

This Vocation Business

The thought comes to mind after reading three recent letters from alumni and old students regarding vocations to the priesthood that perhaps not enough is said about this matter during undergraduate days. There is a sermon on vocations every year and there is a novena for vocations, but the few Bulletins devoted to the subject may not be enough. Perhaps the Bulletin has leaned over backward to avoid giving any impression that you are being "roped in."

The whole matter can be put simply enough: if you have a desire to serve God in the Priesthood or the religious life and have the necessary qualifications, go ahead. It comes down largely to a matter of whether or not you have the desire; the qualifications of mental, moral, and physical fitness are judged much more easily. They may be summarized thus:

Mental--the ability to make the grade in studies;

Moral--the ability to avoid mortal sin, at least for the future, and a spirit of faith that will make for progress in virtue;

Physical--a body strong enough and well enough to stand the strain of a rather exacting life, both in the seminary and later in priestly work.

Now what is this desire? Many boys will worry along for years with this sort of desire: "I would be a priest if I thought I had a vocation." That's about as close to a "vocation" as anything can be. It rarely happens that God gives such a direct call as he did to St. Matthew or St. Paul; the history of "vocation" in the Church, on the contrary, contains singular instances of great saints whose "vocations" seemed far from being the work of the Holy Ghost. An extraordinary "vocation" is always a bit under suspicion: they tell of a young man who spent some time in the seminary here who made it known that he got a "vocation" when a barrel of sugar fell on him. Needless to say, he did not last long.

To get down to facts, the "desire" is desire to live as close as possible to Our Blessed Lord in this life, coupled with a practical willingness to give up any worldly objects or attractions that would interfere with the fulfillment of that desire. The layman's union with God through the Sacraments and prayer has many worldly allurements to overcome, and it can never, of course, reach the fruition that is the priest's. He can transform bread and wine into the Body and Precious Blood of Our Lord and Saviour; he holds the key to the tabernacle; he is strictly "at home" in the House of God; he alone knows the great joy of restoring a scarlet sinner to the embrace of God; he can truly make it a joy to die.

This desire is normally the fruit of a good Catholic life. If it comes suddenly during a Mission or Forty Hours it needs a good testing-out. The desire should be submitted to the judgement of a prudent priest, under whose direction the subject will proceed cautiously and wisely. The practical step to take is to go ahead when the director approves. Enter a seminary. It's giving God a chance. It's the honest way to set your mind at rest. If you do not belong, you will find it out, and you will always have the satisfaction of knowing that you did your best for God. There is a class preparing to enter the Novitiate here in June; if you feel the urge to enter, talk to a priest about it without delay. (A reprint).

PRAYERS: (Ill) brother of John Worthington (Lyons), polio, Six Special Intentions.

NOVENA FOR VOCATIONS BEGINS TOMORROW. CUT OUT AND SAY PRAYERS IN FRIDAY BULLETIN.