

Homily Year 31 B - November 4, 2018

In today's gospel and in the first reading, we have two very clear lessons: first, there is one God; second, we must love God above all else. Just as there are many different people in the world, there are as many different ways of loving God above all else. The principal way in which we love God and, by extension, our neighbor is through our vocation in life. Every time we speak in church, every time we pray, we are expressing our recognition of God and our love for God. We often express this love of God in the way we love our neighbor through our vocation in life.

Today, I would like to speak with you about one vocation - priesthood. In recent months and years, we have read so many things about unfaithful priests, men who have not remained true to their vocation. Likewise, we know from our own lives that people with other vocations have not remained true to their vocations and have gone astray. The problem is not with the vocation; the problem is with the person not living the vocation.

The vocation of priesthood remains a necessary part of our Church just as marriage, family life, single life are necessary elements of our Church. Without the Eucharist, without people there could be no Church.

Today, more than ever, we need holy, dedicated priests to serve God's people in the Church. That means that more are needed to respond to God's invitation to priesthood. How do we do that? We, I have a little plan that I call the Aucoin plan.

First of all, we need to pray. That sounds very simple, but when was the last time that you prayed for more men to respond to God's invitation to priesthood? When was the last time that you prayed that God would choose someone in your immediate family to become a priest?

Secondly, we need to invite people to consider priesthood. After all, your invitation may be God's voice to that person. Whom should you invite? Well, start close to home: your son, your grandson. It could be a nephew, an uncle. Maybe it's the brother-in-law you cannot stand. It would, at least, get him out of the picture while he's off to the seminary.

I remember once in Old Forge I was giving a presentation about vocations. In the parking lot after Mass a woman came running up to me and said: "Father, this is my husband. He's yours. I've had enough." Obviously, the one you invite has to be eligible. Obviously, he was not although by the time they got home, maybe he was. I never found out.

Third, we need to encourage people to consider the priesthood. When I was rector of the seminary, I can't tell you the number of students

who told me that they received very little encouragement about coming to the seminary even from within their own families. Here are some of the responses they would receive they expressed interest in the seminary.

You want to be a priest? Why would you want to do that? You're way too good looking to become a priest! How dumb is that! Then, there is: "Priesthood? You're way too smart for that!" That comment makes it sound as if you need to be as dumb as the person making the remark. "You want to go to the seminary? Why don't you go to a real college first?" If someone said to you, I would like to be an engineer, would you respond with "Why don't you study accounting first? Then, decide later if engineering is for you." Would you tell someone interested in teaching to study law first, then decide later on? Of course not! The same applies to priesthood. The seminary is the place for someone trying to discern if priesthood is the right vocation. The seminary staff works with candidates to help them decide. If priesthood is not the right choice, then they would encourage them to look elsewhere for a vocation. "Why would you ever want to be a priest? There are way too many sacrifices attached to priesthood." Give me a break. Tell me what vocation in life does not have sacrifice. The sacrifices of priesthood are different from other sacrifices. Actually, some of you may be sitting next to your sacrifices. I'll let you decide that.

A simple formula: pray, invite, encourage. The priests of tomorrow are going to come from the families of today. Future priests will not come from the rectories of today. They will come from your families. Priests are not some kind of Marvel comic book character that all of a sudden emerges from the slime of the earth. Priests come from the people of God to live their vocation by serving the people of God. In fact, priests don't come from heaven, but we hope to end up there.

So, when someone asks me what am I going to do to make sure that there are priests in the future, I just turn the question back to them - what are you going to do? The answer? Pray, Invite, Encourage