



Vocations and Seminarians Newsletter

January 15, 2006

Diocese of Baton Rouge

Dates to Remember

- World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life - February 5, 2006
- World Day of Prayer for Vocations - May 7, 2006

Dear Seminarians and Friends,

A daily meditation book recently contained a quote from St. Ambrose which I thought very appropriate for National Vocation Awareness Week: "All the children of the Church are priests. At Baptism they received the anointing that gives them a share in the priesthood. The sacrifice that they must offer to God is completely spiritual – it is themselves." This is the foundational and unifying principle for all vocations. Whether celibate or married, male or female, ordained or lay...we all participate in the one paschal mystery which joins us to Christ and one another.

In anticipation of next month's World Day for Consecrated Life, I asked Sister Ily Fernandez, C.S.J., if she would write a reflection on her vocation as a religious sister. In the article which follows, she describes very beautifully how her sense of call first surfaced during her high school years. It began with a questioning and a desire to live life to the fullest.

Religious vocations can also arise later in life, but there is something to be said for encouraging a sensitivity to God's call during the younger, more idealistic years of high school and college. I read recently that the author Robert Ellsberg temporarily dropped out of college at the age of 19 to join the Catholic Worker Community in New York. He wrote that "I was tired of living for myself alone and longed to give myself to something larger and more meaningful."

During his time at the Worker, Ellsberg was greatly influenced by Dorothy Day, co-founder of the lay movement along with Peter Maurin. Dorothy enjoyed talking about the lives of the saints with the younger members and often commented on how "youth has an instinct for the heroic." Ellsberg writes that "...Dorothy had faith in people, and she was able to make them feel her faith as well, so they forgot their feelings of inadequacy and found themselves doing all kinds of things they never dreamed possible." He ended up staying there five years, during which time he converted to Catholicism and settled on a career which has enabled him to remain actively involved in Church-related work.

Middle aged candidates for the priesthood and religious life obviously possess greater gifts of wisdom and maturity drawn from a wealth of lived experience. However younger candidates should not feel overly disadvantaged because they possess the equally important gifts of idealism and a fervent desire to make a difference in the world. People typically grow more conservative with age and this is both normal and good. But hopefully we may also retain a fondness for the more liberal, passionate, and idealistic years of our young adulthood. I pray we continue to plant seeds of a religious vocation in the minds and hearts of young people that they might consider the adventure of such a calling.

In Christ
Father Matt Lorrain

“A Treasured Life” by Sr. Ily Fernandez, C.S.J.

A few days ago I had the opportunity to have a conversation with a college student who wanted to interview a Sister regarding her story and life-style, for a Speech class on the topic of “different cultures.” I just happened to be at that moment at the entrance of the Catholic Center, and with no Sister being on the Campus Ministry Staff, the receptionist pointed me out and we immediately set a date for the interview.

At first I was quite surprised by my “interviewer:” she was a young woman who wore contemporary dress and indicated a non-denominational church affiliation. By her looks, I did not think she would be the type to be engaged in such a serious conversation. I was wrong!

So this is what I told her: “My story of noticing a call for religious life, began when I was a high school student, and I asked myself what I wanted to do with my life... I was a regular teen, had a good family, liked school, enjoyed the company of friends, loved to dance and have a good time at parties. But, I began to feel emptiness when returning from such activities... I can recall sitting on my bed one night and asking myself: Is this all there is to life? I want more! Where is God in all this?”

I used to teach religion to children in a very poor area on Saturdays and later visit with their families. I was beginning to notice that these experiences filled me with great joy and peace, like nothing else could. During that time I began to talk with one of the Sisters at school. She was an open and friendly woman. I shared with her my questions and I asked her about her life. I began to learn that there was such a thing as “a call from God” that was revealed in our feelings and attractions. She guided me to read Scripture and specifically gave me a passage that from then on has been a real treasure: “I can do all things in the One who strengthens me.”

It would take very long to share with you all the details of my life, but in long strokes I will tell you that I truly fell in love with God. It has been a process that rooted me in a relationship that asked for a total self-giving response. I just wanted to be with God and do those things that would lead others to God.

My parents objected to my becoming a Sister, but through the years they came to realize that I was very happy in this life, so eventually they were satisfied with my decision. So much so, that before Dad died, a few years ago, he told me how proud he was of me.

As Sisters of St. Joseph, we are called together in community to be women on a mission. Our formation prepares us for our life of service with a spirituality rooted in Jesus. Trying to respond to the call to live, work and pray to bring people closer to God and to one another, we are called to a heroic life. But there is tremendous joy and fulfillment in giving ourselves to such a mission.

It is a worthwhile life because what is at stake is so big. We commit ourselves to help Jesus in his ministry of reconciliation in the world. We want people to know the Good News. We commit ourselves to an inclusive love of the dear neighbor, because we want to be where God’s grace is most active today. We place ourselves with the poor and needy, who keep giving passion and urgency to our mission. We know that helping people come to know and love God will also call them to work for reconciliation and justice.

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Our experience of how God works within us, as a community of Sisters, calls us to collaborative partnerships in all we do. In all our ministries, we work side by side with other gifted women and men—calling forth each other's gifts for mission.

We are so committed to God's people, the dear neighbor, that we take liberating vows, to more completely free us for service. We take a vow of Poverty because we want to be free from the pull of consumerism, and from any possibility of building our identity around what we have. We have everything we need for mission, but nothing we have is ours.

We take a vow of Chastity because we want to be free to give our time, our energy, our affection to those we serve. We want to be free to go anywhere and do anything that women are capable, as we are needed.

We take a vow of Obedience because we want to be free from just doing my own thing, to make a difference in a mission so much bigger than anything we could ever do alone.

It is a wonderful life. We have come to know that Jesus was right when he told us that we would find our life by losing it.

My time with this young woman came to a close. As she was saying good-bye, she said to me: "Sister what a treasured life you live..."

If any part of this story is attractive, inspiring, or even stirs some deeper questions in you, please follow those movements of the Spirit within you. Give God an opening in your heart.

We believe that our life as Sisters of St. Joseph is such an extraordinary life, that we want to share with you as much as we can, so that you might consider this life, as a possibility. There are many wonderful ways for Christians to fulfill their baptismal promises to be one with Jesus, in a life for others. Our life isn't always considered as a real possibility. I am proud to tell you, it is an extraordinary life, we love it, and we invite you to consider it for your life.

(Sister Ileana Fernandez, C.S.J., is Director of Vocation Ministry for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille.)

"Discerning Life Choices" Continues at L.S.U.

The Office of Vocations is preparing for the final five sessions of an eight-part series being held at Christ the King Catholic Student Center on the campus of L.S.U. in Baton Rouge. Each session is presented by a different speaker and is intended to assist students in the process of discerning their vocation in life. The dates and speakers are:

February 1 – Sister Helen Cahill, O.S.F., Franciscan Missionaries;
February 15 – Father Jaison Mangalath, S.V.D., pastor of St. Paul Church;
March 8 – Art and Kris Barrios, on 25 years of marriage;
March 29 – Wendy Gilmore, principal of St. Jean Vianney School; and
April 19 – To be announced.

Each session follows a similar format: Mass at 6:00 p.m. in the church, followed by a light meal at 6:30 p.m. in the activity center, and then the presentation from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. in one of the 2nd floor rooms.

International Observances

World Day for Consecrated Life, February 5, 2006, observed on the Sunday following February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, and which gives special emphasis to vocations to the consecrated religious life.

World Day of Prayer for Vocations, May 7, 2006, observed on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, also known as "Good Shepherd Sunday," and which includes all Catholic Church vocations.

Mark Your Calendars

2006

Saturday, June 3, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – Permanent Diaconate Ordination

Saturday, June 10, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – Transitional Diaconate Ordination

2007

Saturday, May 26, 2007, 10:00 a.m. – Priesthood Ordination

Saturday, June 9, 2007, 10:00 a.m. – Transitional Diaconate Ordination

Roster of Seminarians

Third Theology:	Howard Adkins.....	59,	St. Agnes
	Michael Alello.....	25,	St. Jude the Apostle
	Cary Bani.....	47,	St. Joseph Cathedral
	Chris Decker.....	24,	St. Isidore the Farmer, Baker
	Jason Palermo.....	26,	St. John the Evangelist, Plaquemine
	Chris Redden.....	31,	St. Alphonsus Liguori, Greenwell Springs
Second Theology:	Jamin David.....	23,	St. Ann, Morganza
	David Dawson.....	23,	St. Patrick
	Andrew Merrick.....	25,	St. Mary of False River, New Roads
	Paul Yi.....	32,	St. Theresa of Avila, Gonzales
First Theology:	Mark Beard.....	44,	Our Lady of Mercy
	Paul Gros.....	23,	Most Blessed Sacrament
Fourth Philosophy:	Brent Maher.....	21,	Immaculate Conception, Denham Springs
Third Philosophy:	Todd Lloyd.....	22,	St. Thomas More
	Bryan Thompson.....	25,	Our Lady of Mercy
First Philosophy:	Joseph Hoang Vu.....	18,	Sts. Anthony/Le Van Phung
