



Allocutio



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Allocutio: Vocations

I believe that one of the biggest problems at the moment is the loss of the sense of God. Even before we come to speak of Christ or the Church or sacraments the fundamental problem is the weakening of a real sense of God.

I recall when I was a young lad, even when just four years of age, my mother some evenings sitting us down around her and speaking to us of God and explaining that it was he who made that crescent moon outside and the evening star. And I remember when many years later she told us about Queen Blanche of France telling the young Louis IX that she would rather see him drop dead there and then at her feet than that he should commit as much as one mortal sin and put his eternal life at risk.

Jesus told us, "Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me." I think we could all adopt those words. The heavenly Father doesn't want us to lose anyone he has entrusted to our care. We all have serious responsibility to do all we can to help those whom God has sent our way, be they children, spouse, colleagues, friends, parishioners, whatever, to draw closer to God.

Do you know what I think? It is the lack of a sense of God that causes people to have no morals, to be selfish, to lose hope. Once people sense the real possibility of God questions arise and clear directions become necessary. Why has he put me here? What is my role in it all? Am I wasting energies? What is most important? It is in the context of that question that the commandment of love can be heard.

In this special year devoted to Vocations God is calling all of us to help him. And what he is asking us all to do is to look again at how we can all help promote his name among our generation. It is because his name is not being honoured, it is because he is not taken seriously enough, that sores are growing in our society. Drugs, murders, breakdown in relations! The general vocation among all of us in the Christian community is to promote the name of God. And that is a challenge at a time many people want to take God out of life. This is the major battle Pope Benedict is having with the secular world. There are many reasons for this and no doubt sins of the Church have contributed. But the underlying problem is that whoever God is, what he is about and the law of love he wants us to follow can be so challenging that it is handier in this world of so many things and activities to avoid the issue. The immature and superficial do not want to be disturbed. Nor does the weaker side of us.

The challenge of this time is to promote God. And the first step is to seek God with all our hearts and to share with others our encounter with God, no matter how inadequate it seems to us to be. Doesn't our world need hope in the face of life that always seems destined to death as a recent radio programme indicated? Doesn't our world cry out for an end of divisions and hostilities in something that unifies? Doesn't it need charity to overcome the many tensions and hurts that we inflict on each other so often? A world without God and his Son cannot deliver on these needs.

These troubles are found right at home and in families; they are not just international news stories. Right there in the home there is a call to bring God and his ways to bear on children and young people. God is needed in every place where people interact.

So the Church is asking us all to think seriously this year about what we can do in the middle of all this. It is a year for a more determined effort to think about our vocation to bring God to others. And we must pray that each of us will hear and find what God is saying to us and that we may have the courage



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to follow on from what we hear. How for instance can I give better witness to God to those around me? Can I do anything to help vocations to grow? Let us pray in peaceful prayer, not with anxiety or feeling under pressure.

We know that the Church is not just the clergy and religious. We all know the place our parents had in helping us receive the faith. We also know of many others, teachers, friends, acquaintances, who have helped our faith mature. And here in Ireland and other places at differing periods of history many humble ordinary folks have continued to spread the faith when priests and religious were simply banished or persecuted or simply were not there. In fact everyone who gets a sense of the truth wants to share it.

But the Church is not just the laity. It is good to have special people among believers who give a dedicated service for the good of the Church. Quite simply put it is good to have people whose witness is one of total dedication of their lives to the Lord Jesus. This has two good effects. The first is that jobs get done which others who have families and other vocations would not have time or energy for. The second is that it helps bolster the faith of the rest of the believers.

Priestly and religious vocations are gifts then to us all. We do need them. Our Lord said to us to pray that he would send labourers into his harvest. If he asked us to pray it can only mean that he intends to answer our prayers. Did we not hear him say there to us recently, "Trust in God still and trust in me!" And doesn't Our Lady say, "Do whatever he tells you!" So let us pray with deep faith for the gift of many vocations, let us pray continually for this but have a confident calm in our hearts that God will hear and answer.

The Church is full of stories in its history of people who prayed for years, indeed decades, and saw nothing for their troubles. Did we not pray continuously for peace in the North and kept praying when each day brought us more news of bombings or other disturbances? So similarly we can pray for vocations with confident faith that our prayers will be answered. We should have the courage to mention to young people the possibility of a vocation to the service of the Church. I had that mentioned to me when I was young. It did not take an immediate effect in me in that I didn't enter the seminary straight after school. But it was a seed sown. And if God is behind it he will cause it to grow.

One final thought for today. What our world needs is the presence of God's love in it, it needs the touch of the good God. Souls that offer themselves to this God in a vocation facilitate God being present in the world and impacting on it. There is a huge work to be done out there in the face of the new ills plaguing our society. It is a pity that a few older priests and sisters and brothers are left to confront it. So let us all pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into that vineyard.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill