

# VOCATIONS

We are familiar with the narrative in the Book of Genesis of our Holy Bible in which Abraham was commanded by God to offer, as a holocaust, his only son Isaac, whom he loved. Abraham, in his "sublime obedience," complied with God's will, and made his painful journey to the place of sacrifice. But as he raised his knife over Isaac, an angel of the Lord stopped him. "Do not lay a hand on the boy; do nothing to him. I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me." (GEN. 22:12)

A child is the most precious possession of any husband and wife; he is, in a profound sense, the vivified expression of their love. The Christian knows that every child is a gift of God, freely given. And yet, as nothing belongs by right to any man, not even his own being, so neither does the child belong, by right, to the parents. God may at any time ask them for a sacrifice, a return of His gift for His own service. Obviously God does not require a sacrifice as immense as Abraham's was to be; but it is in the same spirit of obedience that we are called to offer our greatest possessions to Him.

In what sense can we say that parents give their children to the service of God? When a son or daughter feels drawn to the special following of Christ found in the priesthood or religious life, it is *he* or *she* who gives himself or herself . . . not the parents. It would seem that the Will of God is fulfilled when parents permit the acceptance of this call. Such, however, does not reach what should be the essence of their oblation.

The sacrifice of Abraham consisted, not in the un-effected holocaust of his son, but in his internal oblation; in like manner the sacrifice of the parents does not so much consist in the mere permission to follow a vocation, but rather in their internal willingness to offer their child. Such an offering is a life-long giving, in the spirit of obedience, recognizing this fact: our child is a gift from God. We must so educate him that, whatever may be God's will for him, he may be prepared to accept it. If Christ seeks him as a special follower, he will be prepared to follow Christ.

This attitude entails a realization of the importance of the Catholic home as the foremost training ground in which children are imbued with the spirit of Christ; and it requires positive encouragement, given in the home, toward vocations to the priesthood or religious life. These elements comprise that often difficult but ultimately joyful thing—the giving of sons and daughters to God. This giving requires that spirit of obedience, in child as in parent, which alone can truly provide those necessary candidates who will become "saintly priests and fervent religious" laboring in the vineyard of the Lord.

God, the rewarder of His faithful people, will certainly pour blessings and joy upon those parents who, possessed of a spirit of love and obedience, teach their children to know, love, and serve Him in a special way. Sons and daughters though sometimes separated from their parents by a vocation, are actually brought nearer to them in many ways, because they have been given and have given themselves to God. For such parents who offer their children through positive encouragement and in a continual spirit of obedience, God's words to Abraham seem appropriate: ". . . since you have done this and not withheld your only son, I will indeed bless you." (GEN. 22:16-17)

The pastor and parishioners of St. John's and St. Bernard's congratulate the men and women of this parish who have been obedient to the Will of God and are today serving Him in a special manner in a religious life. We are proud of the following who call the Onawa and Blencoe parishes their former home: Father George J. Benjamin, son of Bert Benjamin and Edith (Messing) Benjamin, baptized here July 22, 1917; Brother Fabian, C. F. A. (Thomas B. Duffy) son of the late John Duffy and Helen McShane Duffy of Blencoe, baptized here October 29, 1905; Sister Mary Eunice, R. S. M. (Annabel Fegenbush) daughter of Eunice Taylor Fegenbush and the late Roy Fegenbush of Whiting, baptized here as a convert September 14, 1926; and Sister Mary Nadine, B. V. M. (Mary Murphy) daughter of Charles T. Murphy and Madeline McGovern Murphy, baptized in St. Mary's Church at Waucoma, Iowa. Mr. and Mrs. Bert Benjamin, Mr. and Mrs. C. T. Murphy, and Mrs. Eunice Fegenbush are present members of St. John's Church here. Roy Fegenbush is deceased and is buried in the Whiting cemetery and Mr. and Mrs. John Duffy are deceased and are buried in the Blencoe cemetery.