



Reflections

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE VOCATION OFFICE OF THE DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

PAGE **1** MESSAGE FROM FR. CULL, VOCATION DIRECTOR

PAGE **2** SR. ELIZABETH MARIE CORMIER'S VOCATION STORY

PAGE **2-3** GUIDELINES FOR DISCERNMENT

PAGE **4** DEACON BRENDAN McGRATH'S VOCATION STORY

THE CALL TO HOLINESS

MESSAGE FROM THE VOCATION DIRECTOR



For the 46th World Day of Prayer for vocations taking place on the first Sunday of May, Pope Benedict XVI invites us to reflect on the theme: "Faith in the divine initiative – the human response." In his message, the Holy Father identifies the central dynamic of invitation and response: "In the universal call to holiness, of particular relevance is God's initiative of choosing some to follow his Son Jesus Christ more closely, and to be his privileged ministers and witnesses."

What a privilege it is to hear and answer the call to priesthood or

religious life! We need real heroes who are willing to give their lives to the Lord in loving service.

In this edition of Reflections, we offer some guidelines for discernment to encourage a courageous response to the will of God. We also present the vocation stories of Deacon Brendan McGrath who is preparing for ordination to priesthood this May and Sister Elizabeth Marie Courmier, a member of the Sisters of Our Lady Immaculate, who assists those in formation with her community. May their personal sharing awaken in the hearts of those being called today a response that is generous and joyful.

VOCATION EVENTS CALENDAR

ORDINATION TO PRIESTHOOD

Saturday, May 2, 2009
11:00 a.m.
Cathedral of Christ the King,
Hamilton.

ORDINATION TO TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE

Friday, June 26, 2009
7:00 p.m.
St. Margaret Mary Parish, Hamilton.

ANNUAL VOCATIONS MASS

The eighth annual Diocesan Vocations Mass will take place:

Sunday, September 20, 2009
11 a.m.
St. Mary of the Purification Parish,
Mount Forest.

The Mass is organized by the Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus and Serra Clubs.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

SR. ELIZABETH MARIE CORMIER'S VOCATION STORY

Sr. Elizabeth Marie Cormier made her final vows in June 2002 with the Sisters of Our Lady Immaculate.

I think that for most of my life I have always felt God tugging on my heart but like many other young people, as I got older and went to high school and university, I tended to push the voice of God away. It was after my second year of university that I really started to seriously discern the call of God. By spending time before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and entrusting myself to our Blessed Mother, I was finally able to say yes to His will. It was really a beautiful gift but involved a long struggle.

For young people to hear and answer the call of God today, prayer is so very important. When it comes to making the most important decisions in our lives, we need to be open to the Holy Spirit and this involves a listening heart. In addition to personal prayer, frequent the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Confession and seek out a spiritual director. For young women who are sensing the call to religious life, I recommend that they visit convents and participate in retreats where their questions can

be addressed directly and where they may see for themselves the beautiful gift that is religious life.

I am humbled by my vocation and continue to ask our Lady to help me persevere and to be more pleasing to God everyday.

I encourage young people to remember the words of Pope John Paul II: "Do not be afraid." Some people are afraid of the unknown while others can become perpetual discerners, people who are going from place to place looking for the most perfect community which of course does not exist. Others worry that they have too many debts or that they are not worthy of the call. It is vital to remember that if God is truly calling, He will take care of all those aspects that seem so impossible to us. Our part is to come forward and say yes. Should you discover that you are not called, you will always know the peace of having offered yourself to God first. God cherishes those who earnestly desire to do His will.

I am very grateful to God for the gift of my vocation. I can't imagine my life any other way. I am humbled by my vocation and continue to ask our Lady to help me persevere and to be more pleasing to God everyday. What a blessing and joy it is to strive to lead a life that gives glory to God and really draws others to Him through one's witness, through one's simple everyday life.



I am very grateful to God for the gift of my vocation. I can't imagine my life any other way.

SR. ELIZABETH MARIE CORMIER

PHOTO: MEMBERS OF THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY IMMACULATE AND THOSE IN FORMATION

GUIDELINES FOR DISCERNMENT

Worship at Mass, if Possible, Daily Mass

Treasure the gift of the Holy Eucharist as the greatest blessing of your life. After receiving Christ in Holy Communion, ask for total openness to His will.

Spend Time In Eucharistic Adoration

Flowing from reverent participation in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, spend time in adoration before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Given the noise and busyness of daily life, it is all the more important to slow down and be silent in order to truly listen.

Maintain the Discipline of Daily Prayer

Following the Lord is not about a one-time experience but about becoming a friend to Christ and friendships take time. Set aside time each day for personal prayer.

Reflect on the Word of God

Meditate on the Word of God, especially the Sunday readings or a chapter from one of the gospels. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to all that God desires to reveal.

Be inspired by the Example of Mary, Mother of God

Mary is your spiritual mother. Pray the rosary and ask her to help you offer a complete yes to God's loving plan.

Choose Spiritual Reading

Read books that feed you spiritually, especially with regard to the lives of the saints. Read even a few pages at a time and pause to reflect on what you are reading.

Frequent the Sacrament of Confession

God calls the sinner to become a saint. The sacrament of Confession imparts the gifts of pardon and peace and strengthens you to lead a life of virtue.

Associate with Good People

People often become like those with whom they associate. Choose friends who encourage you to do the right thing and to put God first in your life.

Talk to Someone You Trust

You need someone to help you understand the activity of God in your life and how you are being invited to respond. Choose a spiritual director or trusted mentor to assist you.



A EUCHARISTIC CALLING

DEACON BRENDAN McGRATH'S VOCATION STORY

The ordination to priesthood of Deacon Brendan McGrath will take place on Saturday, May 2, 2009 at the Cathedral of Christ the King, Hamilton.

When did you first sense the call of God in your life?

I first sensed a call around grade 10. I would describe this as the experience of an interior call, born out of my prayer life and of worshipping at the celebration of the Eucharist. I just felt a gentle invitation from God to minister to His people, to minister His sacraments as a priest.

Were there any significant events that helped you give further consideration to the call?

A significant event occurred when I was in grade 12. I was an altar server and actively involved at St. Joseph, Patron of Canada Parish, in Acton. At this time, the Diocese of Hamilton introduced a campaign in which parishioners were invited to submit the names of those whom they thought might be suitable candidates for priesthood. When that campaign started I had about half a dozen people come up to me in a two week span of time asking if I was interested in becoming a priest. As I look back, I can see that such affirmation together with a commitment to daily prayer influenced my decision to enter the seminary.

Another significant event was my involvement in the parish I attended while studying political science and economics at the University of McGill. I attended Mass on a frequent basis and served as a reader and minister of communion. This involvement made me feel very much at home and also gave me a sense of being called to something more. In addition to setting aside time simply to be with the Lord and asking Him for the guidance to know what I should do with my life, I turned to our Blessed Mother asking that she help me discern what God wanted for me and how I could best answer that call.

Do you have any role models who have inspired you?

Among all the priests that I have known, I think back to the example of Father Angelico Valeriotte. He was the pastor of the parish from the time my family moved to Acton when I was in grade 6 almost until the time I left for university. I sensed that he was such a holy man, very devoted to our Lord and our Blessed Mother and that he had a great love for the people whom he served as well. I have also been inspired by the example of Pope John Paul II. Seeing the gift of his whole life and the great wisdom that he offered in his teachings encouraged me to make the decision to begin my studies for the holy priesthood. To willingly sacrifice, to be an offering for the people is a great mystery and a great honour I think.

What are some guidelines for those discerning a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

As I reflect on my own story, I see the importance of frequent participation in the Holy Eucharist, time spent in Eucharistic Adoration and devotion to our Blessed Mother. In addition, it is important to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit from those around you who affirm those qualities of holiness in you and encourage you to more prayerfully consider the call of God.



YEAR FOR PRIESTS

Pope Benedict XVI has announced a "Year for Priests" (June 19th, 2009 until June 19th, 2010) to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the death of St. Jean Marie Vianney, the Cure' of Ars - Patron Saint of parish priests.



To view video clips of our interviews with Deacon Brendan McGrath and Sr. Elizabeth Marie Cormier, visit us online at www.vocationinfo.ca

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.