

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

VOCATIONS FOR PARISH PRIESTS...

A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to speak with the vocation director here in the Archdiocese of New York, a very fine young priest by the name of Father Christopher Argano. Father Argano who is from Staten Island, attended Msgr. Farrell High School and went on to Saint Joseph's Seminary and was ordained a priest in 2008. The job of vocation director is to try to recruit new priests for the Church.

When I saw him on that particular day I said, "You probably have the toughest assignment in the whole diocese now!" He laughed and agreed that after this past year in the church, it's not easy to ask men to consider a vocation to the priesthood. Yet surprisingly enough, Father Argano mentioned that the numbers of men expressing interest in the priesthood and applying for the seminary are up. That certainly is a good sign despite all the troubles in the Church. We need good holy priests who will renew the Church and bring the light of Christ to a troubled world.

On this Sunday, August 4th, we celebrate the Feast of Saint John Vianney. He is the patron saint of diocesan priests. John Vianney, who was born in France in 1786, became a priest at a very difficult time in the Church as well. For forty one years, Father Vianney ministered at the small parish of Ars in France. He was not eloquent or a scholar but the love of God burned brightly within him.

Through prayer, fasting and incredible labor, John Vianney succeeded in converting his parish from worldly ways to the way of Christ and the gospel. His chief ministry in the parish, besides saying the Mass was the sacrament of penance. Fr. John heard confessions for sixteen hours a day and people flocked from all over France to confess their sins. So you see that simple parish priest can do a great deal of good and even be canonized!

Shortly before we were ordained priests, our class met with the late Cardinal John O'Connor. He spoke to each one of us privately in his room. As I was getting up to leave, the Cardinal turned to me and said, "You know, I envy you!" I had to ask "Why?" He explained the reason: "Because you are going to be a regular parish priest and really that's all I ever wanted to be!" Life had led him in a different direction.

One time Pope John XXIII gave an audience for priests at the Vatican. One priest said, "Holy Father, I am the Vicar General of my diocese! (A high post). The Pope complimented him. Another priest mentioned that he was the principal of a school and one more said, "I am a canon lawyer." The Pope nodded appreciatively. The next priest on the line though said, "Your Holiness, all I am is a simple parish priest!" The Pope then embraced the man and said, "that is the best job of all!"

Yes, the Pope was right-being a parish priest is the 'best job of all.' The parish is where "the action" is. A dedicated and holy priest can do that work.

This is where you "come in" as they say. Why not say a "Hail Mary" or even a rosary for vocations? How about making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and ask our Blessed Lord to raise more workers to send into the vineyard? Despite so much "gloom and doom" in the past year, let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who certainly can do all things!

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*