

Vocations



**YOU
R
here**



**To where is God
calling you?**

A PERSONAL CALLING —FOR EVERYONE

At the time you were conceived, more than a million others could have come into existence instead of you. But they didn't, and never will – because *you* did! You may well ask “why me?”

The clues are within you and around you. Your own deepest, best longings are hints of what God made you for, especially when they intercept with the needs you see around you.

Times of silence and stillness are essential for hearing God's call and discovering the meaning of your life.



Prayer

O Lord, you search me and you know me,
you know my resting and my rising,
you discern my purpose from afar,
You mark when I walk or lie down,
all my ways lie open to you....

It was you who created my being,
knit me together in my mother's womb.
I thank you for the wonder of my being,
for the wonders of all your creation.

Already you knew my soul,
my body held no secret from you
when I was being fashioned in secret
and moulded in the depths of the earth...

O where can I go from your spirit,
or where can I flee from your face?
If I climb to the heavens, you are there.
If I lie in the grave, you are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn
and dwell at the sea's furthest end,
and even there your hand would lead me,
your right hand would lead me,
your right hand would hold me fast....

O search me, God, and know my heart.
O test me and know my thoughts.
See that I follow not the wrong path
and lead me in the path of life eternal.

(Psalm 139)

THE CHRISTIAN CALLING

God's Word, and call to us, are focused most clearly in the person of Jesus.

The people who met Jesus of Nazareth loved spending time with him. In his presence they just *knew* they mattered to God. That is something every one of us needs to know.

Practising our Christian faith means spending time with him. We discover how much we really matter when we discover how much we mean to him. We also discover why so many people have given their lives in his service, and even been willing to die for him.

Spend a few minutes thinking about how John and Andrew must have felt the first day they met him. They had been following him along the bank of the River Jordan:

Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, "what do you want?" They answered "Rabbi, where do you live?" He replied, "come and see"; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour (see John 1:35-39).



Different Paths

The circumstances of ordinary life are where we live out our relationship with God – whether we are students or employed, unemployed, healthy or sick. God is present to us in all our circumstances. Closeness to God (holiness!) is the calling of all of us. There are different ways of following that fundamental calling.



To some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some evangelists; to some pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11, 12).

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Most people marry. **That is their path to holiness**

What makes Christian marriage special is the way it mirrors Jesus' own love. On the cross he showed a love that was complete – life-giving, forgiving, and faithful to the end. That is the love that “changes everything”. Christian spouses commit themselves to that kind of love for each other. Vows made before the altar echo Christ's love for us from the cross: complete and faithful to the end.

Christian marriage is a sacrament—a sign of what God's love is like. What a vocation! More than that: God's own love for husband and wife is *in* their love for each other.



Plan for your marriage not just your wedding



Your diocese has special programmes to help you prepare for this great calling, and to help enrich marriages.

For further information contact:

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CONSECRATED LIFE

Live-giving love is the special feature of married love. But love can be life-giving in other ways as well.

People who really love what they are doing make big sacrifices for it – like preparing for the Olympics! Love takes us beyond normal limits and normal expectations. People *in love* do “mad” things. Love can’t be reduced to something measured, calculated or self-concerned.

That’s why some people forego perfectly good options – including marriage and financial independence, taking vows of “poverty, chastity and obedience”. They are making a statement with their lives. They are saying: even the good things of life don’t fully satisfy human hearts, we are made for more! Their lives become a sign pointing to that something more.

As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ Jesus answered, ‘Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.’

Another to whom he said, ‘Follow me’, replied, ‘Let me go and bury my father first,’ But he answered, ‘Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.’ (Luke 9:57-60)

Down the centuries, Religious Sisters and Brothers have been at the frontiers of providing schools, universities, hospitals, orphanages, leprosaria... By working together in communities they have given their work a life beyond their own life-times as individuals.

Today, governments and others have taken over many of these works. And so communities of Religious Sisters and Brothers look for new ways of going out to the frontiers of human need. It is only the shapes and forms of religious life that are changing.

New forms of Christian community are also springing up. All of them start from the discovery of how much we are loved by God, which generates the desire to love in return.



Prayer

O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands....

in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast. (Psalm 63: 1-9)

PRIESTHOOD

Jesus described himself as the good shepherd. In his day, the shepherd led his small flock out at the beginning of each day. Then he spent the whole day with them, leading them to better pastures. It was a very intimate relationship. He knew each sheep by name, and they knew him. It was this sense of *being there for them* that reminded Jesus of his own relationship to us.

It is a mistake to think that when Jesus left off he handed over to others as his deputies. According to Catholic tradition Jesus never left off! As the risen Jesus he is still personally our “shepherd”. And there are no deputies. Those who are ordained to act in his name only give voice to what *he himself is still doing*:

There is only one Pastor of the Church and he is Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. All that priests do as pastors is serve Christ’s own pastoring of the Church. There is only one priest in the Church, Jesus Christ, and all that Christian priests do is to be the sacramental presence of Christ’s own priesthood. There is only one Teacher of the Church, Jesus Christ, and all that priests do is give voice to Jesus who speaks through them as the Word of life for their hearers.

As priests preside over the Church’s liturgy and over the Christian community, they do so only as servants of Christ who alone is head of the Church. (Bishop Michael Putney, Foreword, in *The Prayer of the Priest*, William F. Ekert, Medio Media, Arizona, 2005)

To serve in this way is an amazing privilege!
And it’s not about being worthy, because no-one is.



What about celibacy?

That, too, is a way priests can put their lives at the service of Christ – who gave his *all* for us.

Celibacy is a way of saying with our lives what we say with our lips: that nothing matters more than:

“The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.” (Matthew 13:44).



VOCATIONS

WANTED—DEFINITELY ALIVE

Do you mean me, Lord?

If you are wondering whether God might be calling you to this way of serving Jesus' mission, don't be put off by the experience of your human weakness. In one of his down moments, St Paul pleaded with the Lord to remove his weakness

But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you: my power is at its best in weakness. So I shall be very happy to make my weaknesses my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me, and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong (St Paul second letter to the Corinthians; ch.12: 9,10).

And don't be put off by the weaknesses and failures of others. Pope John Paul II felt supported by the generosity of young people when he said to them at Taize:

Dear young people, to bring to the world the joyful news of the gospel, the Church needs your enthusiasm and your generosity. You know, it can happen that your elders, after the difficult journey and trials they have undergone, fall prey to fear or weariness and let the dynamism which belongs to every Christian vocation grow weak. It can also happen that institutions, because of *routine* or lack of numbers, are not sufficiently at the service of the gospel. Because of this the Church needs the witness of your hope and your zeal in order to fulfil her mission better. Don't be content to criticise passively, or wait for persons or institutions to become better. Go yourselves towards the parishes, the student organisations, the different movements and communities, and patiently bring them the force of your youth and the talents you have received. Bring your trust and support to the ministers of the Church – they are your servants in the name of Jesus. You need them, and they need you... (From the Pope's address to young people at Taize, 5 Oct 1986).

Our son entering the seminary has had such an influence on our family; it makes you think about your faith more.... It has encouraged his siblings to think more about their faith and discuss it more. We are incredibly proud. I would encourage parents to talk to their son if they think that is appropriate and ask, 'Have you ever considered the priesthood?'

—Parents of a seminarian

An exercise:

Contemplate in silence the scene painted by Matthew (ch. 14, vv. 22-33). The disciples were in the boat being tossed about by the waves.

During the fourth watch of the night (Jesus) came toward them.... When they saw him walking on the water they were terrified.

His reassuring words lifted Peter to another level. He heard Jesus saying to them:

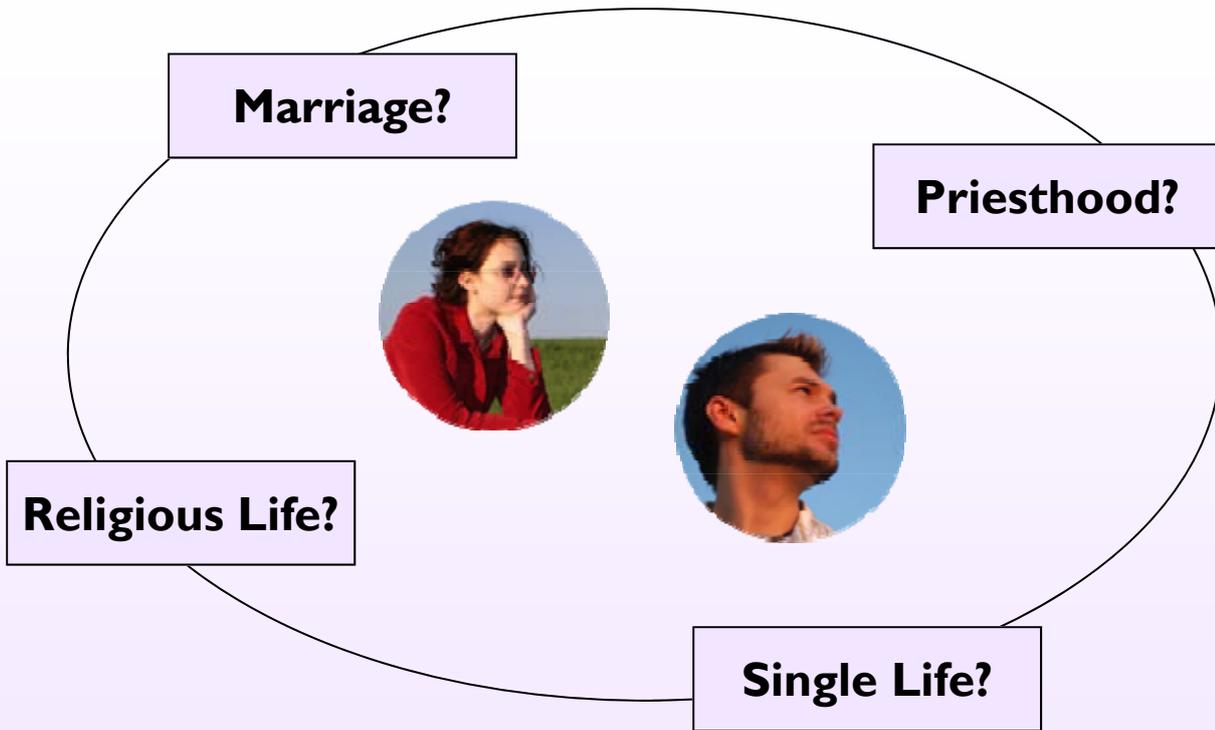
*Be of good heart
it is I,
don't be afraid.*

Faith in Jesus' word enabled him to forget all else; he forgot the dangers, he forgot what others might say, he forgot himself:

*Peter replied:
Lord,
if it is you
let me come to you upon the waters.*

And he said
Come.





Psalm:

What can bring us happiness?" many say.
Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord.

You have put into my heart a greater joy
than they have from abundance of corn and new
wine.

I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once
for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.
(Psalm 4, verses 7-9)

A Prayer

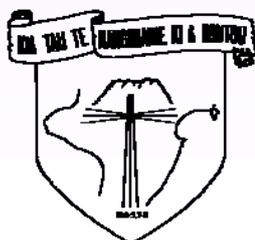
E te Matua atawhai, God of joy & compassion
thank you for the gift of life.
Make me whole-hearted in my love for you.
Fill me with wonder and awe in your presence.

Jesus, let me discover how my own worries
melt away when I reach out to others.
Give me the privilege of helping others
in ways that will matter to them forever.

Holy Spirit, lead me where you will.
May the world be a better place
because I took my place
where you wanted me to be.

DIOCESE OF PALMERSTON NORTH

Rohe Pīhopa o te Papaioea



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