

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

When I was growing up my parents had a close friend, “Dottie”, who became an adopted aunt for the eight children in our family. Dottie was a sergeant in the Army who worked with my father. She was also quite a character. Because Dottie remained unmarried until late in life, she spent a lot of time with our family and she would take care of us if our folks wanted to go away. She got to know us pretty well and as a spinster “aunt” had nothing better to do than to spoil us kids. Given how outspoken she was I was quite surprised when after I told her I was going to the seminary she said: “I always knew you were going to be a priest.” I said; “You did? Well I wish you would have told me.” It might have saved me a lot of floundering around about what I was supposed to do with my life. Not to mention some stupid decisions I made as a young man.

I mention this because there may be some young man that you know who the Lord is calling to the priesthood but who is having difficulty hearing the call. Considering a vocation to the priesthood or religious life is probably the most counter-cultural notion a young person can make these days. Think about it. If a young man said that he wanted to go to Tibet to “find himself”, or to get rich selling internet pornography or worse still, make a living aborting babies, he would find ready support for his decision from the news & entertainment media that dominates our culture. But to give one's life in service to the Lord and others as a priest, sister or brother? How much does our culture support an idea like that?

The fact that our culture is so biased against Christianity now makes it all the more important that parents, grandparents, relatives and friends encourage the young people in their lives to be open to the possibility that the Lord may be calling them to a religious vocation. After twenty years as a priest I can say in all sincerity it is truly a wonderful life. Yes, it is true, I will never have my own family, but so many good people have invited me to become part of theirs. All the practicing Catholics I know have good things to say about the overwhelming majority of priests and religious that they have known. And I trust that you can see that most of us are happy. What I don't understand is why so few parents & families encourage their sons & daughters to consider religious vocations. So please, encourage the young people in your life to have faith in God and teach them that the greatest joy of all—love—is found through self-sacrifice. With this wisdom they will know what it is that the Lord wants them to do with their lives and, whether He is calling them to the vocation of marriage, religious life or the single state, they will be happy. Finally, if you know someone who you think might make a good priest or religious simply ask them if they have ever thought about it.

It could save them a lot of unnecessary floundering around. As a former “flounderer” I know how helpful that can be.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley