

A GENTLE CALL



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At a time when Catholics across Canada are concerned about the shortage of parish priests, Pope Benedict XVI declared June 2009 to June 2010 as the *Year for Priests*. To quote his words, “Precisely to encourage priests in this striving for spiritual perfection on which, above all, the effectiveness of their ministry depends...” The ministry for parish priests in today’s world is difficult as many have more than one parish and priests are aging, with few young replacements on the horizon. Based on the latter, Catholics must above all, express gratitude to, pray for and encourage priests in their ministry.

Many Catholics worry about the decline in men entering the religious life. One dictionary defines vocation as a summons or a strong inclination towards a particular cause or action. Questions Catholics may ask themselves are as follows: “Are not as many men being called?” or “Are the calls not being answered?”

Answering the call is more difficult than one might think and requires a lot of discernment. A calling is a personal decision. A voice does not come out of the sky or an angel sent to give a message as portrayed in biblical times. Father Martin Pable, OFM, gives three necessary signs to discern if a man is being called.

- The first sign is a desire for this kind of life. Is the man drawn to this life happy about the call? He should not feel uncomfortable, guilty or pressured in any way.
- The second sign is the proper motivation. The church looks for spiritual reasons such as the desire to serve God or to evangelize. The desire must be based on very solid religious reasons and faith principles. Wrong reasons would include a sense of security such as a place to live, food on the table, and the assurance of employability.
- The third sign is fitness for the life. The life is not meant to put stress or strain on the man. God grants the privilege of free will and does not want to cause misery to a man’s psychological or physical health.

Many Catholics over the years have been praying for more priests. The prayers do not appear to have been answered. God answers prayers in His own time and His own way. We just have to trust God as He watches over us as a living father. God’s presence in our lives is an indication that He will not forsake His flock.

Does God want the laity to take more responsibility? This has happened over the years. Lay men and women are now present in many ministries such as ministering the Eucharist,

proclaiming the Word, baptizing catechumens, performing funeral celebrations and leading liturgies of the Word when priests are not available for Sunday or weekday masses. There has been and will perhaps continue to be changes in the way pastoral services are delivered. Women have been given more prominent roles since the Second Vatican Council.

Parents and grandparents need to continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood, especially in this *Year for Priests*. Sons and grandsons can be encouraged to try the life. This is a difficult decision for young men raised in the affluence of today’s society with so many options available. Continue to pray that they will make the right decision. Sisters in the League: pray, pray, pray. †

ST. PATRICK PARISH COUNCIL

Burlington, Ontario

Council members gathered together to prayerfully welcome the new statue of Mary in the new Marian Shrine, donated by the local CWL. The shrine was built during the 40th anniversary renovations of the church in 2009.



[Left side front row: L-R: Helen Zarankin, Evelyn Keenan. Second row: Theresa Dunn, Tina Salem. Back row: Nettie Pawliw, Margie Belfour and Carol Ervick. Right side front row: Jackie Gaba, Patricia Harrington. Second row: Rhoda Baugh. Back row: Winnie Minton, Diane Brennan, Bridget Doherty and Aimee Grodski.]