



The Living Word

Follow

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The Gospel for the 10th Sunday of the Year is taken from Matthew 9, verses 9-13.

Our Lord asked Matthew simply to "follow Me." Matthew responded without hesitation. He got up from his office (he was a tax collector) and left all things to answer his Master's bidding.

Often a young man or woman with a vocation is tempted to put things off, "I'll wait until I finish college," one might think, "or perhaps work for a few years, or get a taste of the world." Chances are the call of God will grow more and more faint, as the noise of activity and attachment to worldly interests grows stronger.

There is a parallel here in the call of Christ for a sinner to repent, to put one's house in order, perhaps after years of neglect. Grace works through the things around us. Sometimes a clear call to penance comes on the occasion of a death in the family or through a personal bout with illness, often through the inspiration of something we read or hear, or the good example from a heroic soul. God's call is strong at these times, but we must act promptly, or else His pleading, His offer of mercy may fall upon deaf ears.

To get back to the subject of a call to religious life, one cannot help but notice that the number of applicants to our seminaries and novitiates has diminished considerably over the past decade. The Church is suffering from a shortage of priests and sisters. One must assume that an all-wise Creator has called sufficient numbers to preach His Gospel, administer the sacraments, staff our Catholic schools and missions. He has chosen enough young people to join a life of dedicated service. Why then has only a fractional number answered His call?

Perhaps the gentle call of Christ to follow Him is confused with self-seeking and personal fulfillment. One must not look upon a vocation from the viewpoint of "what will I get out of it?" Religious life is an act of love, an act of surrender to the Will of God. It is not always clear in what direction the hand of God will lead us. Certainly a man and woman entering the state of marriage cannot foresee what the future will bring. But having surrendered to each other's love and the love of God, they let the pages of their lives unfold, confident that divine assistance will strengthen them.

In a religious vocation, if we truly love, we really don't care what the consequences will be. It may lead to a crowning of thorns, or even to Calvary itself. Certainly Matthew didn't weigh the pros and the cons. It was enough that the Master called.

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