

Msgr. Bill's Weekly Letter...

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Please keep all those who are discerning a life in service to the Church in your prayers this year. Pray also for those who have the responsibility to guide the men and women discerning a vocation to religious life. We also pray for their families who have raised their children to live a life of generosity, courage, and faith.

I encourage all parents to love their sons and daughters so much that you are willing to offer them to Mother Church and God's service if that is what God wants for them. When your children ask you about their future, talk to them about marriage, priesthood, religious life. Ask them if they have thought about religious life, priesthood, etc. They will not choose this just because you mention it, but silence is usually interpreted as a, "No."

God our Father loves your daughter or son even more than you love them. His heart is infinitely in love with each of us, each of your children. He will never, NEVER, lead your son or daughter into a way of life not good for them. Help discover what God has in store for them. Always remember you may have a pope or Mother Theresa living upstairs, riding in your car. Always give God a chance.

Many of our homes have some wonderful stone work. Kitchens and dens are full of counter tops and floors that show off the beauty of stone. Our own altar has beautiful marble and sandstone. We have statues that depict saints and Mary. Museums are filled with the works of Michelangelo and Bernini.

One common element of these works is the cutting and polishing which brings out the beauty. It is not the raw stone we admire, rather the chiseled, cut, polished, worked-over stone that catches our eye. I believe it was Michelangelo who said, "I see the figure in the stone and cut away what does not belong."

St. Paul's allusion to being living stones is a reminder that we too must be cut, chiseled, bent into shape if we desire to be Jesus' ambassadors and helpers. We cannot go it alone – on our own. First of all, Jesus loves us more than we can imagine, and he will not ask you or me to stand out in front of others without his presence.

When Christ uses the chisel, it is not to embarrass or bully, rather to trim, cut back; prune our lives that we may grow even more beautiful and fruitful. Left on its own the rose bush does not produce the flowers we enjoy. God knows that each of us needs to be cared for. We can be our own worst enemies by our forgetfulness, carelessness, downright meanness, etc. We get in our own way. God's grace can see much further than eyesight. Grace can see beauty on the inside of the stone and help cut away what doesn't belong. Grace can release the soul from its own prison.

Grace is the very beauty of God within. The chisel, pruning fork, sandpaper, etc. are tools God uses to *shine us up* so to speak. He uses Confession, Eucharist, prayers, fasting, and penance et al. to help us become what he dreams for us to be. His plan for you or me is greater than any plan we have for ourselves.

Let our prayer this week open the heart to be molded and formed by grace into a deeper expression of God's abiding presence. You and I could be the proof others need to see the glory of God. Do not sell him or yourself short.

pace – bene,

Msgr. Bill

