

Father Ed Rama

This weekend I began my first Vocations Mission Weekend. I celebrated Mass at St. Catherine of Bologna in Ringwood and preached at all the Masses on Vocations. When I made arrangements with the Pastor, Fr. Pawel to be at his parish, I did not realize that it was 10 years since I was assigned to that parish as a seminarian. It was my first assignment, I remember because it was in 2009, "The Year of the Priest". The pastor at the time, Msgr. Pat Panos, God rest his soul, asked me to give a talk on the Priesthood on the Feast Day of St. John Vianney, August 4, 2009. While I was preaching today on Vocations, I realized that it was exactly 10 years to the day that I preached on the Priesthood in the same parish on the Feast Day of St. John Vianney, the Patron Saint of all Priests. Wow...only God could work that out.

I was reminded of my first meeting with the Vocations Director. I remember the difficult time of discernment trying to figure out what God was calling me to...what was He asking me to do with my life. Numerous times people would come up to me and ask if I ever thought about becoming a Priest, and often they would assume that I was a Priest. I kept having that feeling in my heart that God was calling me to be His Priest...there was a burning in my heart for God...a love to be with Him and to serve Him in the Sanctuary.

One day I got my nerve up to call the vocation director and to make an appointment with him. I remember driving to his office in Clifton to meet with him. At the time I was working for an engineering firm and I was doing well financially. The job paid well with a comfortable expense account and sporty company car, a silver BMW convertible. I was concerned that the vocation director might see the car I was driving and think that I was too worldly and not see me as priestly material, so I decided to park the car as far

away from the vocations office as possible. The parking lot was huge because the office was connected to the high school parking lot. I had my meeting and all went well. The priest then suggested that we get a bite to eat for lunch at the local diner. He said to me, “would you mind if we used your car because my car is in the garage for repairs”. When he said that I began to laugh to myself thinking that God must be laughing also. I had to tell him the truth that I didn’t want him to see my fancy sports car. When he got into the car with me the first thing he said was, “Can we take the convertible top down”. Today I drive a Corolla.

In our Gospel this weekend Jesus gives us a parable about a rich man and He warns us of the dangers of greed. The rich man had an abundant harvest, so much so, that he didn’t know what to do with it. Finally, he decided to tear down his old barns and to build bigger ones to hold his goods. He said to himself, I’ve got it made...the American dream...I’m on easy street, where he can eat drink, and be merry. But God said to him, you fool, and demanded his life that day. We can hear the words echoing, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and to lose his soul”.

Jesus reminds us in this parable that we have to store up the treasures that matter to God, not the things of the world. St. Paul reminds us to seek the things that are above. What is it that is pleasing to God...what is it that will help us get to our home, the kingdom of heaven? The things that are important to God are charity and love...Have we loved God and our neighbor...that is what we will be judged on. God wants us to love and to have charity, to care for one another, to be kind and forgiving to everyone. He wants us to follow His Commandments, the Teachings of His Church, to stay close to the Sacraments, to pray to Him and grow in our relationship with our God. These are the things that matter to God...that we place our trust in Him and not in the things of the world.

Jesus is the rich one, He is God, the Lord of lords, and the King of kings. Yet He gave it to us, that is, He has bestowed a kingdom upon us. He emptied Himself and became a slave. He came not to be served but serve and to give His life as a ransom for us, for our salvation. He has given us everything that we need for our salvation. He has given us the Church with her seven Sacraments, He has even given us His Blessed Mother to be our Mother. He has given us all the Saints and the devotions. He has given us this precious gift of the Priesthood.

2000 years ago Jesus walked the face of the earth, but now it is through His Priests that He lives, moves, and has His being. St. John Vianney said that if we were to realize the great gift of the Priesthood we would die, not of fright, but of love. The Priest stands in Persona Christi, that is, in the person of Christ. He says the words of Jesus, "This is my Body...This is the Chalice of my Blood..." And the bread and wine cease to be bread and wine and become His Glorified Body and Blood, the closest that we can come to being with our Lord while we walk the face of the earth. The Priest is the one who says the prayer of absolution where are sins are forgiven and once again our souls made right before God. When the doctor walks out of the hospital room and says that nothing more can be done, they call in the Priest for the Anointing of the Sick, a healing sacrament. So many times people have told me of physical and spiritual healings from Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. God has given us such a wonderful and powerful gift in the Priesthood.

Everyone knows that are Church is in a terrible way and we are living in terrible times with scandal after scandal. Perhaps these are the worst of times for the Church, but God does not call the worst men in the worst times. On the contrary He calls the best in the worst of times. In the history of the Church He has always called the greatest Saints in the worst times. St. Paul reminds us,

where sin and evil abound, grace abounds all the more. Jesus urges us to pray to the Master of the harvest that He send more laborers into the harvest. Pray for Vocations to the Priesthood and religious life. God hears your prayers. Offer up a Holy Hour each week for Vocations, pray the Rosary, offer your sacrifices and sufferings for an increase of Vocations to the Priesthood.

If you see a young man who looks like he might someday make a good Priest, encourage him to think about it. Teach your children and grandchildren about the Priesthood and Consecrated Life.

I suppose today many men will not consider the Priesthood out of fear. I say to you, "Be not afraid", if God is calling you, He will give you the grace to go forward and to be the Priest that He wants you to be. There will be no greater joy in your life than saying yes to God's call and to give your life for Him and His people as an Ordained Priest...a Priest Forever!