



CALLINGS

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT VOCATIONS

FALL 2003 • VOLUME 6 Nº 1

Example and discernment pave path to priesthood

By Fr. Chris Manahan, SJ

I learn best from example, watching someone else and then trying it for myself. When it came to entering religious life and priesthood my examples were one of my sisters, who entered the Franciscans after high school, and one of my brothers, who entered the Jesuits at 30. Through their examples, both impressed upon me that religious life was a life in which I could be myself. Granted there were many things about me that I would want to change, but their examples showed me that religious life was not a matter of fitting into a mold.

The mold I was casting at the time was being filled with activities related to a newspaper career. After graduating from the University of Minnesota in journalism and political science, I worked for 13 years in daily newspapers in Minnesota and Iowa as a reporter and editor. Heading up a newsroom was a goal of mine, as well as making a good living, having a nice place to live, and traveling a lot. By 1991 that mold seemed pretty well filled, and I began looking beyond it.

Religious life appealed to me because it would meld the professional satisfaction of a career with my spiritual and personal development – a combination that would free me to seek the good of others and God's glory at the same time that I developed my own potential. Rather than being lopsided in my focus (strictly career), I thought that within religious life I would be encouraged to keep my life balanced among profession, prayer, and personal relationships. My sister's and brother's examples of religious life helped out at this point, because in

them I saw this balance in action, and it made me inclined to try it myself.

Not one to trust just one source (old newspaper habit), I sought out a parish priest who I respected. Again, it was his example of living out his priesthood that caused me to ask him for spiritual

direction and for help in my discernment. Eighteen months of spiritual direction, beginning with the very basics of learning how to pray, reinforced my initial inclination toward religious life. A few discernment retreats through the auspices of dioceses and religious orders provided time away to continue the discernment among others considering religious life and priesthood.

In general, these retreats and weekends allowed me to have gut reactions by providing impressions of people I would be joining, the lifestyle, and other experiences related to religious life. They also gave me time to "live" the idea of being in religious life, which was helpful because the rest of

my life was still involved in studies and work. The process led to greater certainty

As it turned out the more difficult decision for me became less the decision of pursuing religious life, but in what way? I had an interest in diocesan priesthood and three religious orders based on my reading of their materials and discussions with vocation directors of each. For the longest time – six months – it seemed as if no certainty was coming in deciding which to pursue. What proved helpful was the instructions my spiritual director →



PHOTO BY FR. MIKE HARTER, SJ

FR. CHRIS MANAHAN, SJ (left) WITH FR. JOHN FOLEY, SJ, WHO COMPOSED THE PSALM WRITTEN FOR THE ORDINATION, FRAMED HERE AND PRESENTED AT CHRIS'S FIRST MASS AS A JESUIT PRIEST.

had given me on ways of praying, including one form in which I faced with a decision I begin to write down the pros and cons of each choice in the midst of my prayer. Not long after I began the prayer, I began to smile as I wrote down the positive aspects of Jesuit religious life. It became clear that the Jesuits was the choice for me.

Jesuit life as I knew it at the time, and have seen it in action for the past 10 years, grabs hold of the individual and attempts to uncover for us our weaknesses and strengths, talents and blind spots, gifts and needs, and helps us face them in circumstances that we might never choose for ourselves. It is a difficult formation process in that its purpose is to be revelatory not only of God but of ourselves and others. Sometimes the latter revelations are not what we like to consider. The fruit of the process, however, is that ideally each individual's potential is developed to its utmost and the Society of Jesus uses it (no matter what it is) for the greater glory of God.

No molds here; each vocation unique from God and for God.

For myself, my professional career as a journalist, my later studies to be a secondary social studies teacher, and my desire to go where others cannot or will not, were aspects of my vocation that I felt offered opportunities to be of use in this least society. All three

aspects have been part of my formation, and are now part of my priesthood as a parish priest to six parishes on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

If you're interested in how, that's another story that you can ask me sometime one-to-one or via e-mail.

Finally, here are a few questions that might prove helpful to you as they were for me in the discernment process. Ask yourself these questions, and see what your answers are, and consider them for what they are worth:

- Are you running away from something or running toward something?
- Are you free to make your decision?
- Do you feel rushed or under pressure?
- What have been the happiest times of your life?
- What gives you satisfaction?
- Can you imagine being in religious life just as you are?

This list isn't exhaustive by any means, but they are questions that I reflected upon during my



FR. CHRIS MANAHAN, SJ CELEBRATES HIS FIRST MASS.

two-year discernment process. I answered them differently throughout the process. In the end, however, I felt comfortable that my answers were a good fit for my entering religious life.

It's a decision that I haven't regretted. **G**

Province welcomes five new men

There will be 23 novices in training this year at the St. Paul Jesuit Novitiate, including 8 from the Wisconsin Province, 5 of whom are first-year novices. Brief profiles of the new Wisconsin Province men are displayed below.



Jeremy Cramer, 24, was born in Lowville, New York and has lived in Elkhorn, Nebraska since grade school. He is a Microsoft certified professional, and has worked as an application support specialist for credit card processing and management software. Jeremy has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, and with the Christian Outreach Program of Elkhorn (COPE) as an ESL instructor and outreach counselor.



Daniel Justin, 22, of Lincoln, Nebraska, graduated in 2002 from Creighton University in Omaha with majors in theology and psychology, and a minor in peace and justice studies. He has continued at Creighton, studying for a master's degree in theology. He has been active in peace and justice issues, including protests at the School of the Americas in Georgia. He interned at Creighton's Campus Ministry, and was student coordinator of the Center for Service and Justice.



Charles Olsen, 23, was born in Houston, Texas but moved to Rapid City, South Dakota. He received a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 2002 from St. Mary's University in Winona, Minnesota and began theological studies at the Gregorian University in Rome for the Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota. The son of an Air Force officer, Charles has lived in Oklahoma, Arkansas, California, Texas and Guam.



Paul "PJ" Shelton, 22, was born in Columbus, Ohio and is a 2003 graduate of Marquette University with a degree in history and classical languages. While at Marquette, he was an RA and participated in the Manresa Project as a catechist, youth minister and CYO basketball coach at a local Catholic parish. PJ has been a Eucharistic minister to the aging as well as a member of the MU chorus.



Nathan Wendt, 24, is a native of Cleveland, Ohio. He holds a BA in public relations from Marquette University's College of Communication, with a minor in theology and philosophy. Nathan served as president of the university's student chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America; and was a member of Kappa Tau Alpha, the mass communications honor society. He worked as promotions director for Waitt Radio in Omaha, NE and as a marketing specialist at the Bradley Corp. in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

ANSWERING THE CALL

A Positive View of Celibacy

Fr. Warren Sazama, SJ

DIRECTOR OF VOCATIONS – WISCONSIN PROVINCE



Often when people comment about the sacrifices that religious and priests make through their vows, they share a common view that our sacrifices are somehow quite extraordinary. I tend to respond that while we religious and priests do in fact make significant sacrifices, so does everyone who makes a serious commitment to a loving relationship such as marriage and parenting. Regardless of how we choose to commit in our love for one another, commitment requires sacrifice.

And while it strikes many in our contemporary culture as unthinkable that a healthy man or woman with options can choose a life without sex, spouse, or children and can live a happy, full life – it shouldn't be that surprising. Jesus himself lived his life this way and invited his disciples to imitate him by giving up marriage for the sake of God's Reign (Mt. 19: 12). Moreover, he promised a hundredfold return in happiness and fullness for those who do (Mt. 19: 29, Lk. 18: 29-30). In my experience, and in that of many of my celibate brothers and sisters, Jesus is right.

For 19 years as a high school chaplain, counselor, and teacher I was in awe of the sacrifices I witnessed parents making for their children – from changing diapers in the middle of the night during infancy, to financial sacrifices which often entailed giving up many things they might like to have for themselves, to putting up with

rebellious teenagers who know they know it all and think their parents know nothing. When I look at the sacrifices that married couples and parents have to make, my life sometimes seems easy by comparison. Yet amid these sacrifices, there are many rewards and satisfactions.

Marriage is one very particular way of loving. Then, when married couples have children, they have to make their family their top priority in life. Failure to do so often results in serious marital problems and troubled children.

Celibacy is simply another way of loving in which one is called to love in a more universal way – a way that is particularly suited to a life of ministry. I did my theology studies at the Jesuit School of Theology in California which is part of an ecumenical consortium of theological schools. Quite a few of the Protestant seminarians there were self-described "Preacher's Kids," many of whom said they lamented that, while growing up, their minister parent often seemed to be there for everyone else but them. As a result, they understandably felt some sadness and resentment.

This doesn't surprise me because I believe there is an inherent tension between ministry and the commitment of marriage. Loving celibately frees one to love more broadly without worrying about neglecting one's spouse and children.

Imagine Jesus, if he were born in our time, with a wife and children saying that he can't go on to preach the Good News in the next town because he has to take his children to soccer practice, or that his wife has a job in Bethsaida, so they can't move right now. It is in this more universal, free form of loving that we religious and priests are called to a life of ministry.

What is the "hundredfold" that Jesus promises in return for sacrificing family,

sex, and marriage for the sake of God's Reign? Probably the easiest way is to answer from my personal experience.

I cannot imagine a more meaningful, full life. By the grace of God I've been able to make a significant difference in many people's lives in my 39 years as a Jesuit and 26 years as a priest. People experience that they have a claim on me – that I'm truly theirs. Former students often come back to me for advice, to help them celebrate special moments in their lives, or to seek support in difficult times. Sometimes we even become adult friends. The joy of experiencing God working through me and using me to help someone grow closer to God and experience the liberation of the Gospel is the ultimate high for me – one that never seems to lessen over the years.

Celibate loving frees me to love so many more others literally around the world – Australia, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, California, all over the Midwest – than I could otherwise ever imagine. As a member of a religious community, I have been gifted with many wonderful older brothers and spiritual fathers to learn from and be inspired by, younger brothers to mentor and receive energy from, and lifelong friends and companions joined in a common mission.

My vow of celibacy also gives me a special relationship with God as my spouse. This is somewhat difficult to describe as is any intimate relationship. All I know is that my relationship with Christ is the core relationship of my life, and my celibacy greatly contributes to that.

Soon after becoming a Jesuit novice, I realized that this life makes no sense without God. It is a life based on faith. The sacrifices entailed by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience only have meaning in **see SAZAMA on back page** →

the context of a life of growing friendship with Christ, whom I want to more and more become the center of my life. As a result, spending quality time with Christ every day in personal prayer and through the celebration of Mass is the most important part of my day. My relationship with Christ is the primary source of my spiritual and emotional energy that propels me to serve and be there for others in ministry and community.

Religious life is entirely structured to facilitate union with God and ministry. As much as I treasure my Jesuit brothers and lifelong friends, I did not become a Jesuit to be in

community with this or that specific individual. I became a Jesuit, although not fully consciously at the beginning, to find union with God and to be able to make a positive difference in the world through service of God's people as a member of the Jesuit community.

Is celibacy for everyone? Obviously not. But for those who are called to a celibate way of loving, this way of life can, if lived well, be a joyful, rich, very meaningful way to live one's life in union with God, as well as a very special way of giving oneself to others to help build the Reign of God on earth. **E**

Four Jesuits ordained



(From left) GREG LYNCH, SJ, CHRIS MANAHAN, SJ, JIM MCDERMOTT, SJ, AND JOHN THIEDE, SJ FROM THE WISCONSIN PROVINCE WERE ORDAINED IN ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA ON JUNE 6TH.

Two Wisconsin Province men begin first studies



PAUL LICKTEIG, SJ (second from right) AND MATT MOSER, SJ (third from right) ARE TWO OF SIX FORMER NOVICES WHO ARE MOVING ON TO FIRST STUDIES AFTER PRONOUNCING FIRST VOWS OF POVERTY, CHASTITY, AND OBEDIENCE AT THE CHURCH OF ST. LUKE IN ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA IN AUGUST. FOUR MEN FROM THE UPPER CANADA AND MISSOURI PROVINCES ALSO PRONOUNCED FIRST VOWS WITH PAUL AND MATT. THEY ARE (from left) ROBERT MACKE, SJ, TIM MAIN, SJ, WILLIAM MBUGUA, SJ, AND (far right) MOUSSA FADDOUL, SJ.

UP COMING EVENTS

OCT 3-5

COME AND SEE weekend at the Jesuit House of Studies at Loyola U. in Chicago. This weekend experience is for all inquirers who are interested in learning more about Jesuit life and training and in getting to meet young Jesuits in training. The weekend starts with Mass at 5 p.m. and ends with lunch on Sunday.

OCT 10-12

WEEKEND AT THE NOVITIATE in St. Paul, MN. This weekend is intended only for "late stage" discerners who are seriously considering applying on the next year or two. The weekend starts with Mass at 5 p.m. and ends with lunch on Sunday.

DEC 19-23

COME AND SEE DISCERNMENT RETREAT at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. This retreat starts with Mass and dinner at 5 p.m. on Friday and ends with lunch on Tuesday. (This is right after semester exams for many colleges.) The first day of the retreat is the "Come and See" part, where a number of young Jesuits in training will share their vocation stories and talk about life as a Jesuit and the vocational discernment process. The rest of the retreat (from after dinner on Saturday through lunch on Tuesday) will be a silent, individually-directed prayer discernment retreat where you'll meet with your Jesuit director once per day, and spend most of the rest of the day in prayerful silence.

There is no charge for any of these events, and we are happy to help men with travel costs to and from these events if needed. Please contact Fr. Sazama, SJ.

FEB 13-16

DISCERNMENT RETREAT at the Jesuit Retreat House near Denver, CO. This retreat, which takes place at our retreat house in the beautiful foothills of the Rocky Mountains, is on the long Presidents' Day Weekend. It starts on Friday afternoon and ends with lunch on Monday. This is a silent, prayer retreat on which you will have daily conversations with a young Jesuit in training. The retreat will include some presentations on Jesuit life. Since this is a busy ski weekend in the Denver area, airline reservations need to be made early.

MARCH TBA

COME AND SEE WEEKEND at the Jesuit house of studies at Loyola U. in Chicago. This weekend is for all inquirers who are interested in learning more about Jesuit life and training. You'll spend the weekend with young Jesuits in training, who will share their vocation stories and experiences of Jesuit life and formation. We'll begin with Mass at 5 p.m. on Friday and end with lunch on Sunday.

JUNE 18 - AUG 1

SIX WEEKS A JESUIT program in the Chicago-Milwaukee areas. This is an opportunity to live in a Jesuit community and work in a Jesuit ministry with other men considering the Jesuits. It is an excellent way to get a better feel for what it might be like to be a Jesuit.

Ongoing Vocation Discernment Groups

We have two discernment groups for men considering the Jesuits.

- ▶ Milwaukee group: contact Fr. Jim Flaherty, SJ at Marquette University (414) 288-5000, james.flaherty@marquette.edu).
- ▶ Omaha group: contact Fr. Dick Hauser, SJ at Creighton University (402) 280-3010, hausersj@creighton.edu).

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