February 1, 2026

Dear Friends,

In last week's Gospel we heard the call of the first companions of Jesus in the mission to announce the Good News. And while St. Matthew tells us that Peter and Andrew, James and John, left their boats and their nets immediately and followed Jesus, that is not the experience of most of us. But, there are elements of that call that are common for all who seek to follow Jesus more intentionally.

That call is given to us all in the waters of Baptism. For most of us, baptized as infants, it is our parents and godparents who promise to help us to hear Jesus' call in our lives and to have the courage to answer that call. For most of us, that call is to a vocation to marriage. Through that sacrament, in which a couple commits themselves to each other for life, the Lord works to draw the couple closer and closer to him so that they become living signs of his love in the world.

For others, the Lord calls them to the single life, so that they might use their time, talent and treasure to work in a single-minded way in a vocation that advances God's reign in the world, while using a significant amount of their time for volunteer or professional ministry in the Church.

For still others, the Lord makes a call to the priesthood or religious life. And like the other vocations described above, this vocation is rooted in our common Baptism. It is in those waters that the Lord plunges us into his saving death and resurrection, giving us new life and calling us to a particular mission to share that life with others. When the Lord calls some of us to the priesthood or consecrated life, it is important that those around us nurture and support that call. And while, as I described above, this is not the only way to live out our call, and not even the most common, it is an important one in the life of the Church.

In my own vocation journey I was always supported by friends and family who saw something in me that prompted them to affirm me in my desire to answer the Lord's call. For me that call took unexpected twists and turns.

From very early on in my life I was attracted to parish life. I was an altar server, and helped in other ways behind the scenes in my parish. I then got involved in ministry as a volunteer catechist and was eventually hired to start a part-time youth ministry program. This eventually led to a career in ministry as a lay person.

It was not until later in life, through the encouragement of family and friends, and particularly Archbishop Brunett, that I began considering the possibility of a call to the priesthood. I was surprised by this call later in my life. The call, I thought, had been there in my early twenties, but then it receded and I was happy doing ministry as a lay person in the Church. But, the Lord opened a new path for me in my late forties and I was ordained in 2007 at age fifty. I am grateful for the journey I have had and for the many people who accompanied me on the way through a very rich life of ministry - for thirty years as a lay person and now for these past eighteen years as a priest.

This weekend, throughout the Archdiocese of Seattle, we are asking people to reflect on who you know who might have a call to priesthood or religious life. It is a simple program, *Called By Name*, that has been used successfully throughout the country to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

I invite you to pray about young men and women you know, and perhaps you've thought, they would make a good priest or religious. Perhaps they have thought about it too. Use the QR Code below and submit their name.

They will then receive a letter, inviting them to explore the possibility through vocation-themed dinners, discernment groups, retreats and other experiences. This kind of encouragement can be life-changing for a person. It certainly was for me. To this day I am grateful to Archbishop Brunett and all those family and friends who encouraged me along the way. I have never been happier in my life than I have been these past eighteen years. Maybe your encouragement, our encouragement, can do that for someone today.

Thank you for taking some time to consider and to pray about who you might suggest and then submitting their name. Who knows, this simple act could change their life and the life of our Church!

Peace,

Fr. Gary Lazzeroni
Pastor

