A FUTURE *full of*
HOPE

EVERY ENCOUNTER
WITH CHRIST,
WHO IN SACRAMENTS
GIVES US SALVATION,
INVITES US TO "GO"
& COMMUNICATE
TO OTHERS

THE SALVATION
THAT WE HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO SEE,
TO TOUCH,
TO ENCOUNTER
& TO RECEIVE
& WHICH IS
TRULY CREDIBLE
BECAUSE IT IS
LOVE.

Pope Francis

MISSION
+++
PRAYER
COMMUNION

A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE
CLIFTON DIOCESE

CLIFTON DIOCESE

God knows me and calls me by my name....
God has created me to do Him some definite service;
He has committed some work to me
which He has not committed to another.
I have my mission—I never may know it in this life,
but I shall be told it in the next.

Somehow I am necessary for His purposes...
I have a part in this great work;
I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection
between persons.
He has not created me for naught. I shall do good,
I shall do His work;
I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth
in my own place, while not intending it,
if I do but keep His commandments
and serve Him in my calling.

Therefore I will trust Him.
Whatever, wherever I am,
I can never be thrown away.
If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him;
In perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him;
If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.
My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be
necessary causes of some great end,
which is quite beyond us.
He does nothing in vain; He may prolong my life,
He may shorten it;
He knows what He is about.
He may take away my friends,
He may throw me among strangers,
He may make me feel desolate,
make my spirits sink, hide the future from me -
still He knows what He is about....
Let me be Thy blind instrument. I ask not to see -
I ask not to know - I ask simply to be used.

ST JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

from *Meditations and Devotions*, "Meditations on Christian Doctrine,"
"Hope in God—Creator", March 7, 1848

VOCATIONS

WHAT IS VOCATION?

Pope St John Paul II reminded us that 'Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.' This innate vocation grows in the life of the Christian who 'walks in the path of a living faith which arouses hope and works through charity.' As they walk in this path, people hear God calling them into discipleship, a living relationship with the person of Christ, a call that has three dimensions:

The universal call to holiness: God the Father calls people to listen to his Son, to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and to live as disciples of Christ.

The call to a way of life: a Christian disciple expresses their faith, hope and love through living as a consecrated person, an ordained minister or a lay person, in the married or single state.

The call to work: God calls people to many different kinds of work, ranging from paid work to care of family members. Work on its own does not give meaning to life however; it is human beings who make work meaningful. 'Work constitutes one of the fundamental dimensions of a person's earthly existence and of their vocation.'

The distinctive way that a person integrates all three elements expresses the irreplaceable person God is calling them to be. By the grace of God, a Christian is enabled to live out this unique vocation. In the words of Blessed John Henry Newman 'God has created me to do Him some definite service.'

VOCATIONS IN THE CLIFTON DIOCESE

Clifton Diocese is always seeking to encourage each one of us to consider more deeply how God is calling us to serve. The Vocations Ministry of the diocese seeks to promote vocations and is always happy to come and talk to parishes and schools or other groups about this.

Fr Colin Mason is Vocations Director for Clifton Diocese. He is Parish Priest of the Sacred Heart and St Antony's, Bristol, and has a strong focus on promoting vocations within the diocese. He leads a Vocations team that encourages and supports vocations to the priesthood, the religious life, the consecrated lay life and single life, and to the Permanent Diaconate. The vocation to the married life is encouraged and fostered separately within the Diocese.

A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE
CLIFTON DIOCESE

FR COLIN MASON,
VOCATIONS DIRECTOR

A personal reflection

I would never have become a Catholic priest if it were not for three other priests who all had a remarkable influence on my life.

The first was Fr Pat O'Donoghue (later to be Bishop of Lancaster) at Westminster Cathedral when I was a student at UCL. He strongly encouraged me both during my university years and in the subsequent years. Bishop Patrick died just recently.

The second was Fr Jim Duffy, a Westminster priest, who had a pronounced influence on the course of my life and who was always encouraging and supportive … and offered a wise ear after I became a priest myself. Fr Jim died suddenly a few months ago.

The final person, who had the most direct and decisive influence, was my home parish priest, Fr George O'Sullivan, in Malmesbury. He almost 'ordered' me to apply to the diocese. I had the unique privilege of assisting him at the altar as he offered his final public Mass shortly before his death. He wanted nothing more than to die 'in harness' as the parish priest at St Aldhelm's. God granted him his wish.

All three provided a gentle model of priestly ministry based on service, pastoral care, and fidelity. They gave a living example and witness of diocesan priesthood. But all three knew that words of encouragement and advice are also needed. All three were not hesitant to tell people that they had a vocation.

Having listened to other people's vocation stories over the years, I have noted just how often vocations are seeded by a human word – a word of encouragement from another person in the Church. God works through members of the Church; the divine uses human instruments. The divine Word uses the human word to communicate a calling.

Fr Colin has a focus on vocations promotion and discernment for the diocesan priesthood. He will be happy to answer any questions or to help those who wish to explore and discern a possible calling to service as a priest in the Clifton Diocese.

FR DOMINIC FINDLAY-WILSON,
ASSISTANT VOCATIONS DIRECTOR

A personal reflection

It's very difficult to put into words one's vocation as to a certain extent it's a mystery! And also it's something that is quite dynamic and so it's sometimes hard to pinpoint definite times and places that concretely contribute towards its growth.

I think if I am honest it has always been there below the surface whether or not I realised it. A bit like a dormant seed waiting to be watered.

But I know that certain factors have been important in allowing the seed to germinate. For example my family. The strong faith of my parents allowed a rich soil in which the seedling could take root. Regular family prayer watered the seedling and allowed it to grow – in particular the rosary.

Personal prayer, regular Mass and the sacraments strengthened the young plant. Good friends and particular priests helped to support it during difficult times. But I noticed it grew stronger when I listened to and responded to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in my life. This is not easy in the noise and busyness of life. I had to listen with my heart.

I think that whilst I recognised the presence of my vocation in the end the Holy Spirit wanted me to choose for it rather than wait until it felt right. I think God really wants us to get to know him and then freely choose for him. Ultimately I realised that this was actually the most meaningful thing I could ever do with my life.

Fr Dominic has a particular focus on supporting our current students for the priesthood who are in formation in our seminaries.

SARAH ADAMS,
DIRECTOR OF ADULT EDUCATION & EVANGELISATION

A personal reflection

It was on a hot June afternoon, that a very troubled little person changed my life. I was a teacher to a young boy of ten in a school for children who had been excluded from their main-stream school. When I first knew James his only way of communicating with me was to swear profusely, kick, punch and spit at me. He refused to do any work, but I liked him. There was something about his determination to alienate me that said, 'don't give up on me.'

His story is a long and painful one, but gradually over the year James started to grow in some sense of his own worthiness. A school trip to Wales, was a turning point for him and for me. On the last day we went to Caldey Island. As soon as we were off the boat the children were free to run. But James didn't. Instead he walked alongside me holding my hand. It was a tender gesture with no aggression and no telling me where to go! In that moment I had a profound experience that I was walking with Christ. In that moment my eyes were opened, and for the first time I really understood. The Gospel became real.

This experience has never left me but has continued to guide and nourish, especially when I am struggling to hear God's voice. I continue to journey in faith, committed to living a life of integrity rooted in the Gospel. As a single person it is not always easy to see my life as a vocation. Vocation in the Church tends to be tied up with priesthood, diaconate, religious life or married life. It is difficult to discern if one is called to the single life, but it is possible to live it fruitfully, faithfully and truthfully, enriched by prayer and the inclusive friendships that strengthen and encourage. *Names changed.*

Sarah promotes vocations to the consecrated lay life and to the single life, and she is very happy to answer questions in these areas.

SISTER MARIA,
MONASTERY OF OUR LADY AND ST BERNARD, BROWNSHILL

A personal reflection

I'm on a faith journey as a religious sister, searching daily for the Lord who loves me as I am and invites me to an ever-deeper relationship. I first felt in my heart, in my inner being, an attraction to the religious life at primary school. I used to think that this personal calling at such a young age was unusual, but not so when one listens to other vocation stories.

Looking back on my life, I had many opportunities. My parents practised their faith and celebrated the sacraments. I went to a secondary school where sisters taught, so I didn't have to search for role models.

I began to develop my relationship with Jesus in my final year at university, sharing a flat with a friend who took daily personal prayer seriously. I began to have places and times of stillness and silence where I encountered a real and living relationship with God in prayer.

After teaching for several years, during which time I continued to discern my calling by connecting with different religious communities, I joined a monastic order and after several years of formation, offered myself to God definitively as a Bernardine Cistercian sister.

The Lord loves each of us uniquely and calls us to life. I endeavour to discern and respond to the Father's will to be what I am and to become what God knows me to be and I do this in relationship with my community, within the Church and the world. Jesus continues to captivate my heart.

Reflection

- Get in touch with your inner longings, with your inner being and discover what is your deepest desire.
- Ask yourself what is life-giving for you. In what do you delight?

Sister Maria is able to help those men and women who are thinking of exploring a vocation to the religious life – i.e. to be a monk, nun, brother, or sister.

DEACON STEVE BOUGHTON

A personal reflection

I supressed my sense of vocation for years; God couldn't be talking to me and my life was very full thank you. Others were better equipped to answer the Lord's call, and I felt I was making it up anyway. What could the Lord possibly want with me? Vocation for me was rather like spiritual toothache; I could ignore it or grudgingly acknowledge and explore it, but either way it was still there, nagging away. As my faith became more active and more mine with age, it became clear to me that something else was being asked. A curiousness to clarify what I really believed personally was the catalyst for insatiable spiritual reading, expanding my understanding and finding time just to chat to God. I suppose I just had this sense of being called to help and to share, far beyond what I was doing and more than I could ever imagine. I was confused but open and the toothache just needed to be addressed one way or another. With a sense of fear and uncertainty, and convinced that I would be assessed as entirely unsuitable and unworthy anyway, I made a call to begin to test the urge and fear I was feeling. I couldn't really articulate anything definitive, just a sense of service and a need to share and explain the Gospel. I made the choice to step forward a baby step at a time and to allow others to judge if my vocation was real or imagined; gently, softly, the vocation emerged over time with the help of the many around me.

I am very different but just the same, I am things now I never imagined and have grown beyond what I felt possible. I am still husband, dad, son, employee but now permanent deacon too. Be open and comfortable with the discomfort, reach out and test what you feel.

Deacon Steve promotes vocations to the Permanent Diaconate within the Clifton Diocese and is willing to accompany men in their initial discernment of this path and calling.

PRAYERS FOR VOCATION

PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS

All Highest and Glorious God,
Cast your light into the darkness of my heart.
Grant me right faith, firm hope, perfect charity, profound humility,
with wisdom and perception, O Lord, so that I may always
and everywhere seek to know and do what is truly your holy will,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

PRAYER OF CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

Father,
I abandon myself into Your hands,
do with me what You will.
For whatever You may do, I thank You.
I am ready for all, I accept all,
let only Your will be done in me,
as in all Your creatures:
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into Your hands I commend my soul
I offer it to You with all the love of my heart.
For I love, You, my God,
and so need to give myself, to surrender myself
into Your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence,
for You are my Father.
Amen

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Lord Jesus, the ministry of priests is a sign of your unfailing care.
Call from among us the priests needed
for the Church of today and tomorrow.
Bless all students for the priesthood.
Grant them joy, wisdom, courage and a generous spirit.
Sustain priests with a real sense of your love
and the support of those they are called to serve.
Keep them faithful to their calling.
Amen

40TH WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS
BY POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mary, humble servant of God Most High,
the Son to whom you gave birth has made you the servant of humanity.
Your life was a humble and generous service.
You were servant of the Word
when the angel announced to you the divine plan of salvation.
You were servant of the Son,
giving him life and remaining open to his mystery.
You were servant of Redemption,
standing courageously at the foot of the Cross,
close to the Suffering Servant and Lamb,
who was sacrificing himself for love of us.
You were servant of the Church on the day of Pentecost
and with your intercession you continue to generate her in every believer,
even in our difficult and troubled times.
Let the young people of the third millennium look to you,
young daughter of Israel,
who have known the agitation of a young heart
when faced with the plan of the Eternal God.
Make them able to accept the invitation of your Son
to give their lives wholly for the glory of God.
Make them understand that to serve God satisfies the heart,
and that only in the service of God
and of his kingdom do we realise ourselves
in accordance with the divine plan,
and life becomes a hymn of glory to the Most Holy Trinity.
Amen

A MEMO TO MYSELF

I have a vocation from God.
If I already know what it is,
I pray to be faithful.
If I am still searching,
I pray to hear God's voice
and to respond generously.
Amen

A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE
CLIFTON DIOCESE

A PARENT'S PRAYER

Loving God, You have given us the privilege
as well as the responsibility of parenthood.
Guide us as we invite our children
to hear your call to service in the Church.
May they respond with deep faith
and generosity to the needs of others.
Help us to be a source of encouragement
by our own desire to be committed people
who serve with love and enthusiasm.
Amen

100 DAYS OF PRAYER

As we began this year, the National Office for Vocation decided to dedicate the first 100 days to prayer, celebrating our Church. This had a special focus on the saints of England and Wales, recognising and celebrating how their mission here on earth led to the ultimate call to Holiness. These prayers can be found here: http://www.ukvocation.org/?page_id=5106

National Office for Vocation
Helping people hear God's call

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS - VOCATIONS

https://www.catholicstudentnetwork.co.uk/vocations

YOUNG CATHOLIC ADULT NETWORK UK

YOUcan UC

We are working collaboratively with YOUcan
For all events, jobs and mission opportunities
for young Catholic adults in the UK.
Please check out their website
www.youngcatholicadultnetwork.uk
and follow on Instagram
youngcatholicadultnetworkuk

DIOCESAN PRAYER

God our Father,
open the horizons of our minds and hearts
so that we can see what hope your call holds for us.

Pour out the overflowing gifts of your Spirit
so that we, your Church,
may become a people of hope for our world.

We ask you this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Our Lady, Woman of Hope,
pray for us.

St Peter, Rock of Hope,
pray for us.

St Paul, Apostle of Hope,
pray for us.

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