesus says, “You did not choose me; I have chosen you and appointed you that you may go and bear fruit, fruit that will last so that the Father may give you whatever you ask him in my name.” (John 15:16) God does not call the qualified. He qualifies those he calls. “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.” (Mt 9:13) This call is a free gift therefore God says to Jeremiah, “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.*” (Jer 1:5)

b) Vocation is a Human Response: It is like a seed which cannot be created in a laboratory. But this seed cannot grow on its own. It needs to be nurtured and cared. Vocation too needs a full hearted attention if it has to grow and bear lasting fruit. See how eagerly Zachaeus wants to see Jesus. Note his yearning to see Jesus and the joy of receiving him (Lk 19:1-10).

c) Vocation is an Ongoing Process. It emerges constantly (St. Mother Teresa,). It is not a moment but a process. Hence there can be a call within the call.

#### 2. What are the basic steps to nurture Vocation?

##### a) A listening heart

Pope Francis made it clear that “God comes silently” and that, without a listening heart, His voice can be “drowned out” by the distractions of daily life. Nowadays listening is becoming

more and more difficult, immersed as we are in a society full of noise, overstimulated and bombarded by information. This prevents us from pausing and enjoying the taste of contemplation, reflecting serenely on the events of our lives, going about our work with confidence in God's loving plan, and making a fruitful discernment. Christians need "to listen carefully to his Word and the story of his life, but also to be attentive to the details of our own daily lives".

Just as we cannot see clearly what we look like, when we look into a pool unless the waters are still, so too we cannot really get to know ourselves unless we are silent. Silence helps us to listen. The world that we live in has such a hectic pace that we have no time to listen to others. The Lord's call – let it be said at the outset – is not as clear-cut as any of those things we can hear, see or touch in our daily experience. God comes silently and discreetly, without imposing on our freedom. Thus it can happen that his voice is drowned out by the many worries and concerns that fill our minds and hearts. We can hear words but we can only listen to silence. A silent heart alone can listen to a silent God. **(Share how you spent time in Prayer and solitude to reflect on God's call)**

#### **b) Discernment**

Turning to spiritual discernment, Pope Francis said this is "a process by which a person makes fundamental choices, in dialogue with the Lord and listening to the voice of the Spirit, starting with the choice of one's state in life". He said the Christian vocation always has a prophetic dimension, since current events in a person's life and in the world must be examined "in the light of God's promise. Every Christian ought to grow in the ability to "read within" his or her life, and to understand where and to what he or she is being called by the Lord, in order to carry on his mission".

Today too, we have great need of discernment and of prophecy. We have to resist the temptations of ideology and negativity, and to discover, in our relationship with the Lord, the places, the means and situations through which he calls us. As the philosopher Socrates says beautifully the unreflected life is not worth living. Discernment is like the headlights of a car that help you see your way as you drive at night. **(Enlighten faithful with personal example of discernment.)**

#### **c) Living one's vocation**

Pope Francis is drawing our attention on the need and urgency of the mission "Vocation is today! The Christian mission is now; each one of us is called – whether to the lay life in marriage, to the priestly life in the ordained ministry, or to a life of special consecration – in order to become a witness of the Lord, here and now." It is said of a certain philosopher who had

women friends but never married. Proposals came his way but he was so caught up discerning them that he died a confirmed bachelor. We need not wait just at the bridge of discernment but along with it we have to take a firm decision.

Everyone is called to live their vocation and there is no reason to fear God's call, even to a life consecrated to God's kingdom. It is beautiful – and a great grace – to be completely and forever consecrated to God and the service of our brothers and sisters. The joy of the Gospel, which makes us open to encountering God and our brothers and sisters, does not abide our slowness and our sloth. It will not fill our hearts if we keep standing by the window with the excuse of waiting for the right time, without accepting this very day the risk of making a decision.

Let us support our young brothers and sisters to listen, discern and make a decision in life to follow the great mission of the Church of spreading his Word all around and helping people in need. Let us join in with our personal and family prayers. Church has great hope in our families where the seeds of vocations are nurtured.

On the account of the urgency to preach the Good News and the shortness to time Jesus sought for collaborators. He chose the Apostles to be his companions for the mission. They were from different backgrounds and had different views and had their own priorities. Yet, when it came to the mission of preaching the Gospel, they all did it in one voice. It is a call for all Churches to realize that the mission is one and the same, that is to preach the Good News together in one voice. To do this effectively all have to overcome the differences, big or small, for this divine mission. (*This Para is included from homily points for Ecumenism Sunday*)

All the faithful are called to appreciate the ecclesial dynamism of vocations, so that communities of faith can become, after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, like a mother's womb which welcomes the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Lk* 1: 35-38). The motherhood of the Church finds expression in constant prayer for vocations and in the work of educating and accompanying all those who perceive God's call. This motherhood is also expressed through a careful selection of candidates for the ordained ministry and for the consecrated life. Finally, the Church is the mother of vocations in her continual support of those who have dedicated their lives to the service of others.

We ask the Lord to grant to all those who are on a vocational journey a deep sense of belonging to the Church; and that the Holy Spirit may strengthen among Pastors, and all of the faithful, a deeper sense of communion, discernment and spiritual fatherhood and motherhood.

