

Vocation - St John's Cathedral – Wed Nov 30th

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In the last few months we have been hearing a great deal about 'Saorview'. Television broadcasting in Ireland is switching from analogue to digital transmission and if like me you do not subscribe to Sky or Chorus but have the 4 basic channels you will have to switch to the new digital receivers, as analogue will be closed down and unless you have a newer TV you need a special box to interpret the signal.

God is constantly communicating God's-self to us – like air-waves all around us we move in a graced world, where God's signal permeates. The problem is not God's silence or absence – where there is a problem it is more our reception and response.

We are like the new TVs - we have the in-built capacity for the divine, an in-built compass orienting us towards the divine, an inner magnetic pull drawing us towards the divine, a receiver to decipher God's call. The call is constant – Augustine expressed this as an inner restlessness, Aquinas expressed it in terms of a desire, we see it whenever we stretch ourselves, when we go beyond the comfort zone and transcend what we might have thought of as our human capacity – climbing Mount Everest, beautiful music, Munster in full flight, beautiful poetry, whenever we go beyond ourselves, transcending our limitations we capture something of God's calling us towards Himself.

Most of all I believe this inner attraction or capacity for God is experienced in the dynamic between loneliness and intimacy, that has us searching for love in our loves, that prompts us to reach out, to foster relationship.

John O'Donohue's 'Anam Cara', "Love is our deepest nature: consciously or unconsciously, each of us searches for love. We do not need to go out to find love, rather we need to be still and let love discover us."

And so it is with God and this thing we call vocation – it is not so mysterious or remote after all, in fact we need simply to allow ourselves to be grasped rather than feel we must grasp at an elusive God. Vocation is a call to love, something we all experience - it is much more democratic than we might like to believe, so rather than being precious that I have a vocation and when I got it or where or how I knew we rejoice that all are called and called equally.

The life-commitment (marriage, work choice, family life, religious life, priesthood) is simply the means by which we express our response – the call, the vocation is deeper, it is the ground underneath that decision.

Vocation is God drawing us to Godself, inviting us into the inner life of God, calling us into the loving relationship that is God. We pray at Mass the subversive words – we whisper them – through this mingling and mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity. Nothing less than a full intimate relationship with God drawing us into the loving relationship of the Father and the Son through the Spirit.

We are called as a people, as a community and it is the quality of our love for each other that brings us deeper in to our relationship with God. This is why marriage is a sacrament, it mirrors to us the love of God the attraction towards God and that he has for us, drawing us together in love. We pray – Love is our origin, Love is our constant calling

Chastity and Celibacy too is a call to love – when it is seen as anything else, especially if it seen as a renunciation of love it becomes distorted and dangerous

So we have the inner capacity to receive and respond to God – indeed (Rahner) “One is oriented to saying ‘yes’ before doing so” we know that it is not always that easy or simple either.

Sometimes the message gets scrambled, there is interference, or lack of clarity or we simply can’t tune in. Sadly as Church we must acknowledge that at times we have made it difficult for others – if vocation is a call to love & relationship we know that trust underpins all relationship and the greatest casualty of child sexual abuse is trust .

We also diminish the capacity of others to hear God’s call when we elevate particular responses such as priesthood or religious life to the diminishment of other responses, particularly marriage.

And yet, in spite of our shortcomings, we have within our Church the tremendous gift that is the Eucharist. *Catechism* ‘The bond of unity that the Eucharist creates is so unique and so essential to the Christian life that we can rightly say that the Eucharist makes the Church’.

The Eucharist is a celebration of our togetherness, our unity, our relationship to each other and to God.

JPII in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 2003 says ‘The Eucharist *creates communion* and *fosters communion* - the Eucharist is the sacrament of communion’

The Theme for the International Eucharistic Congress is particularly powerful ‘In Communion with Christ and with each other’ It recognises that the vocation of the Christian is the call to love, to community to relationship and so we can say as Benedict said at the inauguration of his pontificate and something that has been a recurring theme in his pontificate – ‘Those who believe are never alone’.

Last week we bade a sad farewell to the familiar text of the Roman Missal - the words of the old Third Eucharistic Prayer echo Jesus’ prayer to the Father: “Grant that we who are nourished by his body and blood may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ.”

Our celebration of the Eucharist is not an isolated individual act – it is the action of a community.

Our time of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament needs to flow out of and renew this act so that as T.S. Eliot said in *The Four Quartets*

We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion