

WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

February 7, 2010



HOMILY NOTES

Cycle C

For those of you old enough, can you finish the following commercial jingles and name the company? “My bologna has a first name...;” “Plop, Plop, fizz, fizz...;” “I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony...;” These catchy jingles stand the test of time because they touch something pressed upon our psyche. Once heard again, we cannot get the tunes out of our heads—especially during the rest of this homily and Mass! Give them credit; the jingle song writers have caught us forever in their whimsical trap.

Not unlike these writers, we Catholics have some good inspirational song writers with their catchy tunes. One such song is “Here, I am Lord” whose refrain is: *Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart* [Was this hymn sung today?].

Are these lyrics just as appealing as the commercial jingles? Are they so pressed upon our minds that we could burn them onto our I-Pods? Have these words got us caught forever in a whimsical trap of God’s call? Or, have we discarded them because we believe that the words apply only to those called to seek a vocation in the consecrated life? Maybe we believe only those who are worthy and holy, such as Isaiah, Paul, Peter or women in scripture, can be called to such a noble task.

Well, guess what? These scripture figures, as well as saints, and those men and women called to live the consecrated life are not the only one’s called. Isaiah, Paul and Peter are proof of that. They were ordinary people like us with shortcomings and sins. They felt unworthy to serve. However, like the people pressing upon Jesus in today’s Gospel, God’s relentless song of the call compelled them to change and follow Christ.

This conversion came to these men when they recognized the glory and presence of God in their lives. [Where do we see God's glory and presence in our lives?] Having seen these manifestations, their minds were opened and their hearts transformed. Their unworthiness became humility. Each could confidently say: send me. I will preach. I will follow. They now had gained sufficient trust in and total dependency on God who would supply them with the necessary graces to overcome any deficiencies in their lives. This is why Paul could say in today's reading: "For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective" (vss. 9-10).

God always takes us as we are and where we are! God's lyrics of the call have been pressing upon our minds since our existence. It should be a familiar tune that calls all of us to a vocation to serve God as a person of any age, physicality or state of life.

Consequently, we're all worthy to serve! All of us can attain holiness! We must toss away from our minds the bad jingle tunes of being undeserving and not holy. When we remove such thinking from our mind, we are opening ourselves to God's will. We recognize the innate fact of our universal call to holiness, which has been proclaimed in scripture (e.g. Lev 19:2; Mt. 5: 48), and more recently in the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*.

St. Francis de Sales thought the average person was confused about the meaning of holiness. He was persistently reminding people that the call to holiness emerges out of our human nature, a nature created in the image of God. As one strives to be holy, one needs to be patient with one's imperfections and faults. That holiness is derived from the ordinary Christian ways we act in life and not in extraordinary deeds performed. Similarly, St. Jane de Chantal, said that "one cannot always offer God great things, but one can offer God small things with great love." Simply, holiness is attained by the way we love God and neighbor.

And so, as we think about the many ways in which we are called to love in ordinary ways and do it extraordinarily well, let us not forget those women and men who have responded to God's call to serve as a consecrated religious. This day and Mass is dedicated to them throughout the world. On this *World Day for Consecrated Life*, may the lives of consecrated women and men be blessed with God's overwhelming grace of love! May their lives inspire us to hear God's vocational call. May this tune be forever in our minds and transform our hearts to say boldly: "Here I am, Lord, send me!"

