

10th Grade Priesthood

OPENING SCRIPTURE

Begin with a short prayer and/or lead a meditation based on the lesson's scripture.

REVIEW OPTION

Tie today's class to the previous vocation lesson or other classes you have been working on.

Note to teacher: A free program is available to begin a "discernment group" to help male students further discern the priesthood. The Melchizedek Project offers free books, discussion guides, and leader guides. Groups meet seven times per semester for about 90 minutes. Order a sample packet or request free materials for your group at www.melchizedekproject.com.

READING

5-15 min

Goals:

1. Communicate a reverence for the priesthood.
2. Help young men to be open to praying for God's will in their own lives regarding this vocation.

Preparation:

Review reading. Note interesting parts. Choose 2-3 part to discuss with students.

Instructions:

Time permitting, students might read the entire selection during class, or they could read it for homework before coming to class.

Lead discussion by having students share what most caught their attention, which aspects of the priesthood seemed most wonderful, or most difficult. (Note: there will likely be overlap between "the most wonderful" and "the most difficult" because some of the best parts of every vocation are

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"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life?'" -MATTHEW 16:24-26^[1]

READING

A TOWN TRANSFORMED BY A HUMBLE PRIEST

The story of St. John Vianney, as told by Madame Des Garrets

This is my country. It's flat. It rains a lot. The soil doesn't drain very well, so you will often see puddles everywhere. The rain also makes a lot of mist and fog. I have always thought it was beautiful, but it is also pretty plain.

My town, called Ars, is so small, some nearby towns don't even know we're here. Only forty families or so live here. Forty families and four bars. You can draw your own conclusions.

Until just a few years ago, the Catholic religion was outlawed; although it is possible to practice again, religion has not really made a comeback. It has been almost eighteen years since this town had a priest. The vestments for Mass have fallen apart. The church smells like mold. After the church closed, a local club used it for meetings, maybe even for occult magic. We don't know. It is a mess.

The government made Sunday a work day. People might have been upset at first, but that was more than fifteen years ago. All the young people can barely remember when it used to be normal to go to Mass. The children cannot remember at all. Even if we had a priest, most of us would prefer to work or relax, rather than going to Sunday mass. There is no Catholic school, no religious education, and many children have not even been baptized.

Although it's this small, Ars has the same problems as the worst city: domestic violence, abuse, alcoholism, plenty of violent language and blasphemy.^[2] It is not a place to raise children. It is not the worst town, just mediocre. In forty years, it's likely that no one will be left to care about the things that matter.

Before the revolution, there were 60,000 priests in the country;



now there are less than 25,000. One-third of those priests are over sixty.^[3] Since there are 30 million people in France, I can see why the bishop would not send a priest to Ars; there are too few priests and they are needed in bigger, more important cities.^[4] No one who wanted to do something with his life would ever stay here, let alone come here.

I'm praying for a miracle. My name is Mlle. Des Garrets. I am almost seventy and the lady of the manor. I never married and have no children. I have some power and considerable wealth. I pray every day and I spend my life taking care of the poor and sick in this area. I have done something needed. But I could not do everything. I might have been able to teach the Faith, but there was only so much time. And even if I had taught the Faith, it would not have been enough. Because we need the sacraments—we need a priest! There will never be life without the Blessed Sacrament, and for that we need a priest. There will never be life if we are stuck in our sins—we need confession, and for that we need a priest.

We need a priest but not just any priest. We need someone who can be an outstanding leader, a magnificent orator, someone clever and brilliant. Would the Church waste a priest like that on us?

^[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>.

^[2] See <http://olrl.org/lives/vianney.shtml>

^[3] Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: the French 1799-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 120.

^[4] W. Scott Haine, *Culture and Customs of France* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 12.

the hardest parts. This may be a great topic for further discussion.)

Students may write about their thoughts on the story, if discussion seems slow. Allow time for the students to think.

Some discussions starters:

- Were there any words or concepts used with which you weren't familiar? Let's go through those.
- What would be hard about this life? What would be beautiful? If you were there, what would you look forward to? What would you worry about if you were in his shoes?
- Have you ever gone through any experiences like St. John Vianney? What did it feel like? How did you deal with it? Help students connect their experience to the story, e.g. "Okay, so you, the student, have sometimes longed for a hero to come to town. Imagine



that happening! Or imagine if you were the one chosen to save the city—how would you feel in the beginning?”

- Have students share stories of any priests that they know and admire and why. Emphasize the need to pray to be open to the priesthood and/or support it and its importance for the world.



PRIESTHOOD

Our new priest came this February, 1818. I can guess why he has been sent. I suspect his superiors think him a priest that can be “wasted.” When he preaches, he sounds scratchy. He does not come from an educated family, and it is certain that he failed his seminary exams at least once. He got lost trying to get here. I’m depressed. I will help him; even if he is not the priest we need, he is a priest.

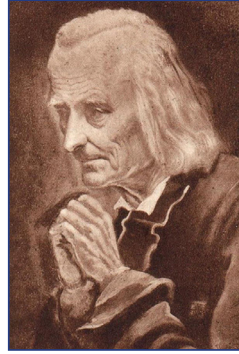
But if I could see the future, I would be ashamed of my doubts. We did not deserve this priest.

From his first arrival, our new priest tramped all over the area meeting people and talking to families. He was terribly poor—ate only bread and potatoes, sometimes eggs. He stayed poor on purpose to pray for us. He gave most of his furniture and his mattress away; he slept on the floor. He once prayed, “Lord, let me achieve the conversion of my parish, and I am ready to suffer whatever you decide all the rest of my life.”^[5]

He cleaned up the church and reopened it. He bought a new altar and new vestments with his own money. He hand-painted the woodwork. He brought back the Mass. He spent nights writing homilies; he memorized them so he could give them with proper feeling, although he always found memorizing extremely hard. He started a school for girls. He spent a lot of time encouraging the young women of the town to stand up for themselves and avoid dangerous situations with young men, like drinking at dance parties.

He began Sunday vespers, he trained the altar servers, and he dedicated the parish to Our Lady. He promoted a town-wide procession and celebration for the Feast of Corpus Christi. In the last year of his life, the mayor and the whole town planned a special gift for the Feast of Corpus Christi. The mayor got a brass band to play for the procession. When they began to play, they say our priest was so happy he could not even talk.

The main thing was the time he spent in the confessional. Sometimes he spent as many as 16 hours a day hearing confessions. One would have to try it to see how hard that would be—sitting in a chair with few breaks, no windows, nothing to read, just giving total attention to others, hour after hour.



He was an amazing confessor. The kindest listener, the best advice. He was truly an *alter Christus*. Thousands of people were converted or returned to the faith. Pilgrims came from all over Europe to ask his advice. The last year of his life, more than 100,000 people traveled to our town just to go to confession.

It was not easy—three times, he tried to leave our town forever. He had a different plan each time, but each time he came back. After the third time, he decided once and for all that God would not let him go, and that he would live and die with us. He lived six more years. When he received the Last Sacraments, they say his words were: “Oh! it is sad to receive Holy Communion for the last time!”

Three hundred priests and thousands of others attended the funeral. This priest had been with us 41 years; he was the “Curé of Ars.” In French, *curé* is another word for priest. I like how it resembles the English word “cure.” That’s what Fr. John Vianney—St. John Vianney—was for us, our cure. The town of Ars was sick and dying, and he brought us back to life. He put us in touch with God, and God came back to Ars.

St. John Vianney is now the patron of all parish priests. He did struggle to pass his seminary exams. He did get sent to a seemingly impossible and unimportant assignment. And none of that seems to matter anymore. Fr. Vianney was incredibly happy and heroically holy. He saved us. He was just what Ars needed; he was what every town needs: a good priest.



^[5] Taken from a film documentary of the saint’s life. See <http://youtu.be/SQO188ZmTm0>

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Note: This background material is provided to help you prayerfully prepare for a lecture, or lead a far-ranging discussion with students.

Introduction:

During ordination to the transitional diaconate and then again when he is ordained a priest, a candidate will make certain promises and agree to certain practices. He is not a religious, and so these promises are not vows, although they are similar. The candidate promises to pray the Divine Office faithfully every day and to take a yearly retreat. He will agree to live simply and without ostentation; he does not make a vow of poverty, but his stipend will be modest. He promises celibacy, and obedience to the Bishop and his successors.

Some priests have said that the promises are harder at different times of life. When one is a young man, celibacy might be the hardest. When one is middle-aged, one might wish to have more luxury and spending money. When one is old, one finds obedience the hardest. And maybe at any time, after a full day with little free time, the idea of trying to say one's prayers in the Divine Office, when the eyelids will barely stay open, is daunting! Nevertheless, each promise also offers incredible joy.

Goals of this Discussion:

1. It is important to be realistic about what you might face in your vocation. Every life has “highs” and “lows”, and sometimes the lows are the very same things that also bring the highs. This discussion should help students to understand the reality of the difficult and the wonderful aspects of the priesthood.
2. The 4th and final lesson of this unit asks students to complete an exercise imagining the best possible life for each of the vocations. Then students are to ask themselves “Which could I live without?” This discussion helps prepare the students by giving them concrete information about the daily experience of a priest so the students may make a more informed examination of this final question.

Instructions:

Two related discussions are given below. In the first, the teacher lists the promises on the board, and asks students to consider highs and lows. In the second, the teacher hands out “A Week in the Life of a Priest” and students look over it to further consider and list highs and lows of the Priestly Vocation. Talking points are given to the teacher to help further the student discussion.

DISCUSSION PART I: THE PROMISES—THEIR HIGHS AND LOWS

List and explain the obligations/promises of a priest (listed below). Ask the students to think of some of the “highs and lows” they would expect to encounter living each promise. Some notes follow below for the teacher to facilitate the discussion and prompt the students, if necessary.

Promises/Obligations

- Yearly retreat
- Pray daily the divine office
- Simplicity of life
- Celibacy
- Obedience to the Bishop

I. AN OBLIGATION TO MAKE A YEARLY RETREAT, A PROMISE TO PRAY THE DIVINE OFFICE DAILY.**Lows:**

- You might not be in the mood for a retreat, or it might conflict with something else you'd rather do.
- It can be difficult to leave the parish in the hands of others, or without a priest for daily mass, etc., for a week-long retreat.
- You have to manage time well to pray the Divine Office throughout the day.
- Unexpected emergencies will come up at times, causing you to have to pray most of the Divine Office at the end of the day when you are really tired.

Highs:

- You might really want or need a retreat for the rest, relaxation, and time for prayer that goes with it, and you get to go no matter how many duties there are at the parish. (This is part of the reason for the obligation, so that needed time is taken for these things regardless of how busy parish life becomes.)
- The Divine Office is one of the most beautifully laid out, wonderfully-worded set of prayers in history. Over time, you will develop favorite sections and prayers and look forward to reading them again as the liturgical year changes.
- It can give a sense of closeness to the whole Church when you realize that other priests, religious and lay people are saying the exact same prayers as you every day, all over the world! This is the official prayer of the Church and it will make you realize how connected you are in the Body of Christ, even with family and friends who are far away.

II. AN OBLIGATION TO SIMPLICITY OF LIFE—A STIPEND SET BY OTHERS, INSURANCE PLANNED BY A PARISH, ETC.

Lows:

- There will probably be times when you see what some of your friends have—nice cars, expensive vacations, and the like, and you may think, “I wish I could live like that.”
- You might at times desire a highly paid career, a position with more respect or influence, or a more luxurious life.
- Priests usually don’t stay long in one place – they need to be free to move at short notice for a new assignment.

Highs:

- A glance at the headlines will remind you that fame, wealth, and power are fleeting. People who have them are frequently targeted by the media, preyed on by detractors and black-mailers, and destroyed by changes in the economy.
- There will be days you are glad to be free of the insecurity of power, wealth, and fame. A simpler life allows you to live with less stress.
- You will be glad that your simple life makes it much easier for you to sympathize with all people, understand and sympathize with their suffering, and help them overcome their problems.
- Nothing brings true and lasting happiness like devoting your life to God. This is one of those things which is difficult to understand without experiencing it.
- A simpler life can allow God’s grace to strengthen you against temptation to sin, allowing the peace of real freedom.
- There is a lot of freedom for what matters in a simple life. You will have a sense of profound fulfillment doing excellent work for God and His Church.

III. A PROMISE OF CELIBACY

Lows:

- Sexuality is a great gift from God and a normal part of being human. You will feel the pang of giving this up sometimes.
- At times it will be difficult to guard your eyes and thoughts and not give into thinking about a pretty woman, or forming a special relationship with a woman.
- Sometimes you will be plain lonely.
- Sometimes you might watch a family of cute little kids and wish suddenly you were a father.

Highs:

- Celibacy is a great gift from God. God has to give this gift to you in order for you to live this way; part of the gift of celibacy is the ability to live it with great joy and thankfulness for the good it does in your life and the life of the Church.
- Celibacy continues to be a normal requirement for priests in the Roman Catholic Church, for several reasons. Practical reasons are often cited. For example, an unmarried man can more easily dedicate himself to the work of the Church. He doesn’t have to balance his priestly duties with obligations to a family.
- You are completely free to make decisions based solely on the good of all souls. If you want to help a married couple sort through their marriage troubles late at night, if you want to take communion to a dying man—you don’t need to tell your wife you’ll miss dinner, or your daughter that you can’t come to her ballet recital.
- If you want to take a stand and teach the truth, you don’t have to worry about enemies targeting your wife and kids. You can make last-minute, life and death decisions.
- You are in the front ranks, free to serve the whole church. In a way, you will become father to everyone. So it is a very practical decision.
- However, while practical reasons for celibacy are valid reasons with roots in Scripture (1 Corinthians 7:32-35), they are not the most important reasons. More important are the spiritual realities signified by celibacy.
- Celibacy marks the priest as a man consecrated to the service of Christ and the Church. It shows in a concrete way that he is not merely someone who exercises a set of functions or who holds a certain office but that he has been changed on an ontological level by his reception of the sacrament of Orders.
- Celibacy configures the priest more closely to Christ, the great High Priest, who forsook earthly marriage for the sake of the Kingdom and for the sake of uniting Himself more perfectly to his heavenly Bride, the Church.
- It is fitting that the priest who offers this same Jesus in sacrifice to the Father, show in his own person (albeit to an imperfect degree) the purity and holiness of his unspotted Victim.
- Celibacy reminds us of heaven, pointing to the coming of the Kingdom when marriage will no longer exist.
- Furthermore, it is helpful to consider the words of the Norbertines, ordained priests who live in community. Their advice is valid for parish priests experiencing loneliness,

because they do not think that community life is the cure for priestly loneliness. There is only one cure. This is what they say: “The loneliness or vacuum one experiences is normal for everyone but especially one who gives up marriage. But one doesn’t give up marriage to experience emptiness. Rather one gives up the good of marriage to replace it with Christ. A priest who feels lonely is one who doesn’t pray or doesn’t have a loving relationship with Christ. With prayer and the Holy Eucharist, you cannot be alone spiritually.” [7]

IV. A PROMISE OF OBEDIENCE

Lows:

- Sometimes the Bishop may really need you to take a new parish or a different job in the diocese. If you really love where you are at or the work you are doing currently, it will be really hard to leave. You will miss parishioners; you will miss staff, especially if you had a good working relationship. And if there were other priests stationed with you, you may miss their company as you head to a new assignment.
- At times you may develop plans for your parish or ministry, and the Bishop will make you wait or even forbid you to move forward; sometimes you will understand his reasons, sometimes you won’t—but you will have to obey. That can be really hard.

- Sometimes you will have to do things under obedience which people will misunderstand or resent, such as announcing the closing of a school, or other difficult changes. This can make relationships with parishioners difficult.

Highs:

- Since our own will is one of the greatest obstacles to holiness and the service of God, it is incredibly helpful to have to submit your will to someone else.
- Employees, spouses, children, soldiers, and religious all have to obey sometimes. Single people are probably the group who have to obey the least; this sounds nice, but a single person who wishes to be holy will often find that he/she has no practice in submitting the will.
- Many people today find that every choice is available to them; rather than exciting, this can be paralyzing. Many people find it impossible to know what to do, which path to follow. A priest under obedience will have a much clearer vision of what is right for him to do, since his Bishop gives him “marching orders.”
- Obedience to the Bishop is essentially obedience to God, because God’s will for the priest is made known through his Bishop’s directions.

[7] http://www.stmichaelsabbey.com/abbey/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=64:-vocations-frequently-asked-questions&catid=40:vocations&Itemid=67

DISCUSSION PART II: THE WORK OF A PRIEST – HIGHS AND LOWS

You've talked about the general nature of a priest's life as evidenced by the promises he makes and the obligations given to him.

In this section, discuss the more specific events of a priest's typical day and week, soliciting from the students what some particular highs and lows might be. Take examples from St. John Vianney's story (and, if the optional reading was used, from Fr. Brannen's *Priests Bury the Dead*). Also encourage students to imagine other highs and lows that they might expect in the daily and weekly life of a priest.

Use the student section "The Work of a Priest – Highs and Lows" to aid the discussion.

(Note: If students have done the Freshmen Curriculum, they may notice that the duties of the priest definitely fall into the three categories "priest," "prophet," and "king" which are the priest's roles in imitation of Christ.)

"I'm very impatient with some of the pragmatic arguments for celibacy—that it frees up your time and allows you to focus your energy in different ways. I'd rather see celibacy as a kind of irrational, over-the-top, poetic, symbolic expression of the soul in love." – Fr. Robert Barron



PRIESTHOOD

DISCUSSION

THE WORK OF A PRIEST - HIGHS AND LOWS

All Christians share in the priesthood of Jesus, who is priest, prophet, and king. But ordained priests share in this reality in a special way.

Look over these lists of what a priest does, and think about the highs and lows of this vocation.

A priest sanctifies and mediates grace:

- He offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
- He feeds the People of God with the Body and Blood of Jesus
- He forgives sins
- He baptizes
- He witnesses marriages
- He prays with and for the People of God



^[8] Taken from a film documentary of the saint's life. See <http://youtu.be/SQO188ZmTm0> [return to text]

The lows? People will need you and ask you for the sacraments even when you are sick, lonely, or tired. Like Christ, you may have enemies, and you will have to lovingly hear their confessions and offer them communion. That could be very hard. People may often be indifferent to you and you will have to work hard to convince them that they need the sacraments. For example, with John Vianney, at first nobody cared about the sacraments and he had to work very hard to inspire people. Once they cared, he then had to minister to these needs all the time in an age with very few brother priests to help him and support him.

The highs? These tasks are highs in themselves; imagine being part of these moments, the tears, the happiness, the excitement, the awesomeness of people finding happiness in Christ, the Church, and the sacraments. Is there a greater mission than saving souls?

St. John Vianney prayed, "Lord, let me achieve the conversion of my parish, and I am ready to suffer whatever you decide all the rest of my life."^[8]

As "prophet," a priest teaches and preaches:

- He preaches the Gospel of Christ
- He instructs others about Jesus and His Teachings
- He evangelizes, bringing the Gospel to the whole world
- He counsels and guides the suffering
- A priest instructs his people.

The lows? People will not always be receptive to you; they might criticize you or try to trip you with questions they don't actually want to know about. You might be disappointed when you do not have as much time as you want to prepare a homily, class, or talk, and then you may be embarrassed at your presentation. And you'll just have to put it in God's hands because you will not always have time to write the greatest homily ever. You might not be able to answer a question as well as you wanted to and you will feel badly about not doing better. You will hear stories of incredible suffering, and it might be hard at times for you to cope with the weight of other people's sorrows. St. John Vianney surely knew that he was not the best public speaker and he was well aware of how long it took him to prepare a good homily. Sometimes he stayed up all night.

The highs? These tasks are highs in themselves. Sometimes you will be successful through God's grace. People will tell you that



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they finally get it—that they wish to become Catholic, that they can now make sense of their life, cope with their suffering, or make an important decision. You will feel honored, humbled, and...just great! It is a huge honor to be allowed to spend all your time thinking about and trying to preach the Gospel and help people. St. John Vianney's happiest moments were seeing that the town had ceased to be indifferent; a town that had once cared nothing for God, was now marching in a public town-wide procession through the streets, the mayor having assembled a brass band, all to honor the Lord. What a transformation!

As “king,” a priest leads, defends, and cares for the People of God:

- He visits the sick
- He cares for the Dying
- He buries the dead
- He stays with God's people in good times and in bad
- He defends the people of God from the Evil One
- He fights for the souls of God's people

The lows? You will see a lot of suffering and death as a priest. People will turn to you in their worst hour and that may be a lot for you to handle. Our famous enemies, “the world, the flesh, and the devil”, will target you more the more you serve the Lord. You may be the victim of vicious criticism and slander. You may find yourself in conflict with bad laws or demonic activity. You will have to keep a strong prayer life and firm resolutions to live virtuously in order to withstand such sorrow and opposition. Being a priest is hard work; three times St. John Vianney decided to leave Ars—it was so hard, and he was the only priest they had.

The highs? You will be God's own instrument in the lives of people. There are few things harder to cope with than death, and no enemy more dangerous than the world, the flesh, and the devil. You will be God's own soldier in the very front ranks, providing the most difficult and most needed defense of the human race possible. If you have ever watched a super-hero movie and felt some desire to be the one to save the city, you will understand what inspires a man to take on the dangerous but marvelous role of the priesthood. Three times after deciding to leave, St. John Vianney went back to Ars and decided to stay there until the end. The people needed him; God had called him. In the end, he loved God enough to stick to his calling.



Instructions:

Close with the following points. The optional stories provided may be used as examples.

CALLED TO SUPPORT THE PRIESTHOOD

- All of us are called to support the priesthood in whatever way is appropriate to our own particular vocations. Some ways to do this are:
- (for young men) being open to and answering a call to discern the priesthood
- supporting a friend or family member who feels this call
- encouraging your boys, if you have a family, to consider the priesthood
- working with your parish priests and bishop and generally being supportive of their good work
- being educated about the priesthood, especially because much of what people commonly believe about priests is at best misunderstanding, and at worst outright lies
- (A beautiful example of a religious brother and deacon who supported the priesthood comes from St. Francis of Assisi. See story below.)

CALLED TO GRATITUDE

- A life that supports the priesthood is a life that practices prayer and virtue. All the virtues are needed to support the priesthood; however, one especially important virtue is Gratitude.

**PRIESTHOOD****CLOSING READING****ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI (1182-1226)**

Although Francis of Assisi was ordained a deacon, he never felt called to become a priest, and he remained all his life a religious brother. He always had a great reverence for the priesthood.

One story collected about St. Francis tells how he helped a priest who was in trouble. This remarkable story is helpful for us now, because it reminds us that priests are human just like anyone else. Our response should always be to redouble our prayers for them.

St. Francis shows us why:

“I have heard that once, while Saint Francis was traveling through Lombardy, he entered into a church to pray, when a certain man went up to him. Now this man, who was . . . a Manichean . . . decided to take advantage of his visit to attract people to his own sect, subvert their faith, and bring the priestly office into contempt. For the parish priest there was notorious for his immoral life, it being known throughout the district that he kept a concubine. And so this man said to the saint: ‘Look, should we believe what a priest says and reverence the sacraments he administers, when he maintains a concubine and his hands are polluted?’ . . . [Francis], realizing the evil intent of the heretic, went up to the priest in the presence of all the parishioners, knelt down before him and said: ‘I do not know whether these hands are such as this man says they are. But even if they were, I know that this can in no way lessen the power and the efficacy of the sacraments of God. These hands remain the means through which many of God’s benefits and graces flow to the people. That is why I kiss them, out of respect for the things they administer and out of reverence for him by whose authority they do so.’ Having said this, he knelt down in front of that priest and kissed his hands.”^[10]

Several versions of this story say that the priest was overwhelmed by St. Francis’ support and converted to a purer life immediately. Mercy to the priest helped him fulfill his vocation. St. Francis always stressed that we must love priests most of all because they bring us Christ. Here he explains to his brother friars:

“If I were at the same time to meet some saint coming down from heaven and any poor little priest, I would first pay my respects to the priest and proceed to kiss his hands first. I would say, ‘Ah, just a moment, St. Lawrence, because this person’s hands handle the Word of Life and possess something that is more than human.’

“These hands have touched my Lord, and no matter what they be like, they could not soil Him or lessen His virtue. To honor the Lord, honor his minister. He can be bad for himself, but for me he is good!”



^[10] From the anecdotes of Stephen of Bourbon (1250-1261) in *Testimonia Minora*, 93-94, included in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume 2*, edited by Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Vayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New York City Press, 2000), 787-788.

- St. Teresa of Avila advocated practicing gratitude: “It is necessary . . . to strive not to be ungrateful. . . . how can people benefit and share their gifts lavishly if they do not understand that they are rich?”^[9]
- (In Pope John Paul II’s life, we see him actively giving thanks for everything which helped him become priest, then bishop, then Pope. In all he did, he was continually thanking God. This gratitude fueled him to give himself completely for others. See story below.)

[9] Teresa of Avila, “Autobiography,” in *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila, Volume 1*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1987), 10.6.



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OPTIONAL CLOSING READING

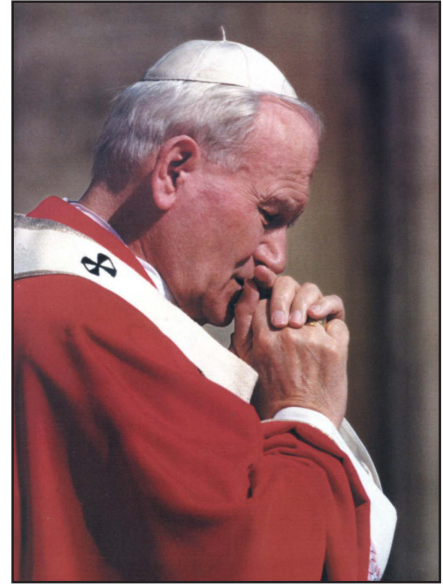
POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II (1920-2005)

The Pope is a bishop and a bishop has the fullness of the priesthood. Sometimes we forget that the vocation of the Pope is ultimately the same vocation of the priesthood. Pope Saint John Paul II can teach us much about the priesthood.

In *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*, St. John Paul II tells of first learning that he would be made a bishop. Here he shows how much his own vocation depended on the goodness of other people. He speaks of gratitude to the monastery which provided him a place to pray. He is grateful to the bishops who came before him: “how could I fail to be moved by this heroic spiritual heritage?” He is grateful for the happiness of working with other priests. He continues: “the Eucharist [is] linked with the vocation to the priesthood and the episcopate by a bond so strong and deep that it constantly reveals new riches to our grateful hearts.”^[11]

He was always showing gratitude for the priceless gift of life, the Faith, and each human experience, even suffering. In 1994 after he broke his hip, he said, “Through Mary I would like to express my gratitude today for this gift of suffering.... I am grateful for this gift. I have understood that it is a necessary gift... the Pope has to suffer, so that every family and the world may see that there is, I would say, a higher Gospel: the Gospel of suffering by which the future is prepared, the third millennium of families, of every family and of all families.”^[12]

St. John Paul II saw that his own vocation was a gift; it was the fruit of other people living out their vocations. Inspired with gratitude, St. John Paul II welcomed every opportunity to live



his vocation for other vocations. Practicing gratitude helped him take his place in the great chain of salvation, and it gave him humility and the strength to give himself completely to God and to the world.

^[11] John Paul II, *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*, translated by Walter Ziemba (New York: Time Warner Book Group, 2004).

^[12] See 29 May 1994 Trinity Sunday Angelus message (in Italian) at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/angelus/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19940529_it.html



HOMEWORK

YOU DIOCESAN VOCATION OFFICE WEBSITE

Research and write about the Vocation Office website for your diocese. Answer the questions below.

1. What is the web address for your diocesan vocations website? Does it have its own website or is it part of the main diocesan site?
2. Who is the diocesan Director of Vocations, and how can he be contacted?
3. Does the website offer information about just priestly vocations, or is there information on other vocations as well?
4. Describe some of the sections and subsections of the website. Does it have a FAQ section? Interviews with priests or religious? Prayers? Links? Tips for discernment? If so, what? If links, links to what?
5. What information is given for anyone who might want to look into a priestly vocation? What should he do first?
6. What was something that caught your eye or seemed interesting in this website? Write about this—what was it, why did it get your attention, what did you learn from it?

