

From Fr. Yake's Desk

1. Earlier messages that I sent on this website on the issue of quarantine have pointed to two of the sufferings imposed on the world's populations by mandated isolation due to COVID-19: loneliness (April 2) and boredom (April 20). In the message of March 24 I wrote, "The Chinese character for 'crisis,' (pronounced, way-chi) means both danger and opportunity. While not ignoring the obvious dangers presented by covid-19 our faith exercised by a spirituality emboldened by prayerful devotions can bring us peace of mind and an opportunity to be with the Lord in ways that we have never experienced before." The reflection that follows will explore the positive opportunity dimension of loneliness and boredom so that they might embolden Christian spirituality.

A good starting point is to state the essential insight of a faith or religious perspective that is found many times in the bible and may be summed up this way from Psalm 62:

"In God alone is my soul at rest;
my help comes from him.
He alone is my rock, my stronghold,
my fortress: I stand firm."

In Thomas Merton's first book, *Seeds of Contemplation*, (1949) the monk's first sentence in the Introduction states his central thesis; "Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul." (p. 11) Then in Chapter One entitled, *Everything that is, is Holy*, Merton asserts, in agreement with the Prophet Daniel (Dan. 3: 57-88), that the way to God is by way of the created world; it is theologian Bernard Lonergan's, *world of immediacy* from which persons' knowing may lead to a being in love with God. Sinners fail to find God because they do not love God perfectly so the world has potential to reveal both heaven and hell. Merton concludes this chapter,

"The fulfilment we find in creatures belongs to the reality of the created being, a reality that is from God and belongs to God and reflects God. The anguish we find in them belongs to the disorder of our desire which looks for a greater reality in the object of our desire than is actually there: a greater fulfilment than any created thing is capable of giving. Instead of worshipping God through His creation we are always trying to worship ourselves by means of creatures." (p. 17)

His insight is a way of describing addictions that were referred to in the discussion on boredom (April 20). Creation was intended by God to be the means to find and thus to love God, like a work of art permits knowledge of the artist, but sin had blocked creation's ability to accomplish its purpose. This insight raises the question of how persons may situate themselves so as to enable creation to achieve its purpose for them, even a positive purpose to loneliness and boredom.

The direct answer to this issue from the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition is that persons need to assume the virtue of humility. Humility is the foundational and indispensable quality that enables all other virtues. St. John Vianney, popularly known as the Cure of Ars, taught that humility is to all the virtues what the chain is to the rosary,

and note that the first mystery of the holy rosary, The Annunciation, has humility as its virtue. In St. Peter's first letter he insists on humility as the basis of establishing a positive relationship with others and with God. We read, "And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another for, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time." (1 Peter 5: 5-6)

According to St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) there are three degrees of humility: first degree, to abandon (mortal) sin, second degree, to be open to God's Will by assuming an attitude of indifference (to suffering or to joy, accepting whatever God allows), third degree, to be poor like the poor, facing the unknown future depending trustingly on others.) Note Jesus' comment on the need to become poor like children if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18: 3-4), poor meaning dependent because in Jesus' day children had no rights but received everything as a free gift from adults. These three degrees may not necessarily be in order as, for example, the Venerable Leo John Dehon, the founder of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, believed that the second degree of humility was greater than the third. Poverty, however, is not a good in itself as it can be the result of injustice but some have vowed (evangelical) poverty, not as an end but as a path that can enable humility and solidarity with those who must suffer.

In his Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) (2009), a reflection on integral human development, Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI began chapter five,

"One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation. If we look closely at other forms of poverty, including material forms, we see that they are born from isolation, from not being loved or from difficulties in being able to love. Poverty is often produced by a rejection of God's love, by man's basic and tragic tendency to close in on himself, thinking himself to be self-sufficient or merely an insignificant and ephemeral fact, a "stranger" in a random universe. Man is alienated when he is alone, when he is detached from reality, when he stops thinking and believing in a foundation." (p. 29 and footnoted from St. Pope John Paul II's Encyclical Letter, *Centesimus Annus*, 41)

In his observation of human alienation due to being detached from reality we hear echoes of Merton; that creation's sacramentality cannot succeed when persons reject God's love or see the created world as something to be used, perhaps for profit, rather than as a door to God.

That which is positive about the suffering imposed by isolation: loneliness and boredom, for example, is that persons discover their fragility and how they may have lived the illusion of self-sufficiency; they may find that their lifestyle and values obstructed humility, the truth of their existence that was from God. It is the insight of the Carmelite spirituality revealed to saints Teresa of Jesus (Avila) and John of the Cross that God's love is best expressed by permitting us to share in the cross, to bring us to the Dark Night, where in humility we realize our dependence on God who alone can satisfy the human heart. The poverty imposed by isolation becomes an experience of humility and there to discover the influence of modern culture that by opposing all degrees of humility

worsens the pain of isolation. The result of not living in humility is that proud persons are unhappy so they are ever seeking to feel happy through addictions.

What is happiness? Rev. Anthony De Melo, SJ indicated that persons' only need to be real and humility is the human reality. (Note that even the word, human, denotes imperfection, humble.) COVID-19 has created a level field of solidarity to expose human weakness and vulnerability where a minute virus can infect rich and poor alike. De Melo taught that happiness is an unconditioned, i. e. it does not exist where conditions make for happiness: Infants, for example, are born happy, he explained, as they have aliveness; that which they did not have before. Once they put a condition on their aliveness that they learn from their culture; "I'll be happy when, I'll be happy if, I'll be happy when I have..." they place themselves in a state of unhappiness and the more they pursue these conditions the unhappier they will become. The cure of this addictiveness is to die to people and the pressures to conform to external or imposed values.

In chapter 8 of Tom Morris' book, *Philosophy For Dummies* (1999), he discussed theories of happiness. "Persons' happiness is a consequence of excellence; a life that contributes to others. Thus a system of education must aim for excellence in order to satisfy happiness needs for both individuals and society." Note that a life of service, of being for others, is at the heart of Christian altruism. Morris asks: What is goodness, happiness, ethics, morality, and excellence and how are they related? *Morality* is about enabling happiness, the values that, if honoured, cultivate a positive future. Morality offers a structure that facilitates human fulfilment and freedom.

Under the subtitle, *Four Dimensions of Human Experience*, Morris takes us back to the originator of philosophy: Aristotle taught that human beings seek happiness for themselves and others; their existence is teleological: the target is happiness. But what is happiness? For Aristotle happiness did not reside in pleasures or an interior state of peace but as participation in something that brings fulfilment. Happiness was thus viewed as a consequence of excellence; a life that contributes to others' welfare. From this perspective it may be concluded that *moral goodness* is the quality of enhancing happiness.

There are four dimensions of experience that correspond to four targets, four foundations of excellence, to which one can be dedicated in order to promote happiness and the good life. They are: truth, beauty, goodness, and unity. These are all found in God and as persons find themselves prayerfully with divinity they achieve happiness in freedom that we refer to as spiritual.

To be spiritual is to be connected; unity is the goal: inner unity, harmony between self, others, nature, and nature's divine source. All human beings have profound needs that cry out for fulfilment in order that happiness may result. These needs are uniqueness: to feel and to know oneself as special and distinct, union: all need to belong to something greater than self, usefulness: all need to be creative contributors to society by their work, understanding: to know one's place in the world; in the family, community, workplace, and on life's journey. Of these four needs we should ask whether global culture supports or undermines them as they combine as the essence of spirituality, the core of the spiritual dimension of transcending human beings.

2. If you are interested the following is offered as a brief history about how poverty was viewed and evolved within the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The virtue of the evangelical counsel of poverty concerns persons' relationship with the created world. It evolved from an economic sense of poverty to a religious disposition of humility. Understanding this counsel is more complicated than the religious vows of evangelical chastity and evangelical obedience because of this evolution. Here is a brief explanation of the development of thought regarding the evangelical counsel of poverty:

The Old Testament tells of a dichotomy in the meaning of poverty. On the one hand, poverty implied laziness that invited divine punishment whereas wealth was viewed as a sign of divine favour. (Sr. Mary-Jo Leddy has written insightfully about *middleclassness* as a way to explain her observation of workaholic life. She theorized that the newfound wealth of the middle class has them ever working in order to justify to themselves their growing wealth and so to ward off feeling guilty about being relatively rich.) Despite this attitude it was accepted that care should attend the poor and this opinion became the catalyst enabling an evolution of how economic poverty was perceived. The psalms and prophetic writings asserted that God guards the poor and deposes the rich who neglect the poor, or worse, oppresses and exploits them. For example, Isaiah's *Song of the Vineyard* (Ch. 5) indicts greedy landowners who swallow small farms in order to increase their wealth. Isaiah emphasized that acknowledging human dignity before God was of greater worth than possessions, which tend to enhance hubris (pride) to obscure persons' actual status in the created world. Money was never denounced as evil but its greatest good was recognized to assist the poor. From this belief poverty came to be viewed positively as both an obstacle to the sinful arrogance of the wealthy and enabling an appropriate relationship of humility before God. Such is the point of the first beatitude (Mt. 5: 3) where Jesus calls "Blessed" the (materially) poor who know, like children and sinners, their dependence on God's mercy and so understand correctly their relationship to God. The Qumran Community accepted 'economic' or material poverty to enable poverty of spirit, demonstrating their affinity with God, and as it was believed, to invite God to exercise divine power that can only operate through human weakness. (2 Cor. 12: 10) This dynamic is present at the Annunciation where Mary's virginity, meaning, her humility, remaining empty, her nothingness and weakness, became the foundation enabling the Holy Spirit to come upon her.

In the New Testament Jesus did not romanticize the poor but he viewed poverty as a privilege and called the materially poor "blessed," as we saw above (Mt. 5: 3), thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah (Ch. 61). By so doing Jesus proclaimed the establishment of the kingdom of God and this trait revealed his Messianic identity. Key to the kingdom is justice that is the litmus test for healthy poverty: The poor of Christ recognize that they are helpless to save themselves, they receive the kingdom as a gratuitous gift, because heaven cannot be gained by human effort or wisdom. The virtue of poverty is that attitude or 'spirit' where persons realize that their only hope for salvation is God's initiative. Poverty points to the virtue of humility that is the proper disposition in the presence of almighty God.

The Church has always recognized the evangelical counsel of poverty as an imitation of Christ who made himself poor to enrich us as evidenced by his incarnation and redemptive death. Generosity to the poor was recognized as a blessing in Psalm 112 and this point was essential to St. Paul's ministry of preaching to the Gentiles, as he was

ever concerned with the collection for the poor as expressions of his converts' solidarity with Christ who associated himself with the poor. (2 Cor. 8: 1-9, 9: 6-11) In Matthew 25, we see that persons' last judgement is based on how they took care of the poor. St. Matthew advised his readers not to worry about food, drink, and clothes but that the best use of wealth was to give to the poor (Mt. 6: 1-6, 16-18, 24-34). The wealthy but imprisoned St. Thomas More applied St. Paul's logic by seeing his loss of riches as being an exchange for spiritual wealth. The Church encourages the practice of a degree of external poverty by first possessing poverty of spirit, the first of Matthew's beatitudes. The objective of poverty is to free persons to serve and to give witness to the presence of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Wealth can be a freedom-robbing addiction where possessions possess persons. In the film, *Key Largo*, the Humphrey Bogart character asks the criminal counterfeiter, Johnny Rocco, played by Edward G. Robinson, about what he wants; his answer, "I want more."

The profession of the evangelical counsel of poverty is a sign of contradiction to both the economically poor who can be destitute and the rich who ever strive to accumulate wealth. Such a profession requires a balance between extremes and both the poor and the rich will accuse those who take it of hypocrisy; Jesus himself was criticized for entering the homes of both the rich man and the poor sinner. Ideally, this counsel expresses the need to take what is needed in order to show God's goodness and providential care, but not to seek to accumulate more than that because our hope is in God to secure our life, and as regards to our surplus, we seek to distribute wealth so that all have enough to live. (Is. 1: 17, Micah 6: 8, 1 Cor. 16: 1-3, 2 Cor. 8-9)

3. Message from Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick

"Mary is a model of Christian life, faith and hope. She gives us hope since she witnessed the tragic and horrific death of her Son on the cross. She watches over us. She wants us to be safe and continue in the service of her Son."

In every glimpse that we get of Mary in the New Testament she is seen as a person of faith, whether it be at Cana or at the foot of the cross or in the upper room at Pentecost. Michelangelo's 'The Pieta' shows of the face of Mary as the face of faith enwrapping the crucified body of Christ. The central mystery of her life and person is her motherhood, celebrated both at Christmas and a week later. The Church puts the solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God on the first day of the New Year to emphasize the importance of Mary's role in the life of Christ and of the Church. The Immaculate Conception marks the preparation for that motherhood. The Assumption completes God's work in her since it was not fitting that the flesh that had given life to God himself should ever undergo corruption. The Assumption is the crowning of God's work as Mary ends her earthly life and enters eternity. The Assumption looks to eternity and gives us hope that we will follow Mary our Mother when our life is ended.

In 2018, Pope Francis decreed that the Memorial of the "Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church" be celebrated on the Monday after Pentecost. Mary has a special role and mission given to her by God. As Mother of our Redeemer and of the redeemed, she reigns as the Queen at the side of Christ the King. She is a powerful intercessor for all of our needs here on earth. In celebrating her, we acknowledge this great gift for the Church and world; we call on her to be actively involved in our daily life. Mary is a

model of Christian life, faith and hope. She gives us hope since she witnessed the tragic and horrific death of her Son on the cross. She watches over us. She wants us to be safe and continue in the service of her Son.

On May 1, our diocese in solidarity with others across Canada and the United States, joined in prayer to be consecrated to Mary, Mother of God. During this month of May, Pope Francis has invited us to pray the Rosary. He has added two additional prayers for this month, the link is attached.

4. Here is the service of prayer used on May 1, 2020 by which Canada was consecrated to Mary in the month of May, traditionally the month of Mary, imploring her intercession during this pandemic. It may be used for your own personal or family consecration.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

In this time of pandemic marked by desolation and with worry about the future, let us entrust our country to the care and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that we may benefit from her powerful intercession as we join our prayers and efforts with her maternal mediation in Christ.

By imploring the incomparable help of Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, we invoke her solicitude upon our country and ask that she intercede with her Son, Jesus, to hear the prayers of her children who seek protection from the ravages of the coronavirus, healing for those who are ill, wisdom and courage for those who assist the sick and distressed, and eternal rest for those who have died.

During this month of May, which the Church particularly dedicates to the Mother of Christ, we are one in consecrating ourselves and our loved ones to Mary most Holy, the humble Handmaid of the Lord and his most perfect Disciple. We lift up in prayer and in recognition all those many women and men, clergy, religious and laity, who tirelessly commit themselves to the care of others. The innumerable acts of deep human kindness as well as authentic Christian charity which we witness across the globe are a source of great consolation for all. We are reminded evermore of the need to believe and hope against all hope, and we are called to reach out to the needy, the lonely and the dying, and so welcome the graces of divine consolation

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray.

O God, Father of mercies, whose Only Begotten Son, as he hung upon the Cross, chose the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother, to be our Mother also, grant, we pray, that with her loving help your Church may be more fruitful day by day and, exulting in the holiness of her children, may draw to her the embrace all the families of the peoples. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

R. Amen.

WORD OF GOD

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John. (John 19.25-27)

Standing near the Cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

ROSARY – Recite one decade of the Rosary.

Recalling Jesus' words as he hung on the cross – "Behold your mother" – we meditate on the fifth sorrowful mystery of the Rosary, The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord.

The Apostles Creed

Our Father

10 Hail Marys

Glory Be

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of your mercy.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, in this time of pandemic, we turn our gaze to you, and in Christ consecrate to you the faithful of the (Diocese of Antigonish) and with all the people of Canada.

At the Annunciation, fear gave way to trust as you embraced the mysterious and loving plan of God, who through his providence, care and concern brought about newness of life in you and through you. Intercede, we pray, on our behalf as your children, Virgin most faithful.

Grant us faith, hope and perseverance, as we strive to serve and bear witness to all persons, responding to the needs of those affected by this virus. Standing at the foot of the Cross at Calvary, you united yourself with the sufferings of Christ and so uniquely contributed to the mystery of our redemption.

We beseech you as Health of the sick, draw to yourself in maternal compassion the brothers and sisters of your Son, Jesus and all those who are grieved by this pandemic.

Strengthen the dying and comfort those who weep so that all may experience the healing grace of Christ our Divine Physician.

At the Cenacle, after the Resurrection, you accompanied the Apostles with prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In your maternal care as Consoler of the afflicted, accompany healthcare professionals, all who minister to the sick and those who seek a cure to end this pandemic, that the Holy Spirit may renew the face of the earth.

To all of us, dearest Mary, Mother of all the living, be present and show forth your tenderness, as we raise our eyes to you who shines forth before the entire community as a merciful and compassionate companion on our journey. Time and time again, with burdens weighing heavily on their hearts and in their many necessities, the Christian faithful have sought refuge under your mantle of protection.

Come quickly to our aid at this time, Mother of Mercy, and deliver us from the dangers that surround us in our hour of need; watch over especially the elderly, the weak and the infirm, our children and the unity of our families, and all those who give of themselves selflessly in pastoral care to those in need, until in your arms and in your gentle embrace we all find safety and solace.

Amen.

INTERCESSIONS

United as one Body in Christ, let us direct our prayer to our All-loving God, who wants us to honour Mary our Mother; with her we, too, praise the Lord's mighty deeds as he continues to lift up the lowly, remembering his promise of mercy:

R. Look upon Mary and hear our prayer.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, who experienced the cares and hardships of earthly life, the weariness of daily toil, the trials of poverty and the sorrows of Calvary, come to assist the needs of the Church, the initial budding forth of your Kingdom on earth, and all of humankind. R.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, lend a gracious ear to the devout pleas of those who from across the world implore her goodness for health, safety and peace, especially for our parishes, our domestic churches and all our communities of faith. R.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, obtain the gifts of knowledge and wisdom for government officials and medical professionals that a cure for the virus may be found, and for all who care for the sick, the suffering and the dying, may she obtain from the Lord courage and benevolence. R.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, pray on our behalf and with us to the Lord of life and love, who rules the winds and storms, to calm the tempests in our minds and hearts and grant us consolation, security and peace in our day. R.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CONCLUDING PRAYER

As we conclude this consecration, we ask the blessing of Almighty God: Bestow the grace of your kindness upon your supplicant people, O Lord, that, formed by you, their Creator, and restored by you, their sustainer, through your constant action they may be saved. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISMISSAL

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

REGINA CAELI (HAIL HOLY QUEEN)

Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia.

For Christ, your Son and Son of God, alleluia,

has risen as He said, alleluia.

Pray to God for us, alleluia.

St. Joseph, Protector of the Church, pray for us.

5. **MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE 2020 WORLD DAY OF VOCATIONS**

(3 May 2020)

Words of Vocation

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On 4 August last year, the 160th anniversary of the death of the Curé of Ars, I chose to write a letter to all those priests who daily devote their lives to the service of God's people in response to the Lord's call.

On that occasion, I chose four key words – *pain, gratitude, encouragement* and *praise* – as a way of thanking priests and supporting their ministry. I believe that today, on this 57th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, those words can be addressed to the whole people of God, against the backdrop of the Gospel passage that recounts for us the remarkable experience of Jesus and Peter during a stormy night on the Sea of Galilee (cf. *Mt 14:22-33*).

After the multiplication of the loaves, which had astonished the crowds, Jesus told his disciples to get into the boat and precede him to the other shore, while he took leave of the people. The image of the disciples crossing the lake can evoke our own life's journey. Indeed, the boat of our lives slowly advances, restlessly looking for a safe haven and prepared to face the perils and promises of the sea, yet at the same time trusting that the helmsman will ultimately keep us on the right course. At times, though, the boat can drift off course, misled by mirages, not the lighthouse that leads it home, and be tossed by the tempests of difficulty, doubt and fear.

Something similar takes place in the hearts of those who, called to follow the Teacher of Nazareth, have to undertake a crossing and abandon their own security to become the Lord's disciples. The risk involved is real: the night falls, the headwinds howl, the boat is tossed by the waves, and fear of failure, of not being up to the call, can threaten to overwhelm them.

The Gospel, however, tells us that in the midst of this challenging journey we are not alone. Like the first ray of dawn in the heart of the night, the Lord comes walking on the troubled waters to join the disciples; he invites Peter to come to him on the waves, saves him when he sees him sinking and, once in the boat, makes the winds die down.

The first word of vocation, then, is *gratitude*. Taking the right course is not something we do on our own, nor does it depend solely on the road we choose to travel. How we find fulfilment in life is more than a decision we make as isolated individuals; above all else, it is a response to a call from on high. The Lord points out our destination on the opposite shore and he grants us the courage to board the boat. In calling us, he becomes our

helmsman; he accompanies and guides us; he prevents us from running aground on the shoals of indecision and even enables us to walk on surging waters.

Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us, perhaps even at a time when our boat was being battered by the storm. “Vocation, more than our own choice, is a response to the Lord’s unmerited call” (*Letter to Priests*, 4 August 2019). We will succeed in discovering and embracing our vocation once we open our hearts in gratitude and perceive the passage of God in our lives.

When the disciples see Jesus walking towards them on the sea, they first think that he is a ghost and are filled with fear. Jesus immediately reassures them with words that should constantly accompany our lives and our vocational journey: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” (*Mt 14:27*). This, then, is the second word I wish to offer you: *encouragement*.

What frequently hinders our journey, our growth, our choosing the road the Lord is marking out for us, are certain “ghosts” that trouble our hearts. When we are called to leave safe shores and embrace a state of life – like marriage, ministerial priesthood, consecrated life – our first reaction is often from the “ghost of disbelief”. Surely, this vocation is not for me! Can this really be the right path? Is the Lord really asking me to do this?

Those thoughts can keep growing – justifications and calculations that sap our determination and leave us hesitant and powerless on the shore where we started. We think we might be wrong, not up to the challenge, or simply glimpsing a ghost to be exorcized.

The Lord knows that a fundamental life choice – like marriage or special consecration to his service – calls for *courage*. He knows the questions, doubts and difficulties that toss the boat of our heart, and so he reassures us: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear!” We know in faith that he is present and comes to meet us, that he is ever at our side even amid stormy seas. This knowledge sets us free from that lethargy which I have called “sweet sorrow” (*Letter to Priests*, 4 August 2019), the interior discouragement that hold us back from experiencing the beauty of our vocation.

In the *Letter to Priests*, I also spoke about pain, but here I would like to translate the word differently, as *fatigue*. Every vocation brings with it a responsibility. The Lord calls us because he wants to enable us, like Peter, to “walk on water”, in other words, to take charge of our lives and place them at the service of the Gospel, in the concrete and everyday ways that he shows us, and specifically in the different forms of lay, priestly and consecrated vocation. Yet, like Saint Peter, our desire and enthusiasm coexist with our failings and fears.

If we let ourselves be daunted by the responsibilities that await us – whether in married life or priestly ministry – or by the hardships in store for us, then we will soon turn away from the gaze of Jesus and, like Peter, we will begin to sink. On the other hand, despite our frailty and poverty, faith enables us to walk towards the Risen Lord and to weather

every storm. Whenever fatigue or fear make us start to sink, Jesus holds out his hand to us. He gives us the enthusiasm we need to live our vocation with joy and fervour.

When Jesus at last boards the boat, the winds die down and the waves are calmed. Here we have a beautiful image of what the Lord can do at times of turbulence and tempest in our lives. He stills those winds, so that the forces of evil, fear and resignation no longer have power over us.

As we live out our specific vocation, those headwinds can wear us down. Here I think of all those who have important responsibilities in civil society, spouses whom I like to refer to – not without reason – as “courageous”, and in a particular way those who have embraced the consecrated life or the priesthood. I am conscious of your hard work, the sense of isolation that can at times weigh upon your hearts, the risk of falling into a rut that can gradually make the ardent flame of our vocation die down, the burden of the uncertainty and insecurity of the times, and worry about the future. Take heart, do not be afraid! Jesus is at our side, and if we acknowledge him as the one Lord of our lives, he will stretch out his hand, take hold of us and save us.

Even amid the storm-tossed waters, then, our lives become open to *praise*. This is the last of our vocation words, and it is an invitation to cultivate the interior disposition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Grateful that Lord gazed upon her, faithful amid fear and turmoil, she courageously embraced her vocation and made of her life an eternal song of praise to the Lord.

Dear friends, on this day in particular, but also in the ordinary pastoral life of our communities, I ask the Church to continue to promote vocations. May she touch the hearts of the faithful and enable each of them to discover with gratitude God’s call in their lives, to find courage to say “yes” to God, to overcome all weariness through faith in Christ, and to make of their lives a song of praise for God, for their brothers and sisters, and for the whole world. May the Virgin Mary accompany us and intercede for us.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 8 March 2020, the Second Sunday of Lent

Franciscus

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/vocations/documents/papa-francesco_20200308_57-messaggio-giornata-mondiale-vocazioni.html

6. An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Dearest Jesus,

I believe that You are present in the most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot, at this moment, receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never

permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.

7. Churches Online: Local parishes with livestreamed or video Masses and prayers See Our Blog: www.antigonishdiocese.com

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