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Bishop Luis Madrigal & Bishop Giles Butler

The Seraph

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In ómnibus - Cáritas.*

THE SERAPH

MY THOUGHTS: THE CELEBRATION & THE SOLEMN HIGH MASS

Father Anthony Lentz, OFM

THE CELEBRATION

On July 25th of this year, our community celebrated with a Solemn High Mass at St. Joseph's Mission in Union, KY. It was in honor of Bishop Giles' 20th Anniversary of His Consecration to the Episcopacy. On this day, we, the clergy and the laity, looked to remember and to honor all that God has worked through His Excellency. We should appreciate all that Bishop Giles has done and all the sacrifices he has made to lead us and guide us during this tumultuous time in the Church's history. I remember when the late Bishop Louis Vezelis told me that to be a true Roman Catholic bishop, who stands up for orthodoxy, is not only a cross, but a living martyrdom. I do not doubt that Bishop Giles would agree with this assessment. I remember on the day before his consecration, August 23, 2005, I asked him how he was doing, and I will never forget his response:

"Well, now I will never get to be a hermit." This response made an impression upon me, although at the time I didn't know why. I suppose after being a priest for several years, I can now better appreciate its profundity. When a man becomes a priest, his life is no longer his own; it belongs exclusively to God and His holy work. For the candidate, it begins when he receives the tonsure, that is, his entrance into the clerical state. He recites Psalm 15:5: *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: it is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me.* The enormity of this vocation does not truly become a reality until the young man is elevated to the priesthood. Now, to become a bishop, to receive the fullness of the priesthood, to become a prince of the Church, adds an even greater weight. A bishop understands more profoundly the necessity of his own personal holiness and that he is merely God's tool. For the

worldly-minded, this sounds horrible, but for the spiritual man, this is the path to uniformity with God's holy will, that is, sanctity. Our Lord said that our light must not be hidden, but must shine forth for all to see. This holds an even greater significance for the bishop, for he must be a light that guides his people. He must be an example of holiness. He must be, truly, in all that he does, an *Alter Christus* – another Christ.

THE SOLEMN MASS BEFORE THE ORDINARY

For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation: for My Name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 1:11)

In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Sacrifice of Calvary is renewed each and every day upon many altars. It is the one true Sacrifice and the central act of divine worship within the Liturgy. Like a song that begins with a few essential notes, so too the Mass has evolved and developed over the centuries in the grand symphony of Divine Worship.

It reached its final crescendo in the 16th century with Pope Saint Pius V, when he codified the Mass, approved by the Council of Trent, with the Papal Bull *Quo Primum*.

Now, the importance and the definition of the Mass should not be foreign to the Catholic. It is *the sacrifice of the New Law in which Christ, through the ministry of the priest, offers Himself to God in an unbloody manner under the appearances of bread and wine.*

There is a part of the Mass that does not change; this is called the *Ordinary of the Mass*. The most important part is the Consecration, where the bread and wine are miraculously transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Our Lord. There is also a part of the Mass that varies day by day in many of its wording and in the ceremonies with which it is celebrated. These variations depend on the feast which is being observed, or on the special purpose for which the Mass is being offered, or on the rank of the celebrant. This brings us to the Solemn High Mass.

The Solemn High Mass is the perfect expression of the litur-

gy. It is celebrated by the priest or bishop as the celebrant with music, incense, and with the assistance of a deacon and subdeacon. The most notable feature is that the subdeacon sings the Epistle and the deacon sings the Gospel. This added solemnity is not only more pleasing to God, as an act of Divine Worship, but it is also more edifying for the faithful to take part in. Depending on the needs of the ceremony, many assistants may be required. Usually, you would have at least: the celebrant, the deacon, the subdeacon, the thurifer, two acolytes, and a master of ceremonies. In the past, many parishes would have a Solemn High Mass a few times a year, such as Easter and Christmas, with roles of deacon and subdeacon being taken on by assistant pastors. This solemnity is often reserved for such feasts and occasions to highlight their importance, just like the one at St. Joseph's Mission in July.

For this celebration, we requested Bishop Madrigal not only to attend but to act as the celebrant. Father Joseph was to be the deacon of the Mass. I was given, or rather I took on, the two roles of subdeacon

and the master of ceremonies. As the “master of ceremonies” (MC), it would be my duty to make sure that the ceremony is conducted reverently and efficiently. I spent weeks reviewing the rubrics for the Solemn High Mass, but then, to use a baseball analogy, I was thrown a curveball. About a month before the celebration, I called Bishop Giles to go over everything, and that is when he told me that we would be doing the “Solemn Mass before the Ordinary,” that is, the bishop. I will admit that when he told me this, I was confused because I didn’t understand why he had to clarify it. Of course, it would be before the Ordinary. He was going to be present in the same way he was present during my own first Solemn High Mass, seated at his throne. Alas, this was not the case, for this was a special ceremony in which the bishop plays an active role. Immediately, Bishop Giles emailed me the rubrics, and I had to get to work. This added an extra challenge, but that was quickly alleviated when I was told that Father Martin Barajas would be coming to the celebration. He graciously accepted the role of subdeacon, which allowed me

to focus solely on my duties as the MC.

During the ceremony, I was given a distinct perspective on the symbolism and enormity of these events. I will only give you one, since this article is already quite long. When the bishop arrives at the altar, he makes his reverence with the ministers and then proceeds to the throne. Here he vests in some of the usual vestments for the Mass – amice, alb, cincture, stole, and pectoral cross – and also the cope, miter, and crozier. The bishop, with his assistants, then processes back to the foot of the altar and removes the miter and crozier. He and the celebrant recite all the prayers in unison up to the *Confiteor*. Let us take in this scene. Here

you have a Prince of the Church, humbling himself before God's throne. He sets aside all the dignity of his office, and he becomes the penitent sinner. He inspires all the faithful to humble themselves before the throne of God. His example reminds us about the fruits of the Mass and the encouraging words of St. Paul: "Where sin abounds, grace abounds more."

I want to thank His Excellency for not only being an inspiration, but a father, a bulwark, and a light that shines the path to Christ, Who, and no other, is the Way, Truth, and the Life.

Pax tecum!

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THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD

Holy Orders (priesthood) is a Sacrament — an outward sign instituted by Jesus Christ to give grace. We observe the outward signs of the priesthood in all the Sacraments the priests offer to us. We witness the graces of the priesthood while we receive the graces of the other Sacraments he administers to us. We generally point to Holy Thursday night as the place where Jesus instituted the priesthood, the Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Holy Eucharist. It was at this point that Jesus gave the power to the Apostles to confer the Eucharist, also known as Transubstantiation. We see, however, stages in the power and authority that Jesus gave to them. He sent the disciples out to prepare the way for Himself. He gave them authority to preach in His Name, He gave them the power to cast out devils, and He gave them the power to forgive sins. These powers were not given all at once but in stages. Therefore, there are several orders within the priesthood.

Every Sacrament consists of three essential properties: 1) matter, 2) form, and 3) intention. This is also true for the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It is commonly held that the matter for this Sacrament is the imposition of the bishop's hands upon the recipient (a baptized male human). The form is the words accompanying this action of receiving the Holy Ghost, and the intention is to confer the Sacrament.

Holy Orders is plural, but the Sacrament is one. In the Church, there is a hierarchy. The hierarchy contained in this Sacrament consists of three levels: 1) bishops, 2) priests, and 3) deacons. Each of these Orders are included in the singular Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Bishops are the high priests of the New Testament – princes of the Church. Saint Cyprian famously said: “The bishop is in the Church, and the Church is in the bishop, and if anyone is not with the bishop, he is

not in the Church.” The Sacrament of episcopal consecration is the highest of these levels and the fullness of this Sacrament. Bishops are the successors to the Apostles. Higher ranks within the Church are not Sacramental, i.e., popes, cardinals, archbishops, etc. The papal office is the highest in the Church, and the popes are Vicars of Jesus Christ. However, popes, Sacramentally, are ultimately bishops of Rome, held up as the principal of unity for all the other bishops throughout the world. It is good to reflect in our days that the Church is Apostolic and, therefore, can and does continue even in the absence of the higher (non-Sacramental) levels.

Below the bishops, the next level is that of the priesthood. Priests, ordained with the responsibility to perform many tasks, play a crucial role in the Church. Their primary duties include offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and administering the Sacrament of Penance, which includes forgiving sins. It's important to note that priests are not to be compared to non-Catholic ministers or preachers. Their role is more akin to the priests of the

Old Testament. Priests offer Sacrifice to God in both the Old and New Testaments.

Beneath priests, the next level is that of the diaconate. Deacons are ordained to preach and to assist the bishop and priest. Deacons assist at the altar during the Sacrifice and are the extraordinary ministers of the Holy Eucharist.

The Sacramental Orders, often referred to as “Major Orders,” consist of the bishop, priest, and deacon. However, there are levels or orders leading up to these that are not considered Sacraments. These include the porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte, collectively known as the “Minor Orders.” These orders, though not Sacramental, are deeply rooted in the historical traditions of the Catholic Church. Between these minor orders and the Sacramental Major Orders, there is the subdiaconate. The introduction to the clerical state is marked by the ceremony of “tonsure” or the cutting of the hair.

In the Roman Rite, the Sacrament of Holy Orders is inseparable from the vow of celibacy. As a man progresses through the seminary training,

his commitment is marked by tonsure and the minor orders. As his education and training draw nearer to completion, he receives the order of “sub-deacon.” Though this is not a “Sacrament,” it is at this point that the future priest makes his vow of celibacy. This vow of celibacy, a solemn and significant commitment, is renewed when he receives any of the Major (or Sacramental) Orders.

Religious life within a religious order or community is not part of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. For example, Franciscan Brothers or Sisters do not receive a Sacrament by making their vows and entering the community. These religious do make vows of celibacy (along with poverty and obedience), very similar to the vow of celibacy that priests make. Religious priests are doubly bound to celibacy by their religious and clerical vows.

These vows of celibacy become an impediment to any attempted marriage. The Tridentine Council defines: “If anyone saith that clerics constituted in sacred orders ... can contract marriage, and

that being contracted, it is valid, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law, ... let him be anathema.”

Virginity and marriage are both holy, but virginity is superior to marriage. This is said about the stations of life, not of individuals. Probably, a virtuous mother raising her children in the love of God is superior to a careless or indifferent religious nun or sister.

Clerical celibacy is advantageous for the Church, the clergy, and the faithful. The Church is the “Bride of Christ,” and as such, it is appropriate for Her priests to be free of familial and secular influences. Priests are better able to fight for Christ and the Church because they have no ties to a wife or children. Celibacy also helps prevent nepotism within the Church.

Celibacy is advantageous for the clergy. A priest is burdened with the cares of God, the Church, as well as the souls of the laity. This burden would only be compounded by having a wife and children. A man concerned for the support and care of a family is divided and unable to give his full attention to God, the

Church, or the laity entrusted to his care.

Priestly celibacy is also advantageous for the laity. The laity become the priest's children to whom he devotes his thoughts and attention. His celibacy is apt to inspire them with respect and admiration. It enables them to humbly and sincerely confess their sins to him. They seek to learn the ways of God from him, knowing that he is anointed by God."

The priest's hands are anointed and made sacred by God in the Sacrament of Ordination. It is with these sacred, anointed hands that Jesus is brought to us in the Holy Eucharist. It

is through the Sacrament of Ordination that the priest has the power from God to forgive us our sins. It is through this Sacrament that the blessings of priests are made so powerful and precious. It is through the grace of this Sacrament that the Holy Ghost enables the priest to direct the steps of our souls on the surer path into eternity.

Let us pray daily that God will guide and protect our priests, and that He will inspire and lead more young men to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders for the greater honor and glory of God and the salvation of our souls.

THE MAKING OF A GOOD WILL OR TRUST: *Have you remembered God?*

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THE SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW

Dear Friends in Christ,

From all His disciples, Jesus chose twelve to be His Apostles. Saint Bartholomew was one of these twelve. It is believed that he is the same person as Nathaniel, in whom there was no guile.

Everyone is called to be a disciple or follower of Jesus. Not everyone is called to be a religious, priest, or bishop. These clerical or religious vocations are not just specific callings; they are divine callings from God. It is not we who choose them; it is God Who chooses us. We are free to accept or reject God's calling, but we are not free to escape the consequences of our decisions.

Everyone must accept the discipleship of Jesus or suffer the consequences of being eternally separated from God. This is because, as Christians, we believe that there is no salvation outside of Jesus and His True Church. This means that our ultimate salvation is found in our relationship with Jesus and our participation in His Church. Above this, God has specific goals for each of

us in how we are to follow Him. God gives some the vocation of marriage/parenthood. Others God calls to a celibate life in the world, in the religious life, or the clerical state. Directors of the spiritual life are quick to remind us that it is God Who called us, not we who have called ourselves.

While, in general, it is possible to save our souls in all these different vocations, specifically, we must cooperate with God in the vocation He calls us to enter. A person called to married/parental life will find it most difficult, if not impossible, to save their soul in the clerical or religious life. A person called to a life of celibacy in an unmarried, clerical, or religious state will find it most difficult, if not impossible, to save their soul in the married/parental state.

It appears that today's society wishes to avoid the vocations that God calls us to fill, out of fear of the crosses or burdens that accompany that station of life. Young people avoid marriage and parenthood because it will be difficult. It is too expensive, or it is

thought that we could never do it well, or we are unworthy. There are countless excuses for us to avoid the crosses of our vocations.

None of us is worthy of the vocation that God gives us; however, we must always strive to become more worthy of the graces God has given us. Only God is good, but we are instructed to strive for perfection because God is perfect. There was only one perfect wife and mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the rest of women are imperfect, liable to err, and human. Every man is also imperfect, liable to err, and human. Our salvation is intimately connected to our vocation, where we embrace the daily crosses and burdens, and always strive to do better, to be better. This struggle is essential in every vocation. No one enters marriage as the perfect spouse. No one to whom God gives a child begins as an ideal father or mother. We learn and improve day by day with our successes and failures. Hopefully, constantly advancing in grace and virtue as we draw nearer to eternity.

Many avoid religious or clerical life because they fear the crosses and burdens of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In our

immodest and impure environment, which often promotes materialism and individualism over spiritual values, young people perceive that celibacy is impossible for them. This is true if we rely only on ourselves. However, if we cooperate with the grace of God, we find that, with Saint Paul, we can do all things in Him Who strengthens us.

We seem to have cultivated a generation of children who want to avoid maturity and responsibility at all costs. Many panic at the thought of making their own decisions and living with the consequences. I think this is due to a lack of true faith and trust in God and His graces. As our bodies physically mature, so must our minds or intellects mature, and even more importantly, so must our souls grow or advance in the spiritual life. We must avoid rushing in where angels fear to tread, but we must also avoid idleness and indifference. We should avoid impulsive or rash decisions, but also avoid putting off indefinitely the call that God has given us. We need to answer the call when it is given, not when we want to, or when we think it might be “better.” Maturity, wisdom, and understanding are all needed. And often we need

those around us to help guide us in the ways to hear God's call and answer it with all our heart and soul.

Every vocation has its crosses, and these need to be embraced willingly and cheerfully for the love of God. We should not allow remorse or regret to enter our vocation. Looking back does not help. Cursed is the man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back. Those who have made vows to God, whether in matrimony or celibacy, are to find their true happiness and purpose in bearing the crosses and burdens that come with that

state in life. Looking back with longing to the single state is foolish, childish, immature, and spiritually dangerous. This causes unhappiness and dissatisfaction. It often ends in breaking vows made to God (until death do we part). Once a vow made to God is broken, our lives become increasingly miserable because one broken vow sets the stage for more and more vows to be broken.

May the Immaculate Heart of Mary inspire, guide, and protect us!



“THE PRIESTHOOD IS THE LOVE OF THE HEART OF JESUS. WHEN YOU SEE A PRIEST, THINK OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

~St. John Marie Vianney

GOD'S CREATION: HUMANS

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD

Humans, unique in all of God's creation, are philosophically labeled as "rational animals," and theologically, we are both material and spiritual. We are made with body and soul – a microcosm of all that God has created. This uniqueness, this duality of body and soul, sets us apart and makes us significant in the eyes of God. We share a material body with animals and the world around us, and we possess immortal souls, akin to those of angels.

Developing our God-given potential requires that we not only acknowledge but also actively attend to both body and soul. This responsibility and accountability are fundamental parts of our existence.

The material sciences have studied the human physical body, including the human brain, but have ignored or forgotten the human soul. This has led to treating humans as mere higher-order animals. The studies of animal "psychology" have led to "behavioral psychology" and the concepts of training children with the same

or similar methods that work in training animals.

Animals, without immortal souls, are trained through "reward and punishment." It is a simple concept: when an animal does something desirable, it is rewarded (with food, praise, etc.); when it does something undesirable, it is punished (with scolding, confinement, and even physical pain). Surprisingly, this does work to a limited degree in both humans and animals. Hope for a reward and fear of punishment are practical tools in modifying human behavior.

The problems arise when we begin to employ the intelligence and reasoning of our souls. Deception soon enters, and we become capable of internally rebelling while still obeying the material or physical aspect of the rules or laws. Jesus Christ greatly condemned this phenomenon. Even to this day, we label this hypocrisy as Pharisaism after this group of people that Jesus so boldly denounced. The need for authenticity and integrity is

paramount in our journey towards God.

God has given us the Ten Commandments, and the Pharisees so construed and contorted these laws to “obey” them physically or materially but still disobey them spiritually. They followed the “letter of the law” but not the spirit of the law.

Not much has changed since the time of Jesus. We still have our modern-day Pharisees among us. Many “Christians” claim to believe in Jesus or the Bible, but inwardly, in the depth of their hearts and souls, are in open rebellion against God’s Laws. This inward rebellion soon manifests itself in Pharisaical hypocrisy – their mouths speak good-sounding things, but their actions talk about something far different. To justify this discordance in their lives, they would like us to believe that, somehow, they are internally good, but their bodies are in open rebellion against them. They want to quote Saint Paul in the idea that the “heart is willing but the body is weak.” They want us to believe that it is impossible for them to physically strive for conformity to God’s Law because they are weak, and this is the way that God made us. They further suggest that it is pride

and vanity for us to try to be good. Therefore, they teach and live that “we only need to believe in Jesus and then we can sin on bravely.” The words of Jesus and the words in the Bible are twisted until they are made to appear to agree with the perverted wills of men.

In examining the conflict of body and soul in our human nature, we conclude that everything that is done or spoken is first in the heart or mind (the soul). The actions of the soul precede the actions of our bodies. However, we are very capable of creating a discord between our thoughts and desires and the actions or words of our bodies – lying and hypocrisy. Perhaps many deserve the rebuke from God: “These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.” How often are our prayers filled with distractions? Unwanted or unwelcome distractions should not deter us from our prayers. We should resist them as soon as we recognize them and return to lifting our hearts and minds to God. These are often permitted or willed by God so that we may overcome ourselves and grow spiritually stronger. It is the deliberately willed or desired distractions that should concern us, and we must truly work to avoid and overcome – lest we become

worthy of God's rebuke of "honoring Him with our lips while our hearts are far from Him."

Our angry and hurtful words towards our neighbors originated from our hearts, minds, and souls before they were ever spoken. Jesus reminds us that harboring hatred in our hearts towards someone deserves the same punishment as murder.

Likewise, lust in our hearts makes us just as guilty of adultery as if we physically sinned.

While it is helpful to correct and bring our bodies into conformity with God's Laws, it becomes spiritually useless if there is disobedience and rebellion in our hearts. On the other extreme, it is hypocritical to pretend that our hearts are pure when our speech and actions are not.

We are body and soul. Greater than the animals but less than the angels. There needs to be conformity to our thoughts, desires, words, and actions.

Throughout the year, we speak of "virtue being in the middle," as well as the concurrence of "modesty and moderation." Graces are spiritual gifts from God that inspire us to goodness. When we habitually implement these graces and put

them into action, we develop virtues. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost become virtues in daily lives. I believe that modesty is much more than how we physically dress. However, how we dress does seem to say something about the state of our souls, just as the words we choose to use and how we speak them often betray the thoughts in our hearts. Angry words and actions reveal anger or even hatred that may be living in our souls. Impure words and actions reveal impurity in our hearts, minds, and souls. Immodest dress reveals immodest hearts, minds, and souls.

However, before we begin judging people's hearts, minds, and souls by their physical appearance, we should consider that it is possible — and maybe even probable — that there is a discordance between appearances and intentions. There are habits that we develop, which we perform without thinking. Bad habits need to be worked on, but things done without thought or premeditation make us less guilty than those that are pre-planned, willed, or desired. Sometimes, unfortunate words escape the mouths of people that are soon regretted and are sincerely apologized for. This is very different from mean or harsh

words that have been planned and delivered with pre-meditated malice. Even our civil law distinguishes various degrees of murder depending on the degree of malice and or intentions of the person involved. With this in mind, we caution our readers to be careful of judging the hearts, minds, and souls of others based upon what we see or hear. However, we can look inward and make judgments upon our deliberate thoughts, words, and actions.

Modesty and moderation go hand in hand. On the one hand, we need to steer clear of impurity on display in our modern world, and on the other hand, we need to avoid singularity. We should dress appropriately for the situation with clothing that is suited for the occasion, neither too little nor too much. Quite often, our attention is focused on the lack of covering rather than too much clothing, but either extreme is immoderate and immodest.

Pride and vanity in over-dressing and “giving a good example” to everyone else are sinful. Sensual and seductive dress to be noticed and desired is the other extreme. The commonality between these two extremes is the desire to be seen by our fellow men. Avoiding

singularity and seeking an appropriate covering that is neither too much nor too little is the modest ground we need to seek.

Our intentions need to be pure when we dress. We should dress to give honor and glory to God rather than to be noticed by our fellow men. If we dress to show our friends, family, and neighbors how a truly God-like man or woman dresses, then we slip into Pharisaism. If we dress to solicit impure or sexual desires for our bodies in others, then we have become tempters or temptresses – devils in human form.

We do need to consider those around us, but the thought of God should be first and foremost in our minds in all we think, say, and do. Some have argued that it is not their fault if someone looks at them and sins in their heart. After all, we cannot control what others think. But we are guilty when it is our intention to illicit these thoughts and desires toward ourselves. Thoughtlessness or carelessness may be mitigating circumstances, but they do not completely absolve us from responsibility. We should help each other enter the kingdom of Heaven, not lead others into Hell.

The story of Susanna in the Bible (Book of Daniel) may help us understand this a little more clearly. She was bathing in her own home, unaware that she was being watched and lusted after by two men who formed evil desires and plans in their hearts. When she would not consent to them, she was falsely accused. Still unwilling to consent to sin, she was ready to suffer the penalty of the crimes she was falsely accused of. The sins of these men were not due to her, but rather to the lust in the hearts of the men who were spying on her. Susanna was not immodest in bathing, but rather the immodesty was in the lustful hearts, minds, and souls of those desiring her body.

Genuine modesty is first and foremost a state of our hearts, minds, and souls, just as true immodesty is first and foremost a state of our hearts, minds, and souls. The immodest soul can and does sin without ever seeing or interacting with anyone else. The immodest soul has already sinned before they choose their immodest dress. The immodest, lustful soul has already sinned before ever seeing anyone. The imagination fills in the gaps in the material reality around us.

The intention to be seen, desired, envied, etc., by others

is already immoderate and immodest. The will to see and want others is already immoderate and immodest. The imagination feeds and fills in the fantasies, and when these cannot be experienced physically, they are often played out and relished in fantasy. There is the sin, and there is the evil.

I do not wish to specify styles or measurements because these can and do vary depending on the place, time, and situation. What I do suggest is that we begin to think about what we wear and why we wear it. These intentions are critical. Our first consideration is that we should dress for God, then be appropriately attired for the place, time, and situation. Lastly, we may dress for the edification of our fellow men, but we should not do so to present ourselves as an example to them or as a temptation to them.



VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Very Reverend Lyman A. Fenn, S.S., D.D.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SIGNS OF A VOCATION:

Part Three

A KINDLY DISPOSITION

A. The Apostles

Do we find that a kindly disposition was one of the characteristics of the band of Apostles? The frank Gospel account tells of the quarrels they had; how they argued as to who should be first in the kingdom of heaven. We know of the impulsive outbursts of St. Peter, and of the rebukes he received from the lips of the Gentle One. But in spite of these outbreaks which were, after all, infrequent, we know that the Apostles lived in very close association with one another for a long period, that they fished from the same boat for days and nights on end. They shared one another's joys and hardships, feats which anyone living in a community is well aware they could not have accomplished were they irascible and quarrelsome. On the positive side, we hear at the

very outset of Andrew's running off to the brother Simon to share with him the good news that he had found the Messias. Philip likewise rushed away to find Nathanael. And they were all of a fundamentally kind disposition to learn thoroughly from Christ the lessons of Christian tolerance and amiability.

B. The Boy

We usually associate kindness and self-control with more mature persons, who have rubbed shoulders with their fellow men and who by their experiences have learned to take men for what they are — weak or strong, easily disturbed or calm, volatile or phlegmatic, courageous or timid.

Youth, on the other hand, and especially a boy's youth, suggests thoughtlessness and even cruelty towards companions, the more so if those companions are inferior in physical or mental abilities. No! we cannot expect a boy of twelve or thirteen to have mastered an unruly disposition or to have acquired a positive and well-thought-out attitude

towards his fellows. That would be expecting the boy to be a man. Consequently, it will be more practical to approach the question of kindliness from the negative side, by describing certain types of boys who so lack the disposition as to be unfit candidates for the priesthood.

There are some youngsters who cannot get along with their companions. Constant friction arises out of their cantankerous spirits and quarrelsome little natures. They seem to be all barb, with a dubious talent for picking out the flaws of others, and for drawing attention to them by biting remarks and offensive statements. What happens to such boys? Sometimes they manage to sweeten their dispositions, but too frequently either their companions avoid them or they in turn give up the attempt to go with others, falling back upon themselves to become lonely, isolated, souls — lone wolves that break from the pack.

Characters of this type will not get on well in the seminary, where the family spirit must prevail, and where participation in the give and take of community life itself furnishes an excellent training in tolerance and fraternal charity. It seems unnecessary to add that

the same type is altogether unsuited for the priesthood, especially the pastoral ministry. To be "all things to all men," to have consideration for human weakness, to sympathize with the unfortunate and to smile with the glad, these put to the test even the habitually kind, and are utterly beyond the reach of the irascible man.

What of the hot-tempered boy? I do not mean the one who is perpetually cranky or nasty by temperament, but the one who flares up with fists clenched and voice at its loudest when provoked? This characteristic forms no obstacle to the priesthood, provided the boy is making attempts to control his temper. As a matter of fact, it may become a wonderful asset to him in his maturity if he manages to bridle his temper. Some of our greatest churchmen, the men who do things for Christ, are those who have diverted wild tempers into channels of tireless activity.

UPRIGHTNESS OF CHARACTER

A. The Apostles

Our Blessed Savior seldom used terms of reproach. Rather, He reached men's hearts by the method of kindliness and encouragement. But if ever human defect soured even the sweetness of the Sacred Heart

and drew from the Divine lips withering rebuke — it was hypocrisy. “Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: ... whitened sepulchers. ... You serpents, generation of vipers.”

It is beyond question, then, that no hypocrites were found among those whom Christ chose to be His successors in the priesthood. The Apostles were straightforward, genuine *men*. They possessed within themselves the happy blending of those natural virtues which gave to them a disarming openness of soul. It is the sum total of such virtues that we have designated by the general term “uprightness of character.”

The Twelve, indeed, were forthright. Nathanael was the Israelite in whom there was no guile, and St. Peter was outspoken to the point of bluntness in expressing his oft-mistaken opinions. St. Thomas was as honest as he was stubborn in clinging to his doubts. And their concerted “Is it I, Lord?” at the Last Supper was not posed, but an unaffected question for all, that is to say, for all save one.

B. The Boy

Most of our Catholic boys are open and artless characters, whose faces and whose actions candidly mirror what goes on

within them. Most of them are quick to own up to misdeeds or to admit mistakes. Most of them find it difficult to hide guilt even when they are tempted to do so, being poor liars and clumsy quibblers, and most of them are honest in their examinations and plain dealing in telling the truth. It is among this majority that we can expect to find the germs of a true vocation.

However, there is a small minority of boys who lack that openness of soul, who are furtive, even untruthful and sneaky. So obviously ill-fitted are they for the priesthood that one may wonder if the thoughts of becoming a priest would ever occur to them. But there is no need for wonderment. Desires for the priesthood have a way of keeping strange company at times; and because the company is strange and unbalanced, because there is furtiveness and guile, it is doubly difficult to dissuade the would-be candidate that he should not enter the seminary. If dissuasion is impossible, then at least warning should be given to the seminary authorities, who can definitely close the doors against him.

The Third Sign — Physical Fitness and Home Background

The qualities discussed up to the present pertain to the

internal make-up of the candidate, and are of prime importance. We have now to consider some external traits and circumstances which, while secondary, have a bearing upon the fitness of a young man who desires to be a priest.

Canon law sets up certain qualifications of physical fitness and proper home environment and pronounces that various defects in bodily structure and health, certain social blemishes arising out of the candidate's family background are impediments or irregularities. It is easy to understand the Church's attitude. The priest occupies a position of prominence in society. The eyes of his flock are ever upon him. Hence physical abnormalities or taints of name and reputation, which would pass unnoticed or would not prejudice the work of a man in private life, cannot be tolerated in the person who is always before the public in performing his priestly functions. The dignity of the priesthood and the efficiency of Christ's work are here at stake.

A. THE APOSTLES

The Gospels speak little about the physical fitness or family background of the first priests. But we can be sure that men who lived so much of their lives

in the open, and who carried on the strenuous occupation of fishing, were well able physically to be fishers of men and to bear up under the hardships of their many missionary journeys.

As for the good reputation of their families, in some instances we know the names of the mothers and fathers of the Apostles and in each case they are presented to us as respectable, hard-working people of sturdy stock. More-over, in the light of Jewish interest in a good or bad name (witness their attitude toward Mary Magdalen and the woman taken in adultery) and of the tribal pride in ancestry and genealogy, we may suppose that the Jews would have used any smirch of reputation as an excuse for refusing to accept the preaching of the Apostles, had the latter been unacceptable to their countrymen on this account.

B. THE BOY

Physical Fitness

A boy need not have the physique of a professional athlete in order to study for the priesthood, but he should be a normal, healthy individual. The following defects would definitely eliminate him from the ranks of prospective candidates: blindness, or eyesight so poor as

to hinder the pursuit of close study; deafness, muteness, or an incurable defect of speech; privation of a limb, or hand, or of the thumb and index finger (used in consecrating the Sacred Species and in distributing Holy Communion); pronounced lameness or serious facial imperfection. In fact, any defect that would interfere with the offering of Mass in a decent manner, without involuntary oddity and without scandal, must be considered as an impediment. Hence we must also add excessive nervous trembling, epilepsy, and shocking bodily malformations, such as curvature of the spine.

There are other diseases and afflictions which may render the boy's immediate entrance into the seminary an imprudent experiment. Severe heart murmur, anaemia, glandular trouble that demands a very special diet, and the like, may be curable, or they may grow progressively worse. Sometimes youngsters are languid and lacking in physical energy because of certain organic troubles, for example, an infection of the lungs. Hence arises the demand on the part of seminary authorities of a thorough physical examination by a competent doctor before they will accept the application of a student.

Mention must also be made in this place of the mental health of the candidate. The innumerable disorders of the conscious life of man, all the phobias and obsessions, fits of melancholia, hysteria and the many more, usually develop fully only in later life. But some mental diseases give warning of their presence in early youth, and the alert teacher, even though not trained in psychiatry, can detect the symptoms. If a boy is odd, and given to peculiar actions, especially if other members of the family manifest similar peculiarities, if he is always being ridiculed and mocked at by others and never taken seriously, if, as a result, he separates from the rest and withdraws into himself, the teacher may suspect with very good grounds that there is here the beginnings of a mental abnormality. The kindest and most prudent action in this instance is to advise against entrance to the seminary.

2. Home Background

A boy may get his red hair and blue eyes from his mother, and his tall stature from his dad, but oh! How much more than mere bodily traits does he receive from his parents! Their culture and traditions, their faith and sound Christian principles, all

these are poured into his being from his cradle days. And, under God, it is most frequently in the home that there are implanted in his soul, the virtues of obedience and generosity, the spirit of self-sacrifice, humility, and reverence, which, as has been explained, constitute the moral fitness in a worthwhile candidate.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Church desires the candidate's home surroundings to be examined in detail. She wants to know what kind of parents he has and what is the depth of their Catholicity. She inquires, too, about possible marriage difficulties, for an aspirant must have been born in lawful wedlock.

Even the economic situation in the home will have a bearing upon the boy's fitness. Not that the family need belong to the so-called upper class of society or to be well-fixed financially. If that were a condition, our seminaries would be depleted; for, as our present Holy Father has remarked: "It hardly does honor to those higher classes of society that they are on the whole so scantily represented in the ranks of the clergy." No, most of our seminaries and priests come from the middle or poorer class and very few of

them are able to meet fully the costs of a clerical education.

However, there are poor and poor, and this is the point to be stressed. There is a respectable and "proud" poverty, which maintains its independence in the face of hardships and carries itself in Christian resignation. And there is the poverty which is degrading, which comes to look upon charity as its due, which forgets how to say thank you, and which loses the sense of responsibility. When the sense of gratitude and appreciation is missing, how can we expect a boy ever to value the finer things of the priesthood? Indeed, it is but very rare that a suitable candidate will emerge from such killing surroundings.



To Be Continued

PRO PARENTIBUS

Father Joseph Noonan, OFM

Parenthood – a vocation that has been with us since Adam and Eve brought their first child into the world. It is by far the most influential of the vocations because it encompasses all cultures from around the world. It influences popes and bishops, presidents and prime ministers, royalty and peasants. It often determines which of the children will become saints and which will carry out the most heinous crimes known to man.

Catholic parents would do well to have as their goal in raising their children to guide and instruct them in such a way as to lay the solid foundation for sanctity. In simple terms, raise them to be saints. Far too many parents think this is just not possible. It is always possible.

I believe parents, at times, underestimate the value of setting a good example for their children. When children can see both parents receive the Sacraments each week, it sends a silent message to the children of the importance of receiving the Sacraments. Experience has shown that when children have this good example, they are more likely to receive the Sacraments regularly from the

time they receive their First Holy Communion.

Have you ever noticed the difference between children who receive the Sacraments regularly because of this good example and those who don't because the parents rarely receive the Sacraments?

One must ask the question, what is the reason for this indifference? The simple answer is a lack of supernatural faith. Do parents understand the seriousness of good examples? No one is expecting parents to be perfect examples, but they do need to be good examples despite their faults.

Have parents ever considered reading the life of a saint to provide them with a good example of how to conduct themselves in married and family life? Parents, especially men, should not think it is beneath them to have a saintly model as a guide to everyday Catholic living. The world is filled with horrible, sinful people who are looked upon as "models" but are anything but that.

The examples of the Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph are the

best possible models for parents, regardless of age or circumstance. There are other saintly models from which to choose. The point here is to follow the example of virtue. Supernatural virtue always provides the answer to any questions that a parent may have. Perhaps the essential question in this regard is whether or not a parent is interested in being virtuous or satisfied with the status quo.

Daily prayer is such an essential part of the Catholic parent. Do you pray as a parent each day? Do you consider it a necessary part of your duties to pray as an individual and then as a family? Praying with your children each day is one of the most important examples to set. When a young child sees a parent pray, they are more willing to pray themselves. I wonder how parents tell their children to say their prayers (in their room) and rarely pray with them. Some children may be quite motivated to say their prayers by themselves, but I do not think this is the best method. I have seen too many children who struggle to say their prayers.

The parents are responsible for teaching the children their prayers and for monitoring their progress until the children have established a good habit of praying. Please keep in mind that the children should be

taught to *love* to pray, not simply to memorize the prayers. This is another example from the parents. The parents should love to pray, and the children need to see this. Do not expect more from your children than you as a parent are willing to give.

One cannot say enough about the necessity of parents establishing a Catholic environment in their homes. It is most important to understand that Protestantism has always dominated the United States. Catholics have always been a minority. In the past sixty years, Catholic signs and symbols have gradually disappeared from public view. Modernists have undermined the Faith so effectively that many millions have left the Church, and many more are not interested in having Catholic images displayed in their homes. The lack of external displays in the home is a clear indication of a dead or dying faith.

When you include the destruction of Catholic education, the result is two to three generations of Catholics who know little or nothing of the Faith. This is particularly dangerous when it comes to raising children. Too often, it is the blind leading the blind. Some parents have educated themselves, if only by way of the children's catechism.

The importance of knowing the Faith cannot be overstated. There will be a constant need to explain the Church's teachings to the children. Experience has shown us that it is difficult enough to keep young adults attending Mass and receiving the Sacraments. Parents need to be able to answer their children's questions. If they do not know the answers, they should seek the answers from the clergy. Do not make the mistake of leaving the questions unanswered. It may be the difference between the child leaving the Church or remaining in It.

Parents are reminded that they are the First Educators. As parents, Natural Law provides us with the understanding that we are responsible for raising our children in all facets of family life. Not all parents are indeed capable of educating older children academically, which is why schools were established long ago.

The religious education of Catholic children is an interesting area of responsibility. Serious parents certainly want their children to know the Faith, but are they willing to put in the time and effort to help them achieve this? Some parents can have clergy or approved teachers to teach the Faith, while others do not.

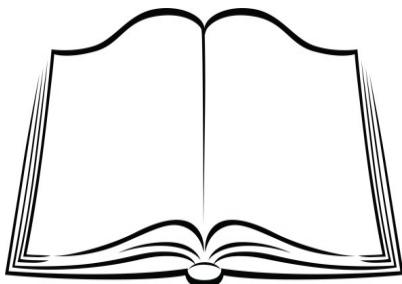
There is an important historical lesson to be considered. There have been an unknown number of Catholic parents throughout the centuries who were called upon to teach the Faith to their children. It is likely that in most situations, it was a simple catechetical series of lessons. It is also expected that many things were learned from the Sunday sermons of the parish priest.

There are Catholic parents today who are in a similar situation. They could learn from the parents in the past. You have the benefit of different catechetical and religious books from which to choose. Teach them how to pray and to love to pray. This can go much further than you realize. Taking one lesson at a time is the simple way to approach this all-important goal of educating your children. Parents today have the added benefit of connecting with one of the Franciscan clergy to answer their questions or set up online courses. As your children get older, keep in mind that you are responsible for setting their Catholic foundation.

Raise your children to be joyful saints, not sad sinners!

The Catholic Mother to Her Children

The Countess de Flavigny



TWENTY-FIRST LESSON ON OBEDIENCE

“Children, obey your parents in all this; for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” *St. Paul to the Colossians 3:20*

Let us now return, my children, to a topic on which we have said but a few words; let us speak of the virtue of obedience, this first and earliest virtue of childhood, a virtue so dear to Our Savior, that He practiced until death.

How much can be said to children about obedience! And how little is this virtue understood even by those who believe they practice it, who imagine they are dutiful because they do not openly rebel against their parent’s will, or against their master’s orders!

These children obey, it is true, but slowly and unwillingly – they submit, but because they can hardly do otherwise. This obedience, so to say forced, is, I fear, without merit in God’s eyes; and cannot have any good effect on your temper. The true obedience, of which Jesus Christ has left us a Divine example, is prompt and entire, unaccompanied by remarks or murmurings.

To obey promptly, is to execute immediately the commands of our superiors – it is to obey directly, instead of putting off until the morrow, and making up our minds to obey merely from the fear of punishment. Remember, my children, how prompt was the obedience of Joseph and

Mary, when warned by the Angel God sent them: they left Bethlehem with the infant Jesus, on a cold winter's night, and fled to Egypt.

To obey entirely, is to obey without reserve, and not merely to a certain point, and for some things only. What would be the merit of obedience, my dear children, if we were to perform a duty only when it has nothing unpleasant in it? But to submit to all orders given, be they easy or difficult to accomplish, agreeable or tedious and painful, then is our obedience entire and generous.

Such was the obedience of Abraham when, by God's order, he consented to immolate his only son. What a difference, my children, between the slight privations that are imposed on you, and the cruel sacrifice ordered to this poor father! And yet how far is your obedience from the submission of Abraham!

To submit without a word, without arguing the point. Ah! It is that above all which appears so very hard. You do not wish to resist your mother seriously, certainly not, but

before obeying her, you raise a thousand difficulties, you give a thousand reasons; it is a struggle, almost a quarrel, to free yourself from this duty of obedience, or at least to learn the reason, the why and the wherefore of everything ordered you: as if your parents, my children, were obliged to render you an account of the use they think fit to make of their authority.

It was not thus that young Samuel behaved in former times. One night, whilst sleeping in the Temple, he heard a voice, which cried three different times: Samuel! Samuel! Samuel! It was God who spoke. But the child, ignorant as yet of the will of the Lord, supposed he was called by Eli the high priest, and he hurried to him, being each time sent back by the latter. Samuel, however, persisted, and without making a single remark on the order that must have seemed so strange to him, came back again and again, repeating: "Here I am, Father, because thou callest me."

We will end by recommending you to obey without murmur-

ing, that is to say without those complainings, which unwilling children indulge in, as it were to make up for the vexation of being compelled to obey. This unfortunate tendency generally leads to ill-temper, sometimes even gives rise to disrespectful answers, and if it does not lead to downright disobedience, it at least takes away all the merit of submission.

Did Our Lord allow a single murmur to escape His lips? Did He utter the slightest complaint, when, by His Father's will, He felt such excruciating tortures? Why is your obedience, my dear children, so often compulsory, and wanting in the qualities we have just mentioned? It is because your heart itself is not submissive, it is because all authority seems an annoyance to you. You are already impatient to reach the time when you will be no longer children, thinking that then you will not be obliged to obey anyone. All men, nevertheless, young or old, wealthy or poor, have superiors to whom they must submit. Children obey their parents and their teachers;

wives their husbands, men the chiefs placed above them, servants their masters, subjects the king, Christians the Lord. Grown people, whose independence you envy, those at least who act rightly – and they are the only ones, I suppose, whom you would wish to resemble – grown people, when by some chance they have no superiors, still obey: they submit to duty, to reason, and that, my children, is often neither agreeable nor easy.

Since then, under all circumstances, and at all periods of your life, you must bend to the will of others, or to a sense of duty, begin early while it is yet easy to you to practice submission. May it please God, my dear children, that in the whole course of your life, you may never meet with more severe authority than that of your present superiors.





FRANCISCAN SAINTS

AUGUST 23RD
The Servant of God
Queen Blanche
Widow, Third Order

Our Divine Lord says: "By their fruits you shall know them" (*Matthew 7:16*), and in these words He bestows great praise on Queen Blanche, for St. Louis was her son, and his holiness was in great measure the result of her maternal rearing.

Blanche, the daughter of the king of Castile, Spain, lived in happy wedlock with Louis VIII, King of France, for twenty-six years. She enjoyed the confidence of her husband so perfectly that he entrusted her with the guardianship of their twelve-year old son, and, until his maturity with the government of the country. There were among the great ones in the land such that were envious of the widow and foreigner, and would like to have taken over the government. But Blanche ad-

ministered the high and burdensome office with such impartial justice and great wisdom that the envious were silenced and her executive ability commended by all.

As a mother, she evinced genuine Christian sentiments. It is in love for her children that a Christian mother must generally stand the test. Will she allow them to do things that are displeasing to God? Will she love them more than God? "He that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (*Matthew 10:37*). Blanche proved that she was a true Christian mother, for she often said to her son: "Rather would I see you dead at my feet than stained with a mortal sin."

She was not satisfied, however, with helping her son to

avoid mortal sin, she was anxious also to preserve him from venial sin. So she joined him in embracing the rule of the Third Order of St. Francis. In living up to the rule she encouraged him with word and example to practice every virtue and to strive after Christian perfection.

The saintly son had such confidence in his mother that, having personally governed the country for several years, he again placed her in charge, while he went to the Holy Land with his army. He did not return until he received the news of her death in 1253. Blanche died surrounded by devout sisters of the Cistercian Order, whose convent at Maubisson she had built. Garbed in the habit of the Third Order, she was entombed in their church.

ON VENIAL SIN

1.) Next to mortal sin, venial sin is the greatest evil in the world. If it is not a separation from God, it is at least an offense against God. If the soul does not thereby entirely lose the grace of God, it does lessen the divine good pleasure and cause His special favors

to be withdrawn. If it does not actually cast us into hell, it will condemn the soul stained with it to the painful tortures of Purgatory. We should, therefore, for no consideration on earth ever willfully commit a venial sin. The servant of God Blanche recognized how carefully we ought to shun venial sin, and she impressed this fact so deeply on the mind of her son St. Louis that at the end of his life he declared himself far happier to have endured without murmuring all the sufferings and afflictions that befell him during his crusades, than if all the kingdoms of the world had been made subject to his scepter. Have you taken venial sin so seriously during your past life?

2.) Consider that venial sin easily leads to mortal sin if we think lightly of it. “He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little” (*Ecclus. 19:1*). Just as a storm will cause a house to collapse if it has sprung its joints, so will the storm of temptation cause a soul to collapse if it has been weakened by venial sin. If you are aware of such weakness in

yourself, if you notice that the temptation to impatience, enmity, and impurity is sometimes very hard to overcome, then examine yourself to determine whether your soul has not perhaps been weakened by venial sins. Be careful to avoid them in future. “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater” (*Luke 16:10*).

3.) Consider that without a special grace of God, as was vouchsafed to the Blessed Virgin, it is impossible for us while on earth to avoid every venial sin. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,

and the truth is not in us” (*1 John 1:8*). Human weakness and carelessness lead us daily into many a sin. That is why we should also say with the prophet: “From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord!” (*Ps. 18:13*). But sins that are fully recognized as such beforehand and of which our conscience make us aware, and be they ever so small, must not be committed by a Christian that loves his soul. Heed the warning of Tobias: “All the days of thy life have God in thy mind, and take heed thou never consent to sin” (*Tobias 4:6*).



PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

GRANT UNTO US, ETERNAL SAVIOR, THAT AS WE, BY THY
GRACE, RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS, SO WE MAY
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