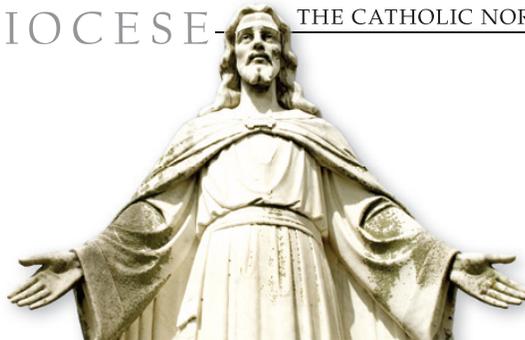


# Pray for laborers

*"To live means to be desired and loved by God, moment after moment."* (from a Vatican document about the consecrated life)



Of all the ways one might define human life, that brief and startling statement says everything.

I wonder what kind of definition each of us would write were we asked to define "to live." I have a suspicion that many of us would begin, "To live means that I..." Our definitions would continue with a list of things that "I" would accomplish, achieve, feel, think, know, do.

But the true definition does not begin with anything "I" set as a goal for myself. Instead, it begins with recognizing that the only reason I am alive is that I am "desired and loved by God."

By desiring and loving me, God brought me into being and sustains me. I am neither the source nor the goal of my own life. I am one who is desired and loved by God, moment after moment, and therefore I am alive. My existence is evidence that God exists!

For most of us, taking that definition seriously means letting a revolution happen in our hearts. If the reason I am alive is that I am

a desire of God, the beloved of God, a thought of God, an object of God's favor, then nourishing a relationship with God brings me even more to life.

Making myself the center, the point of it all, only lessens me. The self-centered husband or wife quickly sours a marriage.

It is the revolutionary irony of the Gospel that in forgetting myself I find myself, that in surrendering myself to God as his instrument I come alive. That upside-down logic is at the core of the beatitudes, and it is emphasized by all four Gospels as a key to Jesus' teaching:

"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?" (Lk 9:24-25)



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**Life gets complicated, and when it does, it helps to hold on to a simple refrain which keeps us grounded in the Gospel of Jesus.**

## Surrender to truth

One obstacle to serious consideration of a religious vocation for some today is that they begin their discernment by asking "Should 'I' do this?" In other words, some approach a vocation as they would a career change, when, in fact, it has much more to do with one's willingness to leap

into God's arms.

It has to do with surrendering oneself to the truth — even though I do not fully understand it — that no matter what I have already accomplished, the reason I am living is because I am desired and loved by God.

"Is God calling me?" That is the proper question to ask oneself when contemplating a vocation. Discerning a vocation means allowing myself to be defined by God's desire and love for me, to want to become an image of God's love and desire for everyone.

In this age of "self-fulfillment," that is no easy task, but that is precisely what the Church — the world — needs. Discerning a vocation means putting

myself at God's disposal, so that when he calls I will not respond, "I have something better to do."

Am I afraid of falling? God will catch me. Am I too weak? Yes, but God is strong. Will I miss my former life? Probably, but I will gain something more. Will I limit my future choices? Most definitely yes, but in giving myself to God I will gain everything.

## Extend God's call

In his message for the 2013 World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Pope Benedict XVI offered this reflection:

"Vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life are born out of the experience of a personal encounter with Christ, out of sincere and confident dialogue with him, so as to enter into his

will. It is necessary, therefore, to grow in the experience of faith, understood as a profound relationship with Jesus, as inner attentiveness to his voice which is heard deep within us. This process, which enables us to respond positively to God's call, is possible in Christian communities where the faith is lived intensely, where generous witness is given of adherence to the Gospel, where there is a strong sense of mission which leads people to make the total gift of self for the Kingdom of God, nourished by recourse to the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and by a fervent life of prayer."

Please join me in prayer for those in our diocese who are considering a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life (and for those who are not considering a vocation but should be!).

Pray that they will come alive in God's desire and love for them, that they will give their "I" to God for his sake and ours. Pray that they will have the courage to stake their lives on what it means "to live." Pray that they will hear his call and answer, "Yes!"

I would like to make a request of everyone who reads this column — lay, religious and priest. Think of at least one young man or woman who you believe would be a good priest or religious; pray that they will be strengthened by the faith, witness and mission of the Christian community; and mail a copy of this article to him or her, with your personal words of encouragement.

Part of your vocation is to extend the call of God.

This text has been adapted from the original column that first appeared in the Arkansas Catholic May 1, 2004.

### DO YOU HAVE AN INTENTION FOR ARCHBISHOP SARTAIN'S PRAYER LIST?

You may send it to him at Archbishop Sartain's Prayer List, Archdiocese of Seattle, 710 Ninth Ave., Seattle, WA 98104.