

Rev. Donato Infante III  
Vocation Homily March 31, 2019

Earlier this month, *Captain Marvel* opened to \$455 million dollars worldwide, the sixth largest opening ever. I went. Look at that top ten list, almost all are stories about heroes. There is something within us that loves superheroes. Within each one of us is a desire to be great. That's why we love Tom Brady. He's the GOAT. It's why the rest of the country hates him: not because he is bad, but because they are envious. Envy is one of the seven deadly sins. Shame on them. It is good to look at Tom Brady and says, "Man, I wish I had that arm. He is so inspiring." It is good to say, "I wish I was as just and heroic and selfless as Batman." It is good to say, "I wish I had the resilience of Captain Marvel."

Greatness comes in many forms. Some of you look up to your parents, a teacher who changed your life, or a saint and say, "I want to be the greatest dad ever, like my dad was." Or something like that.

How was that opening? As many of you know, for the past year I have been assisting in the vocations office for our diocese as a vocation recruiter. It's a title I hate, as my job is not to twist people's arms into becoming priests. My role is to accompany people as they pray through what God is asking them to do with their life, "is God calling me to become a priest?" In my role, I get called upon to visit other parishes and speak about vocations or to visit Catholic schools. I've gotten pretty good at my stump speech. It normally opens with what you just heard, based on whatever superhero film has just come out or is about to come out.

Then, I always show a five minute video from the Knights of Columbus. It's on YouTube and it is about Father Chase Hilgenbrink, who used to play pro-soccer in Chile and then for the New England Revolution, and he talks about how he realized, at the top of his game, when he was at his greatest, there must be more to life than this. He went to pray and heard a small voice in his heart, "Be my priest." That was his vocation.

Now, not everyone who goes to ask God what they are to do hears that call. In fact, he could have heard a million different things. "Chase, marry the girl." "Chase, help at risk youth." "Chase, move home from Chile."

Down the centuries, God has been unfolding one great story, the epic story of our salvation, or as some Catholic theologians like to call it the theo-drama. Think of the great Biblical heroes: Abraham, Moses, and David. That story is still unfolding with people like Augustine, Thomas More, or Mother Teresa. The question is, are we willing to say to God, "God, what is my role in this plan?" Or are we going to say to him, "This is what I want to do." It is only when we ask God what it is that he wants us to do that we find who we are truly meant to be. You are meant to do some God some definite service, so ask yourself, are you trying to live your wife your way and fitting God into it, or are you fitting into the story that God is unfolding?

My talk often ends about there, if they only give me twenty minutes, although sometimes I am asked to speak for longer than that, and then I speak about priesthood and religious life.

I once heard that in the days of Saint Teresa of Avila in Spain, or in the days of Saint Catherine of Siena in Italy, 1 out of 10 people became priests, brothers, or sisters. When I said this, at one talk I was then asked, "That's because they wanted college education and it was the only available opportunity, right?" So let's try this: in the first forty years of Boston College's history, men who had already completed college---not men hoping to go to it--- $\frac{2}{3}$  of the graduates went on to become priests or religious. The situation we have today in which 50% of US priests are between the ages of 65-85 is not normal. It is a sign of a secular culture, where for every new convert at Easter six leave the Church.

So why should men and women ask God, "Are you calling me to give my whole life to you in this way?" Well, first of all, because in finding our role in God's epic plan of salvation, we find ourselves and we find true joy. The rich young man who walked away from Christ's invitation went away sad. That particular form of greatness that he was invited to he walked away from.

But also because we need good men to become priests. We need good women to become sisters. On our Boston mission trip this year, I took the teens to the Jeanne Jugan residence, to a nursing home run by sisters, for the poor. These sisters are able to, by the whole gift of their lives, make the nursing home a *home*, where the community is a family.

Likewise, if you want to hear a good vocation talk by a priest, ask, "Tell me a story of a time you made a difference." You will hear of moments in the confessional, where someone who believed they were truly unlovable discovered the love of God, when someone who felt alone while dying were comforted by the presence of a priest and the sacrament of the sick, or of a teen going down the wrong path rescued from a bad situation. The examples vary based on where the priest has worked, but every priest has such stories. Recently at a vocation panel at Edge, Father Bob was asked to tell a story of a time he made a difference. It was amazing. He was on fire. That's not a pat on the back moment. That's a, "Wow, God, look what you did through your priest." It is the ministry of reconciliation we heard about in the second reading and in the Gospel. It's just another life in the day of a priest!

This is why I invite all of our parishioners to pray that God send us good and holy priests and religious sisters, that people be open to God's call. It is why I invite all our young people to ask themselves, "What is it God that you are asking me to do?" The annual discernment retreat for men for the priesthood, high school aged and up, is next month. If you are interested, come speak to me. Young women, if you are interested in something similar, come speak to me.

How does God intend to make you great and do you have the courage to let him?