



Holy Hour for Vocations Homily

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St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Sunday, 7 August, 2016

This afternoon we have gathered here in the Cathedral, in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord, to pray especially for vocations.

There was a time in our recent history as a Church, when many people felt it was wrong to pray in particular for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. To do so, some suggested, was to downplay the important vocation to married life, and to ignore the reality that the Lord calls some people to remain single without calling them to a religious vocation.

It is true, of course, that we should pray for all vocations – or rather that all Christians, no matter what way of life they choose, will recognise that it is the Lord who gives us the gift of life, and that it is the Lord who in his providence has so arranged things that, if we are really open to his grace in our lives, we will discover that way of life which will lead us along the path the Lord is calling us to follow. This is as true of those who chose to marry, or to remain single, as it is for those who choose to test a vocation to the religious life or to the diaconate or priesthood.

This of course is precisely what we pray for each time we pray the prayer Jesus taught his first disciples. When we pray that God's name should be hallowed, should be held holy, and when we pray that God's will should be done on earth just as it is in heaven, we are praying that each of us will genuinely be seeking to do God's will in our lives. Part of that seeking, of course, is to discover what God is asking of us in terms of our major life choices, just as part of it is to discover what God is asking of us in the day to day realities of each day.

The best way to serve God, therefore, is to commit ourselves each day to be open to whatever God's Spirit might inspire in our hearts to say, to do and to be. Our basic and most important vocation is to be disciples of Jesus. He has brought us into his Church, spoken to us in the depths of our hearts, planted in us a desire to know him and to love him and to follow him, and called us to be signs and bearers of his love to all those we meet. All of us who are members of the Church, whether we be married or single, young or old, sick or healthy, rich or poor, priests, or deacons, or religious, share together in the Church's fundamental vocation: to be together a living sign that God is at work in our world through his Church, which is the body of Christ.



So yes, we must pray for vocations to every form of life in the Church – and we must pray for each other, asking the Lord that we will have the courage to say “yes” to whatever it is he is asking of us.

Is it wrong, then, to single out in a special way prayer for vocations to the religious life and to the ordained ministry as deacons or priests? The answer of course is “no – it is not wrong. On the contrary it is essential”. In the mystery of the Church as the Lord has established it, priests and religious have a special, unique and irreplaceable role in enabling the Church to be what it is meant to be. In a way that is unique to them, because of the ministry they perform and the way of life they live, religious, deacons and priests keep before the eyes of the whole Church the absolute priority of God and the absolute centrality of Jesus in the life of every faithful Christian.

In choosing to make the things of God the organising centre of everything they do and are they keep the “memory” of God, and the reality of God’s presence and God’s saving and healing love, alive and active in a world which so easily forgets God or seeks to banish God to the margins. This precious gift of a living memory and a powerful sign to a forgetful world is needed both for those who are in the Church and for those who are outside the Church. A call to the ordained ministry or to the religious life is, therefore, always a call to be at the service of God’s people within the community of faith which we call the Church.

It is because our Church, and our world, have such great need of this living memory that it is right for us to pray in a special way for vocations to the diaconate, the priesthood and the religious life.

To pray in this way of course, is really to pray that those whom the Lord is calling will have open ears, open eyes and open hearts. From the moment Jesus called his first disciples, he has not ceased to invite people to give their lives to him in this special and particular way. There have always been people who were, and still are, generously prepared to say “yes” to this call. But in many respects, it is getting harder to hear this call which often only comes in silent whispers deep in our hearts. As Pope Francis has reminded us, a vocation, in the sense that we are considering it today, is always born in the community of the Church and is always directed to the Church.

To pray for vocations is to pray that our parishes, our schools, our families and our other Catholic institutions and agencies, will be places of prayer, of hospitality, of generosity and of selfless courage. If they are, and to the extent that they are, they will be places where this quiet, insistent whisper in people’s hearts will both be heard and responded to.

In the words of Jesus in today’s Gospel, then, “do not be afraid”. The God who has called us into life, and into his Church, is anxious and ready to give us all we need to be able to say “yes” to what he is asking of us.

The vocation to which God is calling each of us is our own particular pathway to deep happiness in this life and eternal happiness in the next. Let us make Jesus our greatest treasure, and his will



for us our deepest desire. If our heart rests in him then we will gradually come to hear more clearly the gentle whisper of his voice calling to us – and we will, like Mary, find the courage to say, “I am the Lord’s servant – let his will be done in my life”.