

Homily for February 6<sup>th</sup> 2022

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

***The Consecrated Life***

Last Wednesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, was the International Day for Consecrated Life, which Pope St John Paul II instituted on 1997. This day especially celebrates those men and women who have consecrated themselves in a special way through the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity to follow Jesus with a particular and singular focus. In the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*, which celebrates this gift of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, the following is said about the Consecrated Life:

***The people of God have no lasting city here below, but look forward to one that is to come. Since this is so, the religious state, whose purpose is to free its members from earthly cares, more fully manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below.<sup>1</sup>***

On this Sunday I want to celebrate with you the gift of the consecrated life and learn from our Mass readings how the Consecrated Life manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below.

In the reading from Isaiah we see the intersection between the cares of this world, described by locating Isaiah's vision at the time of the death of King Uzziah, with this vision of heavenly glory. Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up with the Seraphim in attendance around him. In the heavenly realm there are nine choirs of angels, with the Seraphim being the highest and therefore closest to the Lord. As he is caught up in the ecstasy where Isaiah's focus is heavenward, he is so to speak brought back down to earth. He is aware that in relation to the glorious ones, that he is a lowly man "of unclean lips and dwells among a people of unclean lips" Yet at the same time he also experiences the purifying cleansing of God's refining grace, as the coals used to burn the incense touch his lips. This clear vision of God and the clear vision of himself and those among whom he leaves allows him to then hear and respond to the Lord:

***Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!<sup>2</sup>***

Here is the first thing I want to say about the Consecrated Life. It is a calling that is formed and discerned in the life of a man or woman who has a deepening experience of how the heavenly world is to intersect with this earthly world in such a way that the earthly temporal realities are shaped by the heavenly and eternal realities. Pope St John Paul II wrote about this relationship:

---

<sup>1</sup> Catholic Church. (2011). [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium](#). In *Vatican II Documents*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Is 6:8). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

*We should never forget that consecrated life, before being a commitment of men and women, is a gift which comes from on high, an initiative of the Father "who draws his creatures to himself with a special love and for a special mission"*

Isaiah was drawn to the Lord with this special love and equipped for a special mission. This is always so for those who give their yes to the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

The second thing I want to consider with you about the consecrated life is how it is an inspiration to the whole Church to renew the commitment of our baptism and confirmation. Again quoting Pope St John Paul II from the document he wrote decreeing the Day for Consecrated Life:

**This form of life, embraced by Christ and made present particularly by consecrated persons, is of great importance for the Church, called in every member to live the same upward striving toward God who is All, following Christ in the light and power of the Holy Spirit.**

Our consecrated brothers and sisters can inspire all of us to live more intentionally our own callings, seeing in them ways to serve Jesus and his heavenly kingdom while living in this world. St Paul in the reading from 1 Corinthians wanted his readers to see the connection between his faith and witness and theirs.

**Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, 2 through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.**

In this world there are so many influences that distract us from holding firmly to the message of the Gospel. Consecrated men like St. Paul, the priests and religious of the Church can inspire all of us to hold firmly to the message that has been proclaimed to us so we can live the same upward striving toward God.

The third reason we want to consider the consecrated life is to encourage young people today to discern this high vocation. It is worth remembering that when Jesus got into St Peter's boat, the future Pope would have been a young man, at most in his early twenties. After a disheartening night of fishing where he is in desolation, the Lord enters Peter's life in a way that will change him forever. There is a real parallel with the reading from Isaiah. But what is added to the reading from Luke is the Lord's direction for Peter to take the boat out into the deep and let down the nets for a catch. The Church has always understood these words of Jesus as a challenge and invitation to the deepening of our relationship with him and our service of the Church and the World. For those called to the Consecrated Life we hear once more from Pope St John Paul II

*They are invited to celebrate together solemnly the marvels which the Lord has accomplished in them, to discover by a more illumined faith the rays of divine beauty spread by the Spirit in their way of life, and to acquire a more vivid consciousness of their irreplaceable mission in the Church and in the world.*

It was this mission that St. Peter would discover as he would see with greater clarity the intersection between heaven and earth that his consecration to Jesus would establish.

At present in the Diocese of Calgary there are seven men at St. Joseph's Seminary in formation for the priesthood; a further 20 young men who are discerning a call, and five women who have joined to religious communities to consider their vocations.

May we pray for vocations while at the same time encouraging young people to consider a way of life that affirms that the consecrated life is to the Church what the heart is to the body, it enables the church to be energized for mission so that in our own way we can all hear and respond to the call at the heart of our readings:

***Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"<sup>3</sup>***

And cast our nets into the deep.

---

<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Is 6:8). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.