

Priesthood Sunday!

I stand before you as a Priest.

And you sit before me as married men and women and single men and women.

Together, we represent the three possible vocations there are!

Religious life ... Married Life ... Single life.

While there are many different professions in life ...
there are only three vocations in life.

And no one of these is better than another ... they're all good ...
With the very best one for you being the one that God called you to.

We use the word "vocation" to describe this process ...
as it comes from the Latin word "vocare" which means "to call" or "the call".

We hear about calling in our Gospel today.

First the blind man, Bartimaeus, calls out to Jesus.

So Jesus stops and calls out to him.

The crowd says, "Take courage, get up, Jesus is calling you."

And so Bartimaeus went to Jesus. And what was the result?

Mark tells us: "Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way."

In a very real way, Bartimaeus represents all of us ...

In that none of us can see clearly where we're going ...

So, all of us need to have Jesus show us the way.

It's to our great advantage to call out to Jesus as Bartimaeus did
And then listen for Jesus to help us see the way He has marked out for us.

Jesus calls each of us to a specific vocation.

He calls many to the vocation of Marriage ...

He calls some to remain single ... and

He calls some to a Religious vocation as Priest, Deacon, Brother or Sister.

This is not something you hear in Protestant denominations.

While they have ministers ... they don't have ordained priests.

In fact many question the whole idea of needing ordained Priests in the Church ...
asserting that they don't need Priests ... that they can go right to God for everything.

So what exactly is a Priest?

By definition,

a Priest is an authorized mediator who offers sacrifice to God on behalf of others.

The origins of the priestly office can be traced to the unique spiritual authority, representative function, and religious service of the father in the family.

At the same time, the office of kingship was the embodiment of the father's worldly duties, most notably his role in leadership and governing his family and beyond.

Thus, the priesthood is inseparable from fatherhood.

But sadly, the Old Testament traces the progress of sin and its terrible impact on the family ... from Adam's fall to Israel's enslavement in Egypt.

To reinstitute priesthood and kingship in the family, God told Moses to have each family procure for itself an unblemished male lamb and offer it in sacrifice ... with the result that the firstborn sons of Israel were spared by the blood of the lamb.

This accomplished, God then commanded Israel ...
to embrace a new vocation and mission ...
to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood ...
to be a mediator between the Heavenly Father and the family of nations.

But very soon, Israel apostatized by worshipping the gold calf, and so God commanded that Moses' older brother, Aaron, be consecrated as High Priest so that he and his sons would offer various animals in sacrifice to God.

This was the beginning of the Levitical Priesthood ... that would continue for 1200 years as the firstborn sons of the tribe of Levi would serve as Priests for the people ... offering ritual sacrifice to God ... with successive men serving as High Priest of the Temple.

All this came to an end when the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD thereby extinguishing the last vestiges of the Levitical priesthood.

But by this time, God had already replaced the Levitical priesthood with a new one. With the coming of God's Firstborn Son ...

With the coming of Jesus, God's people had a new High Priest.

Listen to how the priesthood of Jesus compares to the Levitical priesthood of Aaron:

Jesus is the sinless priest ... whereas the **priests of Aaron** were sinners and had to offer sacrifices for themselves as well as the people.

Jesus is the everlasting Priest ... whereas the **priests of Aaron** were mortal and were replaced by an endless line of successors.

Jesus is the heavenly High Priest ... whereas the **priests of Aaron** ministered on earth

Jesus is the royal Priest promised by oath in the Messianic Psalms,
Whereas the **Levitical priests** took office without any oath at all.

As the more perfect Priest, **Jesus offers the Father** a more perfect sacrifice than any Priests of the Levitical order could. **Jesus' sacrifice was offered once for all** as compared to the continuous cycle of new sacrifices offered by the Levitical Priests.

In all of this, **Jesus restored** and fulfilled in himself the **family priesthood** ... to which **Israel** had first been called.

Jesus, became the **new High Priest** and the division of kingly and priestly powers was brought to an end.

In establishing His Church, **Jesus reunited** the offices of **priesthood and kingship** and restored the **royal priesthood** of God's people.

We **the people of God now share in** the dignity of **Christ's priesthood and kingship** through our Baptismal participation in his mission as Priest, Prophet and King ... according to our own vocations.

A special way that **the faithful can participate in** the **priesthood and kingship** of **Jesus Christ** is by entering into the **ministerial or hierachal priesthood**.

You enter the **common priesthood through** the grace of baptism.

A man enters into the **ministerial priesthood through** the grace of holy orders.

Through **Baptism, all of us are configured to Christ**.

Through **Holy Orders**, a man is configured to Christ the Head!

Jesus called the 12 Apostles to serve as the heads of the new People of God ... to be priestly brothers acting as spiritual fathers ... to the communities under their charge.

As time went on, **the Apostles appointed others to succeed them ... as elders (Bishops) and presbyters (Priests) over the churches they had founded.**

This appointment continues to this day ... with thousands of Priests serving the people all around the world ... 40,000 in America ... 400,000 worldwide.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote this about the Priesthood:

*“Christ is the source of all priesthood:
the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ,
and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.”*

St. John Paul II, whose feast day we celebrated on Thursday the 22nd, wrote this:

*In the Church and on behalf of the Church
Priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ,
the Head and Shepherd,
authoritatively proclaiming his word,
repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation,
particularly in Baptism, Confession and the Eucharist,
showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock ...
In word, Priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to
build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the Head and Shepherd.*

So **Priesthood** continues to this day.

It is not the invention of the Catholic Church ... but the invention of God!

He's used it throughout **salvation history** to bring People to God & God to the people.

The line in our opening Song ... **the Summons** ... is so meaningful ... asking us ...

“Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?”

Jesus is calling each of us to a specific vocation ... one of three ...

Married Life ... Single life or Religious life

It's so important to call out to Him and then listen.

This was not my first choice ... I so wanted to be married ... but here I am a Priest.

Hebrews: “No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God.”

I'm just back from taking **4 men** on a come & see visit to **Notre Dame Seminary** in **New Orleans** where they got to experience 130 men in study for the Priesthood. On Nov. 6th **Fr. Rick Chenault** will take more men up to the **Josephinum Seminary** in **Canton, Ohio** for a short come & see visit. Please pray for all these men ... as the Church celebrates **Vocations Awareness Week** Nov. 1 to 7th.

And pray the Vocation Prayer after each Decade of your Daily Rosary!

On this Priesthood Sunday, please pray for the Priests serving you now.

By God's design, Priests act in the person of Christ ...

guiding and guarding the people to the Kingdom of Heaven.

What is a Priest?

Fr. Thomas Langer 1960

Priests are mystery men. They come in assorted sizes, ages, weights and collars. They are found everywhere – speeding along, perspiring over, walking by, kneeling on, praying over, laughing with, preaching to, teaching about, pardoning for & playing baseball with.

Little children run to them; teenagers marvel at them, aged folk turn to them; lay people treasure them; non-Catholics stare at them; and Mary watches over them.

A priest is Prudence in a T-shirt; Fortitude with a breviary in his hand; Justice on a ball diamond; and Temperance at any party. He is Faith with a blueprint; Hope with a sense of humor; and Charity with a golf club in hand.

A priest may be anything from a contemplative monk in a monastery to a magazine editor on Wall Street, from a labor mediator to a TV personality, from a student to a professor. Formerly known as the boy-around-the-corner, he's a member of each family, yet belongs to none. He penetrates secrets, shares sorrows, heals wounds. He has the trust of a child, the kindness of a best friend, the sternness of a tight-rope walker, the authority of an encyclopedia, the versatility of a commando, & the salesmanship of a Fuller-Brush man.

A priest is a humble creature – a mystifying worker at all professions. His hours are the longest; his salary the smallest; his Boss the best!

A priest is all things to all men in the sight of God. He may be misquoted, mistaken and misunderstood, but he'll always forgive – because he's a mediator; a peacemaker, a go-between heaven and earth. It's no wonder God loves him. He's a man standing at an altar, clothed in Holy clothes, who while being aware of his own nothingness speaks to God for us and to us for God. And although his greatest act is to offer sacrifice, his most consoling one is to say to me, "Go in peace – Your sins are forgiven."

Please pray for Priests ... and for the men discerning their call to Priesthood this weekend.