

**HOMILY**  
***Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time***  
***February 5-6, 2022***

I want to ask all of the single boys and men in the congregation to stand. These are the potential priests in our congregation today. The Gospel Reading today is about Jesus calling three of the apostles: Peter, James and John. I want to take this opportunity to talk about vocations to the diocesan priesthood, and I want to start by talking a little about my own vocation. I grew up in an all white Catholic neighborhood, and I lived a half a block from the church. It was a new neighborhood and a new parish and a new school; and that is why the majority of the people bought houses there. I went through 12 years of Catholic school. The majority of the teachers were religious sisters and brothers. I had a lot of contact with priests as well, and they were all positive experiences. They were all good role models. I was an altar server, and I sang in the choir. I was at church a lot growing up. People used to say, "You are going to be a priest some day." At that young age, I never thought much about it. When I got into high school, my world was looking pretty small. When I was 15, I got a job at a movie theatre and had non-Catholic friends for the first time in my life. I went to college at Wayne State University where the student population was very diverse, and I took a wide variety of classes. When I got my degree in psychology, I took a job working at a state agency with disabled people, and my service area was downtown Detroit. Again my world opened up to the poor and the disabled and I loved it; but I knew I would not be doing this for the rest of my life. Getting married and having a family did not seem quite right to me at that point. I was more interested in education and work. I got a masters degree in guidance and counseling, and then I went to law school. When I passed the bar, I took a job at one of the largest law firms in Michigan. For the first time in my life, I hated my job. I did not like the competitive environment. I had the potential to make a lot of money and did not care. I was doing medical malpractice defense representing the hospital's interests. My clients were hospital attorneys, and I did not feel I was helping anybody. One of the partners found out I was Catholic and continuously made fun of Catholics. For the first time in my life, I felt that I had to defend my faith. I worked at that firm for six months, and it was a terrible experience; but it clarified all of my values. It was at this point that I started thinking about the priesthood; and it took me several years, but here I am.

Now, I would like to talk to all of the single men in the congregation between the ages of 25 and 40. These

are the individuals who are about the age that men start seminary. Most of the men I was in seminary with that went on to ordination had at least a bachelor degree and had worked several years. We have to get our young adults back to church if we are going to have vocations to the priesthood. No one is going to go to seminary if they are not even coming to church.

We are going to start feeling the priest shortage now. I am spread pretty thin; and, at this point, if I am going to start doing anything new, I have to stop doing something that I am doing now. In one and a half years, one of the pastors in our Family of Parishes is going to retire. A priest may or may not be assigned to our Family of Parishes; but for that to happen; another parish will lose their priest. There are no extra priests. If I have to take over running another parish, I will be much less present at St. Edith. I have talked to a number of parents who have told me that they will not encourage their sons to be priests because they want their sons to give them grandchildren. Maybe you need to rethink that. Your children are listening to you when you make career suggestions whether you know that or not.

In order to be a diocesan priest, you have to be a follower of Jesus Christ, you have to be spiritual and you have to like working in a parish. The ministry of a priest is so diverse that you can use any charisms that you have. You hire people to do the things that you are not very good at. Administration is not one of my charisms, so I hired a fabulous building and maintenance manager, a great bookkeeper and I have great volunteers on my Finance Council that I depend upon. I have never made less money or worked as hard in my life, but I have never been more fulfilled or had more joy in my life. I have come to realize that happiness, joy and fulfillment do not come from material possessions or personal achievements. It only comes from how we love and serve others, and you can certainly do that in the diocesan priesthood. I have never been sorry that I did not get married and have children. I have thousands of people who call me father. I am not lonely, in fact, I sometimes do not get enough alone time. Being a priest is what gets me out of bed every morning, most mornings looking forward to my day. I have never been sorry that I became a priest, not even for a minute.

Love & Peace,  
Fr. Jim