

The Transforming Power of the Liturgy

Vocations



In Eucharistic Prayer II, the Church recalls that God has held her worthy to be in his presence and to minister to him. God, who has no need of the Church's ministry, has nevertheless made her "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own" (1 Pt 2:9). The liturgy has the power to transform us into a people who care for and cultivate vocations in the Church.

Theology

The public ministry of Jesus begins at his baptism when the Father anoints him with the Holy Spirit and establishes him as priest, prophet, and king (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], no. 783). Almost immediately, he calls others to come after him, to form a community, and to share in these three ministries. Some men he makes apostles (Mk 3:14), other people he invites to announce the Lord's mercy (Mk 5:19), and still others serve the needs of those proclaiming the kingdom (Mk 15:41). In this way, Christ shows that: "God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness" (CCC, no. 306). In the communion of the Church, this participation in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly ministries comes about through the sacraments of Initiation and Holy Orders. For some, this participation is further specified, whether by the sacrament of Matrimony or certain blessings, for example, abbots, abbesses, religious profession, virgins, and ministries (cf. CCC, no. 1672). Furthermore, not only does Christ grant others participation in his ministry, but he also calls them to cultivate and cherish these vocations: "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest" (Mt 9:37).



Liturgy

The sacraments and blessings of vocation take place within liturgies, which are "celebrations of the Church" that "pertain to the whole body of the Church" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 26). By participating in these liturgies, the Church shows, enacts, and grows in her care for vocations. This fact is seen in the liturgical celebration itself which takes place within a gathering of the faithful, and before it when the community is prepared for the celebration and prepares for it through prayer. In particular, the ecclesial dimension of these rites is expressed liturgically through the accompaniment of family, fellow religious, or sponsors; through the Litany of Supplication which sometimes precedes the prayer of the sacrament or blessing; and through acclamations following the reception of a sacrament, like those at Baptism and Matrimony.



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Among its Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, the *Roman Missal* contains Masses for vocations. In some of these formularies, the Church prays for those living certain vocations:

- “For Priests” (no. 6)
- “For Ministers of the Church” (no. 8)
- “For the Laity” (no. 10)
- “For Religious” (no. 13 A)

In others, she celebrates special anniversaries:

- “On the Anniversaries of Marriage” (no. 11)
- “On the Anniversary of Religious Profession” (no. 13 B)

She also prays for vocations:

- “For Vocations to Holy Orders” (no. 9)
- “For Vocations to Religious Life” (no. 14)

These Masses may be freely celebrated on weekdays of Ordinary Time even when an Optional Memorial occurs (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM], no. 375), on other days if there is a real necessity or pastoral advantage (GIRM, no. 376), or on others with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop (GIRM, no. 374).

Action

One way to care for vocations is to participate in their discernment, preparation, celebration, and ongoing formation. This support may occur through devotions like Holy Hours for Vocations and other individual or group prayers for discernment, by serving as a mentor couple in a marriage preparation program, by participation in a liturgy of vocation, or through involvement in groups like the Serra Club. Small groups for people in similar states of life are helpful means of ongoing formation. Equally important is the ongoing formation which occurs when different vocations and generations connect, for example, when families open their homes to clergy and single persons, or when the elderly and young befriend each other.

Support at any stage is a response to Christ’s command to ask the master of the harvest for laborers. It is an expression of the care for vocations which the liturgy expresses and enacts.



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