



Homily for 11/7/2021

Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

32<sup>nd</sup> Sun. Ordinary Time, B  
*Vocations*

In the Gospel today, we once again have a short-form and a long-form. There is a temptation on the part of priests to read the short form because it would conveniently leave out something that might be embarrassing to read, namely, Jesus' condemnation of the Scribes of the Law. In this section he condemns them for go around in long robes. Here I stand before you in a long robe. He condemns them for accepting greeting in the marketplace. People will see me at Publix and greet me by saying "Hi, Father!". I have a seat of honor here in the sacred synaxis of the Christian Community. I often ask for donations and many Godfearing widows give from their poverty to the Church. I recite a lengthy prayer every time I offer the Holy Sacrifice. Woe is me! It seems as if Jesus is speaking directly to me. And He is. But perhaps not in the way we think.

We must be careful not to read this Scripture with merely a literalist's interpretation. Jesus does not condemn good practices, but rather the spirit in which the thing is done. For example, when He condemns the hypocrites for their manner of fasting, he doesn't condemn fasting itself, but rather the intention for which they fast, "that others may see them", instead of doing it for God, who sees in secret and rewards those who do so accordingly. The same for praying and paying tithes. In the same way, Jesus doesn't necessarily condemn these practices of robes and seating order and greetings, but rather the mentality and spirit behind them that is erroneous. Wearing of long robes is not the problem. If that were the case, he has condemned just about every Middle Eastern person of his day and many in our own! Everyone in Jesus' day wore long robes. On the other hand, just because the modern custom is to wear long pants instead of robes does not mean there is now nothing to condemn. People in long pants can commit the same error of spirit as people in long robes. No, what Jesus condemns is the abuse of power that comes with sacred office; the assumption that because a robe is worn, and an office held, people should treat the person who wears it with privilege. This is what Jesus is condemning - whether or not you wear long pants or a cassock and alb. There are plenty of clericalists who would never wear a cassock but still assume that priests deserve to be treated differently. And I have met many humble and sincere priests who wear a cassock with an unassuming spirit that seek to serve and offer his life for the other without expectation or demand for honor. In fact, many priests these days are derided and scorned for wearing these long robes. Blessed are they when they insult you and hate you all because of me! Rejoice and be glad, because your reward will be great in heaven! This is the Spirit of God animating their souls. Wisdom, be attentive! It is no coincidence, then, in God's providence, as we speak of the correct spirit the Lord desires for those public people who represent the community of faith, that this week is National Vocation Awareness Week.

"National Vocation Awareness Week, celebrated November 7-13, 2021, is an annual week-long celebration of the Catholic Church in the United States dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life through prayer and education, and to renew our prayers and support for those who are considering one of these particular vocations." The Lord, in His wisdom, has called certain members of the faithful to follow Him in complete dedication, even to the point of renouncing the good of marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of God. The vocation to religious life and the priesthood are geared towards a closer relationship of Christ, in which we cling solely to Him and the hope we have of eternal life in the world to come. It causes those so called to leave everything behind and follow Him.

It is the duty of every baptized Christian to honestly and diligently search for the will of God in their lives. Instead of asking ourselves, "What do I want?" ask instead, "God, what do you want for me?" This is the prayer I myself prayed when I was a young man. There is no greater adventure, nor more satisfying path in life than to embark upon the journey of doing God's will no matter how difficult, daunting or exotic it may seem. His grace is sufficient. Think not, "I am too young" or "I am not good enough" or even "I'm too good for that lowly task!" God does not



call the qualified, He qualifies the called, and whether or not we appraise God's will rightly, it is the greatest path and our only true happiness.

We have a great example of God's providence in the first reading today as we hear about the prophet Elijah in the land of Zarephath. Even when all seemed lost and there was not more water or food, the jar never went empty and the jug never ran dry, such is God's providence if we but trust in it. How much more will God provide for those who audaciously follow His will into a religious vocation or accept Holy Orders from God!

As we approach the beginning of a new liturgical year in Advent, I have been discerning a new theme for the parish. I mentioned it in my address to the parish this past Wednesday. The recorded video and full text can be found on our website and will be reprinted in the bulletin for the next few weeks. In it I develop the theme of evangelization as invitation. The surest and best way to bring people to Jesus is not through a program or speech or YouTube video, but rather by one-on-one personal contact, in which we extend a personal invitation to someone to "come and follow me." The same goes for a call to the priesthood. It is part of my own call and journey. Had it not been for someone to courageously call me forth to consider the priesthood, I may well never have thought about it or taken it seriously. God works through us to speak to another. I would encourage you in this next week to think and pray about someone you know who might make a good priest, religious brother, sister or nun. Then, after you have prayed, make the courageous and crucial next step to personally invite them to consider whether or not God might be calling them to a radical vocation of love in service to God and His people. Do it in person. Do it by phone. Do it by letter or Facebook messenger! Either way you do, make the personal invitation. Don't take the easy road or think there will be someone else. Don't give in and live the short form of the Gospel. Courageously live the fullness of the long form, the unabridged and challengingly complete form of the Gospel. By doing so you might be playing the role of the prophet in another person's life.

May Jesus Christ be praised!