

## Papal Message: Proposing Vocations in the Local Church



"Proposing Vocations in the Local Church" is the theme of the Pope's Message for the forth-eighth World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which is to be celebrated on 15 May, fourth Sunday of Easter. Ample extracts of the English-language version of the document are given below:

"The work of carefully encouraging and supporting vocations finds a radiant source of inspiration in those places in the Gospel where Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him and trains them with love and care. ... Before calling them, Jesus spent the night alone in prayer, listening to the will of the Father. ... Vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life are first and foremost the fruit of constant contact with the living God and insistent prayer lifted up to the 'Lord of the harvest', whether in parish communities, in Christian families or in groups specifically devoted to prayer for vocations.

"At the beginning of His public life, the Lord called some fishermen on the shore of the Sea of Galilee : 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men'. ... It is a challenging and uplifting invitation that Jesus addresses to those to Whom He says: 'Follow me!'. He invites them to become His friends, to listen attentively to His word and to live with Him. He teaches them complete commitment to God and to the extension of His kingdom in accordance with the law of the Gospel. ... He invites them to leave behind their own narrow agenda and their notions of self-fulfilment in order to immerse themselves in another will, the will of God, and to be guided by it. He gives them an experience of fraternity, one born of that total openness to God which becomes the hallmark of the community of Jesus".



"It is no less challenging to follow Christ today. It means learning to keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, growing close to Him, listening to His word and encountering Him in the Sacraments; it means learning to conform our will to His. This requires a genuine school of formation for all those who would prepare themselves for the ministerial priesthood or the consecrated life under the guidance of the competent ecclesial authorities. The Lord does not fail to call people at every stage of life to share in His mission and to serve the Church in the ordained ministry and in the consecrated life".

"Particularly in these times, when the voice of the Lord seems to be drowned out by 'other voices' and His invitation to follow Him by the gift of one's own life may seem too difficult, every Christian community, every member of the Church, needs consciously to feel responsibility for promoting vocations. It is important to encourage and support those who show clear signs of a call to priestly life and religious consecration, and to enable them to feel the warmth of the whole community as they respond 'yes' to God and the Church. I encourage them, in the same words which I addressed to those who have already chosen to enter the seminary".

"It is essential that every local Church become more sensitive and attentive to the pastoral care of vocations, helping children and young people in particular at every level of family, parish and associations - as Jesus did with His disciples - to grow into a genuine and affectionate friendship with the Lord, cultivated through personal and liturgical prayer; to grow in familiarity with the sacred Scriptures and thus to listen attentively and fruitfully to the word of God; to understand that entering into God's will does not crush or destroy a person, but instead leads to the discovery of the deepest truth about ourselves; and finally to be generous and fraternal in relationships with others, since it is only in being open to the love of God that we discover true joy and the fulfilment of our aspirations".

"I turn to those who can offer a specific contribution to the pastoral care of vocations: to priests, families, catechists and leaders of parish groups. I ask priests to testify to their communion with their bishop and their fellow priests, and thus to provide a rich soil for the seeds of a priestly vocation. May families be 'animated by the spirit of faith and love and by the sense of duty' which is capable of helping children to welcome generously the call to priesthood and to religious life. May catechists and

leaders of Catholic groups and ecclesial movements, convinced of their educational mission, seek to 'guide the young people entrusted to them so that these will recognise and freely accept a divine vocation'.



"Dear brothers and sisters, your commitment to the promotion and care of vocations becomes most significant and pastorally effective when carried out in the unity of the Church and in the service of communion".

"The ability to foster vocations is a hallmark of the vitality of a local Church. With trust and perseverance let us invoke the aid of the Virgin Mary, that by the example of her own acceptance of God's saving plan and her powerful intercession, every community will be more and more open to saying 'yes' to the Lord Who is constantly calling new labourers to His harvest".

Vatican Information Service (VIS)