



Prayer for Vocations

Oh Jesus, send labourers into your fields which are awaiting holy apostles, saintly priests, heroic missionaries and dedicated sisters and brothers.

Enkindle in the hearts of men and women the spark of a vocation.

Grant that Christian families may desire to give your Church helpers in the work of tomorrow. Amen.



Calling the Priests of the Future!

**A message from
Archbishop Eamon Martin**

Spring 2022



I'll never forget the day I told my mother that I was thinking of becoming a priest. I wondered what she might say, but she simply paused and asked me to pray about it, and to talk to someone about it - 'Then you'll know the right thing to do', she said.

As a person of deep faith, my mother knew that, first and foremost, it is God who calls priests. The best way to figure out if God is calling you is to talk to God in prayer!

What would you say if someone you knew - your son, your brother, a relation or friend came to you and said 'I think that God might be calling me to priesthood?' Would you support and encourage him? Would you pray for him? What would you advise?

When I was around 17 years old, doing my A-levels, I got a strong sense that God might be inviting me to be a priest. Looking back now, I'm pretty sure that God had already been gently calling me, long before that. My priestly vocation began in my home. As a child growing up in Derry, I came to know that God loves me. More and more, I wanted to love God back! My vocation was nourished in my schools and in my parish of St Patrick's, Pennyburn, and it has been sustained ever since by the support of family and friends, and by the power of prayer.

As a young person, one thing that always struck me about priests was how different they all were - in age and personality, in their interests, even in the way they said Mass and talked to us about their faith. It helped me realise that God calls us as we are - all unique, with different gifts. God knows and loves each one of us intimately and personally, with our good points, and with our sins and failings. God keeps saying "Come, follow me", and he wants us to answer "Yes" to Him, just as the prophets and Mary and the disciples did.

Every baptized Christian is called by Jesus to follow Him in a unique way and to serve God and the Church as active members and co-workers in their parish. Some young women and men are called to serve as religious sisters or brothers or deacons. God also calls priests to give their lives completely to Him.

St John Vianney described priesthood as "the love of the heart of Jesus". A good priest is therefore someone who, despite his own sins and



weaknesses, has a heart that reflects the loving heart of Christ. A priest is privileged to share with people in some of the happiest moments of their lives, and also to be with them in their saddest and most difficult days. He will touch the tiny ears and mouth of an infant at baptism. He will join the hands of a young couple in marriage. He will anoint the forehead and palms of the Sick. He will hold the hands of the dying. During Holy Mass his hands will lift up the Book of the Gospels and - at the Consecration - the sacred Body and Blood of Christ. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation those same hands will absolve sinners in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Today, more than ever, Ireland needs good priests.

What qualities are we looking for in those who come forward?

Above all they should be prayerful, and carry a deep love for God in their hearts. They have to be approachable and thoughtful, humble and reflective; we want good leaders with common sense, who are also effective communicators. We need young men who are caring listeners, and who can show compassion to those who are sick or struggling in any way. We want our student priests to be full of vision and hope for the future - the priests of today and tomorrow need to be happy and joyful in themselves - able to convince others that Christ is alive! Christ is our Hope!

I believe that there are lots of young men with these qualities, but perhaps, in such a noisy and distracting world, they have not yet been able to hear God calling them. That's where you, the people of God, come in! I want you to join me in finding the priests of the future and helping God to call them!

If you know a young man of strong faith, whose heart is like the heart of Jesus, please encourage him to think about the possibility of priesthood. Ask him, "Have you ever thought that God may be calling you to be a priest?" He may be in your family, your parish or workplace. He may be sitting beside you at school or university, or playing in your sports club. God is asking you to tap him on the shoulder and gently invite him to serve as a priest for the future. As my mother did for me, be the first to advise him to pray about priesthood and to talk to someone about it.

+ Eamon Martin

Archbishop Eamon Martin