

# PARENTS AND VOCATIONS

By Ben Palmer

EVERY FATHER AND EVERY MOTHER desires the happiness of their children. For many of them, it is one of the chief purposes of their life: it's what they live for. They work for their children, plan for their children and, especially if they are Catholics, pray for their children.

They know that the happiness of their children will depend largely upon choice of a right vocation.

They know that the choice of vocation should not be left to chance. It is too important. The proper choice depends upon the aptitudes; talents; physical, mental and moral attainments; and possibilities of the boy and girl, particularly the interests, inclinations, or desires.

Plato in his Republic said; "I am myself reminded that we are not all alike; there are diversities of natures among us which are adapted to different occupations. They must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing which is natural to him, and leaves other things—a shoemaker was not allowed by us to be a husbandman, or a weaver, or a builder, in order that we might have our shoes well made; but to him and to every other worker was assigned one work for which he was by nature fitted."

Just shortly after Columbus discovered America, one Juan Huarte spoke to King Philip II of Spain: "It seems to me that it is requisite to set apart a number of sagacious and learned men to examine and investigate into the mental qualifications and capabilities of young persons, in order to oblige them to make a choice of such science and professions as would be most in accordance with their intellectual constitutions, and not to leave the matter to their own choice and direction. For in general cases, this choice will necessarily be an injudicious one, and will induce them to give a preference to some line of life which will prove less advantageous and useful to them, than if they were under the direction of suitable and qualified counsellors.

## Choice and Chance

He, of course, was suggesting that a state or government assign young people to their vocations. Now we would not tolerate this. Nevertheless, it might be an improvement upon chance choice of vocations which often occurs. What chance led Priestley's father to live next door to a brewery, this eventually leading to Priestley's discovery of oxygen, or Daniel Webster's father to live next door to a man of law whom the young boy admired? In Arrowsmith, what chance caused the eye of Doc Vickers to fall upon the for-rent sign of a certain vacant office which led to young Arrowsmith's, whose father owned the office, sweeping out the doctor's office and thus becoming interested in medicine?

Certainly the progress of society and happiness of the individual depend to a large extent upon the elimination of chance. Certainly we must use intelligence. So, likewise, we should take advantage of advice to the young with respect to vocations that may be secured from well-qualified members of the comparatively new profession, vocational counselling.

The difficulty is that the range of knowledge of the advice given by the vocational counsellor, particularly in a public school, may be limited to purely secular occupations. Concentration may be upon choice of that life work which will bring in the most money. This emphasis on secular attainment is, of course, to be expected in a society dominated by concentration on materialism and the things of this world.

## Secular Attainments

There is a tendency for the professional vocational guidance counsellor, outside of Catholic circles, specifically religious circles, to concentrate on secular attainments. Not only is the climate of opinion unfavourable to the choice of a religious life, but there are constant, skillful, and almost irresistible pressures brought to bear upon the young today to lead them into the choice of secular vocations.

Industry and all the forces of national defence and of the educational world outside of the Church have mobilized all the forces of mass-communication, press, radio, pamphlets, magazines, books, television, and even motion-pictures to

impress on youth the patriotic need of training in engineering and the sciences, particularly as a means of defence against Russia. Many a young man may easily be tempted to feel that he can serve God as well by becoming an engineer or a scientist as by becoming a priest or brother. The temptation is to conclude that he can make the best of both worlds; live comfortably with financial success in this world, attain eternal salvation and lay to his soul the flattering unction that he has been making sacrifices for his country.

### **Armed Services**

We are all familiar with the enlistment campaigns by the Armed Services. These, of course are not to be deplored, but we must recognize these campaigns for the youth of America as well as those by industry and business, as competitors for the young men and women who ought to accept the religious life.

Motion pictures about West Point and Annapolis, motion pictures and TV shows making the Armed Services attractive, appeal to the desire of youth for technical training, for adventure and excitement and for heroism. In the terms of the Armed Services, a young man will be well-paid, well-fed well-clothed, well-housed, and will have a chance to see the world, will have opportunities of advancement in pay and in rank and final retirement with prestige and Social Security. With these forces, we must compete in order to encourage religious vocations.

### **The Need of Religious Vocations**

You don't need to be told of the needs of the Church for priests and religious.

In the United States, the number of Catholics per priest dropped from 1,000 per priest in 1790 to 690 in 1956.

In 1956, however, the Catholic population in America increased 20.9%, but the priests only 12.5%. This may be due to the postwar baby boom which greatly increased the Catholic population, and a decline in vocations during the depression and war years. But with the return of peace the number of young men entering our seminaries notably increased and there are indications that vocations to the priesthood are increasing beyond normal expectations.

The situation in the United States with respect to the sisterhood is quite otherwise. Though statistics on sisterhoods are not nearly as complete as on the priesthood, indications are that while during the past dozen years seminarians increased 63.6 %, the increase of brothers (43.8% ) slightly exceeded the 43.4 % increase of the Catholic population, but the increase in the sisterhoods was only 19.1 %.

Thousands of religious have been exterminated in two world wars, in Red China; behind the Iron Curtain, and in Russia. Priests are badly needed to stay the inroads of Communism among the working classes of Paris and Milan and Rome. Millions in Africa and Asia await the call of Christ. The Indians of South America and the too often merely baptized or nominal Catholics from the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean to southern Argentina and Tierra del Fuego need our religious to make that continent truly Catholic and to save it from the growing menace of the godless who say there is no God. So it is not strange that a few years ago when Cardinal Spellman appealed to the religious and laity of his diocese for the encouragement and support of vocations he said that this pastoral letter was the most important he had ever written.

### **Secular educators**

Secular educators are flooding the land with graphs and charts and statistics warning us of the wave of children and young people needing to be educated. The wave is already upon us. It is not a predicted wave. It is not a prediction of a tremendous increase of persons to be educated based upon calculations as to future births. It is a prediction based upon the number of children who are already here.

If secular educators with all the resources of taxation are apparently appalled at the prospect and at their wits end, what can Catholics do? What is our plight and our prediction?

We see already all about us public schools, elementary and secondary, built and being built at the cost of millions of dollars; perhaps three and one half million for a single school. We can and will raise the monies gladly to build the

Catholic schools needed for our children. But where are we to get the teaching sisters?

To pay for an increasingly large percentage of lay teachers at anything comparable to the minimum in public schools would place us in bankruptcy even if we could get such teachers as would be competent and qualified. But we cannot get them at any cost.

At any cost we may get bricks and mortar and equipment, but we cannot get the services of teaching sisters or brothers who do not exist. We cannot avoid the heartbreak of parents who have saved and planned for the Catholic education of their children, perhaps built or moved into a certain neighbourhood for that purpose, when told there is no room left in the Catholic school. This is also a heartbreak for the teaching sisters or brothers who have to turn children away. They, like the parish priests who can find no teachers for their schools, built or ready and able to build, see the disappointment of parents and children. And they see the perils of secular education.. These perils are not simply the lack of Catholic education; they are the perils to prospective vocations to the religious life. For just as the Catholic family is the nursery of vocations, so too it is true that most religious come from Catholic schools. Certainly we cannot expect the necessary supply of religious vocations, already inadequate even with present enrolments, to be available when needed by the oncoming flood of Catholic children if more and more of our boys and girls are compelled by shortages of teachers to go to public schools.

So it is that the needs of our children and our grandchildren for teaching sisters and brothers, the needs of the Church in America for secular and order priests, the harvest available for missionaries at home and abroad, call to us to do everything that each of us can, by prayer, by word, and by deed to speed the increase of vocations to the religious life.

### **What is a vocation?**

We need to answer the question, "What is a vocation?" because young people will not recognize something they do not know.

A vocation is an occupation or a life-long work to which one is called by the voice of God. For the word comes from the Latin "voco," I call. So it was that in the ages of faith, a man's occupation was called his calling and we still use that word as indicating a man's occupation, although we have generally forgotten that God has anything to do with it.

For many centuries, the English man has been praying in his litany "that I may be happy in that state of life to which God has called me." And so another Englishman, Falstaff, when criticized for purse-taking, said: "Why, Hal? 'Tis my vocation, Hal; 'tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation."

There is, of course, something mysterious about a man's calling just as there is about all the operations of grace. The very fact that there is something mysterious about a calling to the religious life leads many young people to believe that the call must be sudden, dramatic, and spectacular. They may expect God to speak to them as He spoke to Moses from the burning bush or on Mount Sinai, or to Jeremias when He put forth His hand and touched the mouth of the prophet, or to St. Paul when He struck him down as by a bolt of lightning on his way to Damascus. So a young person cannot expect to hear the voices of St. Joan of Arc, or to be suddenly overwhelmed with an irresistible desire to become a priest as was that poor, illiterate peasant boy who at prayer was so overwhelmed: The Cure of Ars, St. John Mary Vianney. Christ will not call them personally in an apparition as he did in reality call Peter and Andrew and James and John by the Sea of Galilee. No angel will tap them on the shoulder and say, "Come along with me." The call does not come in whirlwind or earthquake but as a still small voice.

This still, small voice is hard to hear in the din of the world's confusion, amid the clamorous demands for a secular life. The call comes gradually over a period of time through the normal processes of the intellect and the will with the grace of God. It must be listened for and it must be so described that the young person will recognize it when he hears it.

The difficulty comes in that aspects of the religious life known or believed to be known by a young person may alternately attract and repel him. His moods may vary. The impressions made on him by persons leading the religious life with whom he comes in contact or about whom he reads may vary. Above all, he is subject to the constant, insistent, subtle pressure of his environment which he cannot escape except by an act of the creative imagination, which many times

he is unable or unwilling to make.

. One of the most lovable of priests, especially beloved by thousands of young American Catholics, was the late Father Daniel A. Lord, S.J. He said: "I know I did not want to be a priest or a Jesuit. All my natural impulses lay elsewhere. I knew I did not ask God for a vocation; when the thought recurred, I resisted it with fiery repudiation and blanked it out of my memory with deliberate rejection."

### **Piety**

Most young Catholics know that piety is a sign of a vocation or one of the requirements for a successful religious life. Sometimes, however, they have a mistaken notion as to what piety is. They may think that a young person is pious only if he goes about with a long face, spends an abnormal amount of time in Church and at his prayers, is abnormally disinterested in things that normally are of interest to healthy, young people, such as popular music, sports, movies and TV, dancing, and social activities. Experience has shown, however, that it is not the misfits that are successes or desired in the religious life. It is normal, healthy young persons, provided only that they have average health, average intelligence, some degree of true inward piety, good moral character, and generosity. They must be companionable people who can get along with others, must be able to fit into community life. Above all, they must be generous, because they must be willing to give themselves for others and for God unsparingly and without reservation and with the joy of giving.

They must be of good moral character, but, of course, they need not be perfect. A young person need not close the door to the possibilities of religious life because he knows he has sinned. Sainthood is not a qualification to entrance to the religious life; it is the aim, the aspiration, and the ideal of those who enter that life and who do not expect to approach perfection except after long years of self-sacrifice, self-discipline and devotion, and a life of prayer. A young person is sometimes deterred from considering the religious vocation because of the lack of a dramatic call, because of a feeling of his own unworthiness and the idea that he should be abnormally spiritual and perfect. Sometimes he is deterred by fear that if he enters a novitiate or seminary, he may later have to drop out and he or his parents regard this as in the nature of a disgrace.

Of course, this is an utterly false conception of the purposes of novitiates and seminaries. They are not, by any means, for those already clearly called to and fitted for the religious life. They are places for testing or a probationary period of study and observation and of self-appraisal and of appraisal by religious superiors with respect to their aptitudes and qualifications for the religious life. Certainly it is much better for a young person to have made a serious trial of his qualifications and aptitudes to be a priest rather than never to have tried it at all. Certainly understanding parents, friends, and relatives know that such a young person is to be commended and praised rather than criticized. His failure to enter the religious life after a period of study in a seminary or novitiate is no proof of any deficiency of character or of spiritual qualities. Failure to go on, or to turn to secular life, may be simply the result of an intelligent conclusion on the part of the young person and his spiritual advisers that for reasons having nothing to do with spiritual deficiencies, it would be wise neither for him nor for the Church for him to prepare himself for the religious life. And God cannot be expected to stamp perfection on a young person merely at the instant he decides to prepare himself for the religious life. For the preparation for perfection goes far beyond seminary or novitiate; it is a life-long process.

### **Reverence and humility**

Reverence and humility are among the signs of qualifications for a religious vocation. But the very virtue of humility may be a deterrent for it may result in such a sense of unworthiness as to prevent a decision to consider seriously entrance to the seminary or novitiate.

Years ago, a monsignor hearing confession in Australia thought he recognized the voice of the penitent who was a government employee and he said: "Is that you, Mr. Gilroy?" The penitent answered "Yes." The priest said: "Did you ever think of being a priest?" "Yes" said the young man, "but I deliberately put it out of my mind." "Why?" "Because of my complete unworthiness and unsuitability." The man did later study for the priesthood. He became a priest and now is

Cardinal Gilroy.

### **Parental objections**

Practically all authorities agree that one of the principal obstacles to entrance into a religious life is to be found in parental objections. A study of more than 4,000 religious showed that of them 59% of the priests had entered the seminary over the objections of one or more parents and 72% of the sisters had so entered novitiates. Certainly it may be inferred that every year thousands of young people are deterred from entering seminaries or novitiates because of the objections of pAarents. Surprising enough these objections often come from families who are regarded as generally including good Catholic mothers and fathers.

Certainly the family should be, and often is, the nursery of vocations. As Pope Pius XI said in his famous encyclical on the Catholic priesthood: "The first and most natural place where the flowers of the Sanctuary should almost spontaneously grow and bloom, remains always the purely and deeply Christian home." But unfortunately, in all too many cases, the family which considers itself Catholic, often in. perceptibly succumbs to the pressure of its environment, which in America today is so strongly, predominantly secularistic. It is difficult for Catholics living and working in the world to keep the climate of opinion outside the home from pervading the home and subtly and effectively leading the parents, unconscious of the fact, to give undue weight to worldly possessions and worldly success. It is easy for a Catholic parent to desire above all things that his son be a great success in the business or professional world. It is easy for a Catholic parent to wish that the daughter be not only happily married, but married to a man of wealth or at least of the promise of wealth. These are the attractions of a socially advantageous marriage, the prospect of connections of social and financial value. Great is the pressure on the parents to see to it that their daughter is married as advantageously as the daughters of their friends, and that their sons are well started out on the way to worldly success in business or the professions.

### **What are some of the most common parental objections?**

One mother or father may say: "I want my child to see more of life or of the world before making his decision."

What does the parent mean by "life" or "the world"? You might well say to him or her: "You certainly don't mean the evil side of life. You don't want your child to be purposely dragged through the underworld or exposed to temptations that may easily be avoided. If you don't mean the seamy side of life, do you mean to take him up on a mountain-top and tempt him by showing him all the kingdoms of the earth? Are you going to let him taste the flesh-pots of the world with the thought that their saviour will not appeal to him? Are you going to spread before him the prospect of a life's banquet of all the world's delicacies, the allurements of all the senses, the concupiscences of mind and body? Are you going to place before him all the treasures of books and music and art and travel and the companionship of secular associations, sports, the prospects of power, and the gratification of ambition and of pride? Having done this, having let your son or daughter form habits of secular enjoyment, are you going to expect him or her to break those habits? Are you going to make it easier for them to forgo the indulgences of a selfish life for the sacrifices and disciplines of the religious life? Are you not rather purposely tempting him or her towards the secular world? Are you not assuming the terrible responsibility both for your child's soul and for the souls of the many he or she might save and serve, the many spiritual children he or she might have for eternity, if he or she were to embrace the religious life?" Certainly, you must weigh carefully the perils of immersion in the secular life as a test for a religious vocation. Certainly, grave consideration should be given to making the test for a vocation, not in the world, but in the proper place: novitiate or seminary. Here is where the young person should be tested without the alternative peril to his soul.

Furthermore, you must remember that entering the seminary or novitiate is not a final or irrevocable decision. It is merely a determination to find out whether the young person has a vocation.

Furthermore, you should ask yourself the question: "Why give the world first choice, why give it preference?" He may already know something of secular life, but he may know little or nothing about the religious life. Thus, by letting him learn more of life by exposing him to the attractions and allurements of the secular world you may be loading the dice

against the religious life and not holding the scales even.

**"My son or daughter is too young to choose a vocation."**

Choosing a vocation is one of the problems that face the adolescent. For the term adolescence itself means growing up: physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and an adaptation to the young person's social and economic environment. It means finding himself and his place in life—in the community and in the present day world in which he lives.

Studies have shown that adolescence generally determines the part and the extent to which religion will play in the young person's life throughout his life. He generally fixes his attitude toward religion, his conclusions as to its importance.

Experience shows that it is between graduation from grade school and the middle years of high school, or the senior year generally, that young persons decide upon their vocation, or at least the vocation with respect to which they wish to test themselves. Some authorities have said that most vocations are pretty well settled in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Father Poage says: "The ages from 12 to 14 are the most important years of vocational choice in boys. Well over half of to day's priests and brothers decided at that age that they wanted their present life." Of 6,134 clerics recently queried as to when they entered the seminary to become a priest, 47% entered at 13 to 16; 30% at 17 to 19 and 23% at 20 or later.

Most of us at times have wanted the world to stand still and stay the hand of time and preserve to eternity some rare moment, such as when you saw your son or daughter receiving First Communion or being confirmed or graduating from elementary or high school. You knew he or she was then close to God and in a state of grace. Maybe you saw your son at the high point in the athletic achievements of his youth, beautiful as a young athlete sculptured by the Greeks, full of joy and strength and happiness. You would have it ever so, without change or shadow of change. So, too, would you preserve your son or daughter in innocence and in grace.

Might you not at graduation Mass for your son or daughter exclaim:

Time, stand still!

Dig no furrows in that placid brow.

Cloud not those clear eyes

From the vision of Celestial Truth

By the world's confusions.

Clench not those hands

In the world's contentions,

But keep them ever clasped in prayer.

Let not those ears

In the din of the world's clamours

Cease to hear celestial melodies.

Keep those feet

Ever in the paths of righteousness

And let them not

Stray away from the house of God.

Let that heart not become dull

With the world's indifference

Or beat with intemperate passion,

But burn steadily with Divine Love,

Forever part of Thy Mystical Body.

Eternally united with Thee

In the peace that passes understanding.

You know you possess no power to save your son or daughter from the clutch of time, changes in personality and in character and in habits of life. But you can help to show him the way of life that may more easily lead to spiritual perfection than in a worldly employment. For he may enter a way of life in which he may be constantly close to God incarnate, in which his reading may be largely spiritual, in which he may have opportunity for reflection and contemplation and prayer, association with religious of high ideals, and training in self-discipline with the help of a rule of life perhaps tested for centuries, laid down by St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Benedict, or St. Francis. What is a better prospect of preserving this boy or girl in all his or her glorious innocence, idealism, generosity, and spirit of self-sacrifice than entrance to a novitiate or seminary?

Adolescence is the high noon of ideals—a time of dreams of heroism and of self-sacrifice. The young man sees himself as a knight in shining armour, and a young woman perhaps a Joan of Arc. It is the time when living or read-about models of self-sacrifice and of heroism most appeal to youth. The youth that is longing for sacrifice, carries the banner with a strange or familiar device calling to higher levels of achievement. Why should we not take advantage of this idealism, not simply for the advantage of the Church, but because taking a person into a vocation when he is at his noblest, highest, and best is most likely to keep him noble and to make him happy.

### **Happiness for Your Child**

When you speak of the happiness of your child, what do you mean by happiness? You don't need the arguments of St. Thomas made seven hundred years ago to convince you that happiness does not consist in wealth, honour, fame or glory, power, in any good of the body, in any created good, or in pleasure. You know the distinction between a mere succession of pleasures and true happiness, on the basis of your own experience, observation, and reflection. You know with St. Thomas that "final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence."

So, too, you remember the words of the psalmist: "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." You remember also the words of St. Augustine: "Happy is he who knoweth Thee; and the happy life is this—to rejoice unto Thee, in Thee, and for Thee; this it is and there is no other." And again St. Augustine says: "Our temporal life is lived profitably only when it is used to gain merit whereby eternal life is attained." And "anyone setting out to be happy must attain for himself that which always endures and cannot be snatched away through any severe misfortune."

You have made a heavy investment working towards the happiness of your child. How better can you protect that investment than by helping your child, if fitted therefore, to enter the religious life? Certainly God will not overlook one who has vowed himself or herself to His service. Certainly we should remember the words of St. Bernard with respect to the priestly life: "Man lives more purely, falls more rarely, rises more quickly, lives more prudently, is refreshed more frequently, reposes more securely, dies more confidently, is cleansed more quickly, is rewarded more copiously."

### **Wait**

Parents may say: "Wait a little." Why wait? Why is it too early to find out whether or not your son or daughter is fitted for the religious life? Why waste time? Why run the risk of a vocation lost? Why have the young person spend time on studies of no value to him in the religious life? If he is to run the race, why not start training him before he has formed habits that may prevent him from entering the race and from reaching his goal? It was said long ago: "Habit is a cable. We weave a strand of it each day until at last we cannot break it." Why weave the strands of the cable binding a young person to all the allurements of the secular world? Why not weave a cable that will grapple him to the spiritual life as with hoops of steel?

We often say: "Thy Will be done," but rebel against the Will of God. Too often it is our will and not God's. Are we to encourage young persons in the same direction? Are we to emphasize to them with respect to the choice of their vocation, what is their will rather than God's? Are we to emphasize things that they will give up if they enter the spiritual life? Should we not rather emphasize things they will gain if they enter the religious life? Have we forgotten that it is better to

give than to receive? Is the young person to live as if he really believes that he was given the gift of life in order to know God and serve Him in this world in order to be happy with Him in the next? Is he to serve God only with his lips or with his life? These are the questions we should help young people to ask themselves and to seek in prayer the true answers.

Parents who say that their children are too young to consider the religious life seriously often do not object to young dating or even to young marriage. They do not object to a young marriage in many cases if they happen to like the person their child wants to marry. And yet there are two great differences between entering marriage on the one hand and the seminary or novitiate on the other.

In the first place, as to marriage, you may be mistaken as to the character and personality of the person your child is going to marry. Furthermore, that character or personality may change with the years; virtues may diminish or largely disappear. On the other hand, you know to a much larger extent what God is and you know that with God there is no change or shadow of change.

In the second place, marriage is irrevocable. A mistake may ruin your child's happiness forever. The seminary and novitiate are testing places and your child may leave at any time if he or she, or his or her ecclesiastical superiors determine that he or she is not fitted for, or will not be happy in, the religious life. Furthermore, as to happiness, Archbishop Cushing said: "In the absence of a strong sense of purpose, life becomes meaningless and for millions of people almost unbearable in its aimlessness." Certainly the purposefulness of the religious life gives it centrality, inspiration, and a rewarding sense of achievement. We know the achievements of the clergy and many of the religious and we know that there must be an abiding happiness and a sense of joy in the consciousness of duties performed and service well done. A woman in a group of tourists visiting a leper asylum and watching a sister dressing the leper's sores of a victim in the advanced stages of the disease said: "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars." "Neither would I," said the sister.

### **Stifled personalities**

Some parents think that the religious life would stifle the personality or individuality of their child. This, of course, is due to lack of knowledge of the religious life and of the great varieties of opportunities for the young. Certainly no ecclesiastical superior will fail to make use of the talents and abilities of any person in the service of the Church.

As to the happiness of parents, many who have had sons and daughters enter the religious life are emphatic in saying that they are closer spiritually to their children than they would be had the children remained at home. And they find their happiness in the happiness that comes to their children from the religious life. For if the child be happy, the parent worthy of the name will be happy.

It is, of course, natural for parents to wish to have their children with them. It is not surprising, therefore, that parents sometimes make every effort to postpone entrance to a novitiate or a seminary. This, of course, is a mistake both from the point of view of the young person who should embark as early as possible upon the religious life and the training for it, and from the point of view of the parent. The longer departure from home is postponed, the harder it is to sever the connection between parent and child. And so the most conscientious Catholic parent may rationalize and, unconscious of a submerged selfishness, place obstacles in the way of entrance into training for the religious life and delay such entrance. Sometimes, of course, the delay continues so long that the child never enters the novitiate or seminary. This is a risk of delay.

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In helping a young person to determine whether he or she should prepare for the religious life, he or she should be given as much information as possible about the life of priests, brothers, and sisters. This information can be given by books, pamphlets, magazines, motion pictures, discussions with priests and religious and with parents, and visits to seminaries and novitiates.

The religious life should be presented with scrupulous accuracy. It should not be glamourized. The appeal should not be to secular or worldly or selfish motives. Thus, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, at one of the vocational institutes at Notre Dame, pointed out that the appeal to the sisterhood should be by the Cross and not by the tennis racket. He referred to a brochure published by a sisterhood which showed young sisters playing tennis. He did not wish to criticize that particular sisterhood, but he did point out that the appeal should be not to the selfishness or the worldly desires of the young for amusements, normal pleasures, the comforts of life, security for old age, loving companionship, but the appeal should be to the idealism and the ever present love of youth for the heroic. The appeal should be, not to their desire for personal gratification, for a life of peace and of comfort, but for a life of sacrifice.

The disadvantages as well as the advantages of the religious life must be made clear to the young. They must know that the life is not always one of spectacular heroism or of dramatic spiritual achievement. They must know that the life may represent months and years of obscurity, dull tasks, companionship sometimes with persons with whom they do not readily agree. They cannot expect to have the best of both worlds: to have all modern conveniences, to have physical comfort, to have good and regular and plentiful meals, and to be free from worry or care or responsibility.

### **The appeal must be to supernatural motives.**

In encouraging aspirants to the religious life, of course, care must be taken to avoid the tragedy of stimulating such a desire in any person who is theologically ineligible for such a life, such as persons defective in body, new converts until the Bishop thinks that their faith is sufficiently tried, sons of non-Catholics as long as their parents remain in their error, men bound to common military service by the civil law before they are fully discharged, and others. This is a question, of course, for consultation with a pastor, with respect to the theology of vocations. Certainly we will all agree, however, that it would be a tragedy, for example, to encourage to the priesthood one who for physical or mental reasons was clearly ineligible.

Reverend William M. Robinson, P.S.C., writing on the theology of religious vocations, says: "Right intention supposes that the primary purpose of the candidate is supernatural—the glory of God, his own sanctification, the salvation of souls. This supernatural intention does not exclude intentions of the merely natural order, such as love of teaching, desire for peace from the turmoil of the world, satisfying the will of parents or relatives, or friendship of some religious persons. These secondary human intentions are not to be despised. ....

Any Catholic can be admitted to the religious life, who is not barred by legislative impediment, who is moved by a right intention, and who is fitted to bear the burdens of this life."

### **Candidates for a vocation**

Archbishop Cushing has said: "All that is required of an aspirant to Holy Orders is a right intention and such fitness of nature and grace, manifested by integrity of life and sufficiency of learning, as will give a well-founded hope of his properly discharging the obligations of the priesthood. Consequently, there is the duty of seeking candidates for a vocation, rather than candidates with a vocation."

In seeking candidates for a vocation, although it has been said that supernatural motives should be paramount, the attention of young people can be called to the opportunities for service as religious in such fields of activity as may appeal to their particular aptitudes and interests. They can be informed of the large variety of work done by members of the hundreds of religious orders and congregations, by secular priests, and by missionaries at home and abroad. The young woman who likes teaching has open before her the prospect of a wide variety of teaching activities: elementary, secondary, university, and college, opportunities in the field of nursing and of medicine and of occupational therapy, psychiatrics and psychology and teaching of the mentally retarded, of arts and crafts and literature and all the sciences. Here we can parallel the recruiting campaigns for the Armed Services which appeal to occupational or vocational aspirations of youth and a desire for travel and for adventure. But we have the advantage of supernatural appeal.

## Conclusion

We have referred to the pressure, almost irresistible, of the secular world upon the youth of today. We have referred to the organized drive by the world of education and industry and commerce and of the Armed Forces and by secular vocational advisers towards secular life. The problem is in the din of the world's compulsions for the young person to hear the still, small voice. Our purpose is to get the youth of today to pause, reflect, to investigate religious vocations, to ask parents and pastors for guidance, to pray constantly, and to listen for the quiet voice that may call them to devote themselves wholly and without reserve to a life-long service for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Nihil Obstat:  
Percy Jones,  
Censor Theol. Deputatus.

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✠ D. Mannix,  
Archiepiscopus Melbournensis

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