

2nd Sunday per Annum - A
Isaiah 49:3, 5-6;
I Corinthians 1:1-3;
John 1:29-34
Little Flower - 1/19/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today's reading from the Prophet Isaiah makes reference to Jesus' vocation. The Lord formed him as his servant from the womb. God made him a light to the nations. Today we continue the CALLED BY NAME program. Today the program asks me to share with you the story of my vocation to the priesthood.

When people ask when I decided I wanted to become a priest, I always say that it was when I was in first grade. More than anything, I was drawn to the mystery and the beauty of the Latin Mass. When I was in school, almost all Catholic boys and girls thought about becoming priests, brothers, or sisters. From our class of approximately 55 boys, six of us went to Latin School, a high school for boys thinking about becoming priests, and one went to a religious order minor seminary. Four of the six of us graduated from Latin School. Two of us became priests: Fr. Jim Farrell and me. There was never a time when I did not want to be a priest although there were other careers that were attractive to me.

From the time I was little I received all kinds of encouragement. During my childhood and adolescence, we were blessed with many priests at Little Flower whose example inspired and encouraged me, especially Fr. John, Fr. Robert Borchertmeyer, Fr. Edwin Soergel, and later Msgr. Bosler. The Sisters and teachers at Little Flower encouraged me, especially Sr. Gaudentia and Sr. Quentin, both of whom had brothers who were priests. My parents and most of my relatives supported me. I have to honestly say that in my almost 39 years as a priest I have never regretted becoming a priest. Likewise, I have never seriously thought that I would have been happier in another vocation or career.

People, however, receive their vocational calls in different ways. One of our more recently ordained priests told me that he graduated from college with an engineering degree and worked as an engineer for several years. After several years, he wanted to make a career change, and the possibility of priesthood kept coming up in his mind. He believes the call came through his desire to change careers. He wanted to change careers because he was looking for more meaning in his life. He felt that he could use his talents better than for making money and selling the latest in electronic devices. He mentioned that when he was in high school the Archdiocese did a CALLED BY NAME program, and someone submitted his name. At the time, he thought, "Ask me again in 30 years." However, he remembered it. Also, he said he had good role models in his home parish growing up. He told me that on most job satisfaction surveys, priesthood ranks second or third.

I also talked to Sr. Martine, my first grade teacher. She said she first thought of becoming a sister early in primary school. From 6th to 8th grades, she helped the Sisters clean and take care of the church and the parish grotto. She also helped the Sisters in their classrooms. For freshman year of high school, she attended Our Lady of the Angels High School in Cincinnati before joining the aspirancy at Oldenburg. She formally joined the Oldenburg Franciscans two months short of her 18th birthday. Her family supported her. Another factor that was part of God's call for her was that she as the youngest of six was a tomboy who loved sports. This led her to realize that

she could be more than an educator. She realized she could do other things with people. For five years after novitiate, she taught in schools, including two years at Little Flower.

Not only had she thought about becoming a religious, she had also thought about becoming a missionary. Her brother served in Indo-China during WWII and sent pictures home. She was probably in third grade at the time and wanted to help the people in the pictures. However, she joined the Oldenburg Franciscans who were not missionaries. In 1960, her opportunity came. Mother Cephas sent a letter to the Sisters telling them the Capuchin Franciscans in Papua, New Guinea, wanted Sisters to minister to the women of Papua and inviting them to volunteer. At the time, Sister Martine was teaching at St. Rita's here in Indianapolis. Her one hesitation was that her mother had died, and her father was still lonely. He would call St. Rita's every Friday evening. One Friday one of the Oldenburg superiors was coming to St. Rita's, and Sr. Martine wanted to send her letter back with the superior. However, she did not want to do so until she talked with her father. That week he called Thursday evening, which she took as a sign. When she told him what she wanted to do, after reminding her that she was his youngest child, he told her he would support her in whatever she wanted to do. When she was asked to go, she felt called to represent her community. She was honored to be able to do so. She remained in New Guinea for fifty years until the community closed their mission there.

My brothers and sisters, CALLED BY NAME forms are in the pews. If you did not take one last week, please take one or more this week. Please continue to pray and reflect on who you think might be good sisters, priests, or brothers and then recommend them. If you are not yet sure of your own vocation in life, especially if you are young, please consider the possibility that God may be calling you to priesthood or religious life and pray about it. As the three stories suggest, God's call comes in many different ways, most of them subtle. As we search for our vocation, most of us ask ourselves, "What do I want to do with my life?" Perhaps we might better ask, "What does God want me to do with my life?"