

– January 2024 Edition –

HEAR *His* VOICE

**“In the silence of the heart God
speaks.”** *Mother Teresa*

GENUFLECTOR
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THE MAGAZINE



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The background is a dark, textured image of a stained glass window. It features a religious scene with a man, likely a saint, holding a young child. The man has a beard and is wearing a white garment with a dark collar. The child is wearing a pink garment with a gold cross on the chest. The stained glass has various colors including blue, red, and gold, with leaded glass patterns.

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Welcome back to another edition of the Genuflector Catholic magazine and another year for us as we continue our spiritual journey with you.

Jack (Editor-in-Chief)

Don't Miss His Voice

During my first Christmas break in college I had decided that I was going to go to daily mass morning at my parish, which meant getting up early pretty much every weekday. I almost always went to the 9AM mass, which meant getting up around 8:20 AM, but sometimes I went to the 8:00 AM mass, which meant getting up around 7:20 AM. So pretty much every weekday I was getting up early, which even though wasn't always the best, I didn't have much of a problem with, because it meant I was going to mass and that I was getting a good sleep schedule going, since my first semester sleep schedule went crazy. I mean one day in my first semester I would get up at 8:30 in the morning and the next day at 12 in the afternoon, so needless to say, having a little bit of structure felt good, and it also meant I was going to bed extremely late.

But come Saturday, which was the only day during the Christmas break I truly planned to sleep in, I wanted to sleep in. My thought process was kinda of two reasons. First, I was thinking I need to have one day over break where it really, really seems like a vacation. Second, I thought even priests get one day off a week. So I really did my best to make it so I could sleep in Saturday. But because we were going to always go to mass on Sunday morning, the only day to go out to breakfast at the diner, something we did all the time before I went to school, would be Saturdays. But as maybe I should have expected a little more, I slept in on Saturday, sleeping well through the breakfast hour. When I woke up I asked my mom why she didn't wake me up and she said she wanted to let me sleep. But that didn't really matter. What mattered really was that I slept in, and now half the day was gone. And half a day of a break as any student knows is a big deal.

But it is this idea of missing something, especially something that can be easily missed, that I think is really important. I so easily slept through the morning, really without knowing that I even missed breakfast, until I eventually woke up and realized what time it was and realized my stomach was growling for overpriced eggs Benedict. In some ways, I would never have known if I missed it or not hadn't I not woken up and looked at the time. This is how the voice of God is, this is how Christ calls each and everyone of us. He doesn't force us into anything, and for most of us, Christ's voice and His call in our lives won't be a massive seismic event, rather His voice will only speak in the silence, when we can remove the massive distractions we face.

When I was in high school the promo they had for the lunch-hour adoration, which was basically like this 15 minute adoration and gospel proclamation before every lunch period, was a video that shows snippets of the madness of the school day (yelling kids, sports during gym class, the volume of the cafeteria, etc.), all of which was extremely loud. Then the promo drowned out all the noise and panned to a kid in adoration in the chapel, where it was absolutely silent excluding the deep breath the kid makes. The noise is gone, the distractions are eliminated, and all that remains was the kid and God, the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. And by eliminating all the noise and distracting, the kid could truly listen to God's voice in the silence, He could hear the silence. That is the only way to hear God's voice.

Think about the gospel for a second: Jesus goes to Peter, or really Simon at the time, and says simply: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." It says then that Peter and Andrew "abandoned their nets and followed him." Think about that for a second in the modern world. Lets imagine that instead of fisherman, Peter and Andrew were two New York guys on the street and some guy, who didn't look rich or official, comes up to them and said something on the lines of "follow me and I will make you great," because that is really what Jesus was saying – he was saying he would take them from lowly fishermen and make them fishers of men, meaning they would save souls. But back to the modern example – the two guys on the street would think the guy its nuts and either ignore him or start an altercation (I can say this because I am from New York). It would have been so easy for Peter and Andrew to not even listen to Jesus, let alone care about what he has to say. They could have really easily missed the voice of God; they could have really easily missed Christ's calling for their life. The distractions and the noise could have easily caused them to miss Him, just like I missed breakfast. I missed breakfast because I was so focused on sleeping and getting rest that I didn't set an alarm. I missed breakfast because it was just that easy to miss, and the distractions were just too prevalent. But the apostles didn't miss His voice. They ignored the worldly distractions and heard His voice yelling to them in the silence. They heard Him in the complete silence.

When I was younger, for the few weeks before Labor Day, I would go visit my grandparents and family in Minnesota, without my parents, to get some alone time with them, since I didn't see them very much at all. It was my time to relax with my cousins and grandparents and enjoy the Minnesotan summer, which was surprisingly warm. One of my cousins was always at my grandparents house, as when he was very young, I think really since he was born, my grandmother watched him, so he became accustomed to being there everyday. Often times in the lull of the summer days I was there we would sit in the sun room or something and relax and I will always remember that he had his iPad and large headphones. And my grandma would call to him from another room, whether it be from the kitchen or living room, and he wouldn't respond. She would yell to him again, and he didn't respond. It would eventually take someone going over to him and nudging him for him to get his face off of the iPad and to listen. Now I don't know whether the volume was really that loud or whether he was just ignoring us, but either way, he

wasn't listening, and he didn't know what he was missing. My grandmother could have been yelling to him because she needed help cleaning or because she wanted to give him a gift. But because he didn't listen, he didn't know.

And really that is once again the essence of God's voice in our lives. Sometimes we don't hear him because we don't want to, other times it is because we aren't listening. Either way it is because of the distractions, it is because of the barriers we have set up in our lives to avoid listening to Him and His voice. And we never know what we are missing. Among many differences between the voice of God and the voice of my grandma yelling at my cousin is an important one: whenever we miss God's voice we miss something that is important and good for us.

God is always speaking to us, but it is always in the silence of our hearts. When our hearts are distracted by the noise and distractions of the world, we become unable to truly listen to Him, to truly hear his plan for our lives.

Peter wasn't a perfect man, and we know that clearly from the gospel. He denied Jesus three times, after Jesus literally told him he would. But he did teach us a lot of things, and one of those things is to listen and to trust. Peter listened. He didn't ignore or set Jesus aside. Rather, Peter listened to the voice of God and knew exactly what He was saying to him. When we truly hear Jesus' voice, there is no uncertainty. There are no guesses or questions, but only joy. Peter followed because he heard Christ's voice and knew that Christ is the only thing that would truly bring him joy.

We need to seek the silence, and in many ways embrace the silence. We need to follow the silence into the unknown and thereby open our hearts to the voice of Jesus Christ. When we do this, we hear Him, but more importantly, we hear the joy. We don't miss the goodness and joy he longs to bring to our hearts. We don't miss his loving arms trying to embrace us.

It is in the silence that joy is poured out on our hearts. It is in the silence that God comforts us. It is in the silence that God calls us out by name and says **"Well done, my good and faithful servant."**



Pray for Vocation Encouragement

Let us be clear, with no hidden agendas or misleading statements: we are in a vocations crisis in many dioceses in the country, especially some of our larger ones! Vocations to the diocesan priesthood seem to become more and more rare in some parts of the country as the years go on, and many truly do question the future of the Church and its ability to maintain relevance in modern society and culture.

While all of those are adequate concerns, one can not let them dominate their spiritual life or hope in the Church. In a 1969 German Broadcast, Pope Benedict prophesied this about the Church: From the crisis of today the Church of tomorrow will emerge — a Church that has lost much. “She will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning.”

Clearly Pope Benedict saw the movement of the people and society, even back in 1969. People were becoming less and less religious, and the rise of purely cultural religion made itself known. Many of the families that were still going to mass only did so to check a box or to show to the rest of their neighbors they were Catholic. Atheism was starkly increasing, although not as much as it is seen today, and divisive cultural movements were on the rise. Ratzinger saw the destructive natures of these movements on the Church and knew that of course they would be harmful to the Church and its overarching mission. But there is something absolutely crucial to point out from Pope Benedict’s prophecy: he never said the Church would die or that it would cease to exist, rather he acknowledged that the Church would become small, but that the small Church that remains would become on fire with spirit and devotion and would work to rebuild and re-evangelize, and bring the world back to Jesus Christ and back to their original message which is to save souls.

And this is where the role of the ministerial priest comes in, the instruments of Christ to bring souls back to Him. Priests are the picture to the world that the Church isn’t dead and will never be dead, it becomes small, but never dead. Priests show the world that they trust, as we all should, in the promise of the Lord that as the founder of the Church, Jesus Christ will preserve it. Priests show the world what true devotion means, what true faith, hope, love, and trust truly mean. Priests bring the sacraments to the faithful, empowering the faithful to bring Jesus Christ to the world as part of our mission to grow the Church and bring our society back to the loving arms of Christ.

And because of this crucial role of priests in the Church, you will often hear many people pray for vocations, or pray that God sends more men to the priesthood. But there is one problem with this: It isn't like God is purposely sending less and less priests, and that God is reluctant to send men to His priesthood. Rather, it is the reluctance of our society to encourage and foster vocations in young men, and some reluctance on their part to answer it.

Many young men fear what it means when they answer the call of the Lord. Will they have enough money, will they be happy without a wife and kids, will they truly be content in service to the Church? And these are real questions, but they are also questions a man will come to answer through his discernment. Often men will immediately rule out the priesthood, even if they may feel a call, because they are nervous about the very things just mentioned. But those things, if one is truly called to the priesthood by God, will no longer be seen as obstacles, but rather gifts from the Lord. The call to the priesthood is ultimately a beautiful thing, something that should be cherished.

But the reluctance and dismissal isn't all of the part of the young men. Society has almost completely eliminated the idea of a man entering a priesthood, meaning that the idea of being a priest has such bad connotations by many ignorant members of our society that for that reason alone men avoid it. But beyond that, some of this crisis lies with Catholic families. Many Catholic families never discuss, let alone promote priestly vocations in their households, something both disappointing, and in some ways, shocking.

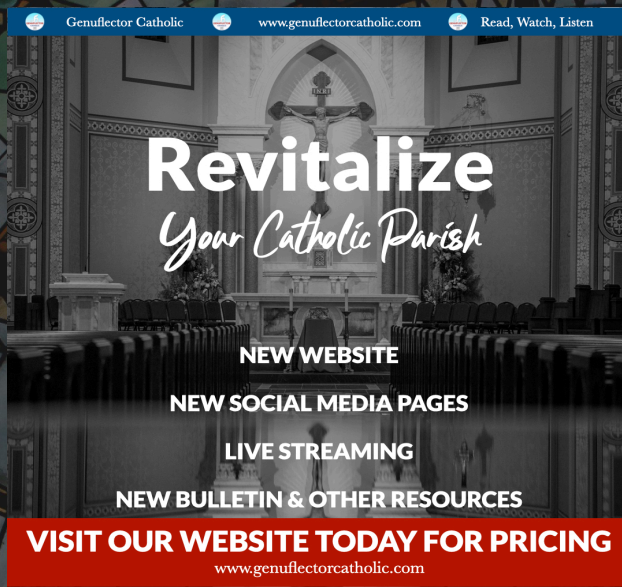
Catholic families have the obligation to pray for vocations, but they must further promote vocations to the priesthood to their children, and encourage them if their child expresses a call or interest. Parents need to realize the beauty of their son becoming a priest, and get beyond the fears that may present a barrier for their son.

In this world where we desperately need priests, we need to of course foster REAL vocations, rather than people who are looking for a way to escape society, but we need to encourage vocations around the world and keep the fire and spirit alive in the church, which is only possible through a wave of young men dedicating themselves to the Church and to Jesus Christ, which is truly the definition of the priesthood: dedication and service to Jesus Christ.

Let us pray of course for vocations, but more importantly, let us pray for an encouragement for vocations, and an openness and willingness on behalf of men to accept the call God has placed in their heart.



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