



WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

I love being a priest. However, I have to admit that I don't like to talk about it, because I feel as if I'm talking about myself. Our Diocese has set aside this weekend to focus on awareness of vocations and the great need we have for priests in the Church. Today, we welcome Patrick Meehan, one of our seminarians who will share his thoughts about preparing for priesthood at the Masses in the St. Mary of the Pines. As priests, we are asked to share our own stories to encourage EVERYONE to think about and promote vocations. Cards are available in both churches for ALL parishioners to think about a young man they think might make a good priest. After prayerful consideration, you are invited to write that person's name on the card and return it to the rectory or place in the collection. We may never know whom God may be calling, and perhaps you could be that voice of God for someone to consider a vocation.

My story is a little unique in that I never went to Catholic school. As I have often joked, the first Catholic school I attended was seminary! I was a normal kid, at least I like to think so, quiet and religious. I always went to Mass. The thought crossed my mind in grammar school, but that's as far as it went. I did continue to think about it, but went to secular college (Monmouth College) pursuing a degree in math. Finally, after talking with the vocation director, I switched to philosophy, which I loved. Because of that, after completing college I was able to enter major seminary.

For me, one small moment reveals to me a lot about my vocation, and also what priesthood means. What is unique is that it was not a lightning bolt moment or even a religious experience. I was a freshman and took a course in typing, which I'm glad I did, even though I'm only adequate. I was seated next to a senior, Michael. He was one of those outcast kids, talked about and made fun of. He wore very thick glasses, was blind in one eye, and suffered from severe epilepsy. I will never forget. The teacher asked me, because of all of that, if I wanted to change me seat. I said, "No." I wasn't afraid of Michael and just couldn't see myself buying into the common labelling of him.

To me, that is at the heart of my vocation. I love saying Mass; I love to be able to absolve in confession; I love all our prayers and devotions. I firmly believe, though, that if I can't sit next to the Michaels of this world, how can I approach God's altar?

All of this is to say that when you look around, don't just look for someone who is holy, even though that is essential. Look for a young man with a heart, one who can relate to people, all people. Look for someone who can see and feel for people, ordinary, every day people, with challenges and problems, gifts and dreams, hopes and fears, great faith or no faith. A priest needs to love to be at the altar, as well as love all the people around the altar.

They are out there. Maybe someone just needs to notice. Think and pray about it, and if you can, fill out a card today. Thank you.

"Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for His harvest.' (Matthew 9:37-38)