

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners:

This Saturday, May 22nd, thirty-four of our young parishioners were confirmed by Bishop Holley. Their preparation to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation began last September. Since that time their teachers and catechists have worked with them to see that they have a good grasp of their Catholic faith. We hope that they will remember what we taught them for the rest of their lives. However, if they can't, it is my prayer that they will at least remember that the Lord has a wonderful plan for each of our lives. It is in embracing His plan, His call for us that we find our happiness. A few years back I found the following reflection on the meaning of Christian vocation by Father Leo Troese in his book, *Seventeen Steps to Heaven*. Whenever I read it I find it inspiring. I hope that you will too.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

Live always to fulfill God's plan for you.

This conviction as to the purposefulness of our lives is what we call the Christian sense of vocation. It is the awareness that we are called to fill a special spot in this world and to be a unique object of God's love, both here and hereafter. It is the vivid, day-to-day realization that we matter to God; that we are not just one of several billion souls tossed off by God in an absent-minded moment of creativity; that we have an individual importance to God and that God has a personal, intense, almost anxious interest in us.

Our Christian vocation imposes on us the obligation to justify God's love for us, God's hopes for us. We do so when we try, day by day, to do God's will to the best of our ability. This means that we make God's will our compass, the norm and the guide of our lives. **In all our decisions and in all our choices, "what God would want me to do," must take precedence over "what I would like to do."**

This unswerving attachment to God's will also is what justifies God's choice of us for His work. We rarely know what the particular job is for which God has chosen us—a job that no one else could do quite as well as we. It may be a certain person whom God can reach with His grace only through us. It may be some chain of events that only we can initiate or some evil that only we can avert.

In most instances, we shall not know, until eternity, what particular task it was for which we — and we alone — were best fitted. This is another and urgent reason why we must strive, day after day, to do God's will in little things as well as in big things. We do not know which of our actions will be our exclusive and essential contribution to God's plan, or which of our words will be the fateful words upon which God is depending.

We know only that we must face each day and each moment as though *this* were the day and this the moment. Otherwise we run the risk of failing God in the one thing that so greatly determined His choice of us; and in failing God, we shall fail ourselves.

Our Christian vocation carries responsibility, but it has its compensations, too. One such compensation is the wholesome feeling of personal worth that should be mine. **If I am important to God, I am indeed an important person.** Other people may not rate me very highly. My talents may be quite limited, and to those who know me, I may be just an average sort of person. My job may be a relatively humble one, and I may be tempted to feel inferior as I see others around me making their mark in the world. Then I remember that money, position, and popularity — all the yardsticks by which the world measures success — are to God

nothing more than a child's playthings. Eventually they must be cast aside and left behind.

In the meantime, if I am in a state of grace and am following God's will as my road through life, then every least action of mine has an everlasting value. However lowly the world may esteem me, every breath I draw is precious to God. Speaking again in human terms, God made me because He needs me. There is something that has to be done that only I can do. What greater personal worth could there be than to be needed by God? It matters little that I do not know the nature of my essential role in God's plan. It is enough to know that I am as valuable to God as the most distinguished person the world has ever acclaimed.

It would not be humility — it would be a belittling of God's wisdom and goodness — to pretend that I do not amount to much, that my life is meaningless, that I would never have been missed if I had not been born. It is just true that apart from God I am nothing. It is quite true that God's love has made me great. To admit this is to do simple justice to God. I must never surrender to the temptation to think, "I am no good. I am a failure."

From my sense of Christian vocation there follows another effect: freedom from serious worry. If I really believe that God loves me with an infinite love (as He does) and that He wants what is best for me (as He does), I cannot worry very long or very intensely. God is infinitely wise; He always knows what is best. God is infinitely powerful; He can accomplish anything He wishes. So how can I go wrong, how can I lose, as long as I try to do my best with such talents and knowledge as God has given Me?

I cannot exaggerate God's love for me, God's care for me. He loves me a hundred times, a thousand times more than I love myself. I am never out of His mind or His attention. And it is not my happiness only in the next life that interests God — that most of all, of course. But, just as Jesus had compassion on the hungry multitude and worked a miracle to feed them, so, too, is God concerned with my happiness here and now. Being human, I cannot escape suffering or dismiss worry completely. But, understanding God's urgent love for me, His concern for me, I will never be crushed by suffering or defeated by worry. God loves me. His love enfolds me — let us dare to say it — in a hungry embrace. If I lose God, it will be because I have willfully rejected Him, never because He has cast me off. **God loves me. This is the whole reason for my existence. Upon my understanding and grasp of this fact my whole spiritual life must be built.**

from *Seventeen Steps to Heaven* by Fr. Leo Troese
(Sophia Institute Press, 2001)