



Called to Love: To which we say “Yes”

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Vocational Discernment

In the first book of Samuel, we find an interesting passage of how God calls Samuel. The story is beautiful and particular about how this teen was consecrated by his mother to the service of God and called. According to the passage, as he was asleep in the sanctuary, the teen Samuel heard a voice that called “Samuel, Samuel!” and as he heard this he got up and went toward Eli the priest and Samuel said: “Here I am. You have called me,” and Eli responded, “No I have not called you, go back to sleep.” This happens two more times to him and Eli realizes it’s the Lord who

was calling the teen Samuel, Samuel did not yet know the Lord, for he had never had a message from the Lord. That is when Eli told Samuel: “Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.’” So, Samuel went back to bed. And the Lord came and called as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” and Samuel replied, “Speak, your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3: 9-10). To respond to the vocational calling it is necessary to enter a process of discernment and answer the question, what is God calling me to do? The vocation is a service, a mission, a ministry which we are all called to answer.

Vocational Path

To help us understand what goes into vocational discernment, we talked to a seminarian in his second year of theology from our diocese, Charlie Leidel. Charlie is the third oldest child in his family. He was born in Farmington Hills on Oct. 24, 1997. At a very young age his parents moved to Grand Haven where he lived until he was 16 years old attending Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Grand Rapids. His parents, Craig and Shannon, raised him alongside his eight siblings (Fr. Samuel, Anne, Mary Claire, Kathleen, John, Virginia, Evelyn and Thomas) very close to the Church. Charlie tells us: “we were accustomed to praying as a family every night; a majority of the time we would do the night prayer of the liturgy of the hours, though sometimes we would switch it for the rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy or any other appropriate prayer.” He also tells us that his dad would take them to the perpetual adoration chapel at St. Patrick in Grand Haven to do half an hour of prayer before the Eucharist.

During one of these visits to the Blessed Sacrament when he was 14 years old was the first time Charlie asked the Lord what He wanted for his life - to be a priest or a married man. Later that day he felt an inspiration to be a diocesan priest which scared him because in his mind there was only the idea of being part of the St. John community which his older brother had joined, or getting married. The years passed and after finishing high school and thanks to his faith experience, Charlie felt the calling of God to the priesthood and decided to enter into the community of St. John in Peoria Illinois, following in his older brother's footsteps. It was there where in prayer, the Lord revealed to him and after two years he made the decision to leave the religious community and begin attending into the seminary to become a diocesan priest.

Just like all those aspiring to be seminarians of our Diocese, Charlie met with Father Stephen J. Durkee, diocesan director of vocations, who helped him make the transition from religious life to being a diocesan seminarian. The first three years of this formation he attended St. John Vianney seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Charlie tells us that during this time, they as seminarians, can grow in human formation, receive spiritual formation, and have the opportunity for prayer and meditation to help them discern God's calling for their life. In his current stage, he is in theology at Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, where his studies are focused on the formation to the priesthood. With the help of God and our prayers he will be ordained a transitional deacon and in 2026 he will be ordained priest.

Vocation to service

One of Charlie's goals is to share the love of God through the sacraments, so in his wish of taking this love to as many as people possible, he decided to learn Spanish. He shares with us: "At the ministry level I want to serve as many people as possible and bring them to Jesus through the sacraments, my words and my example. Besides, I have realized that the Hispanic community is extremely large in this area and with a lot of needs to be taken care of and not many priests who speak Spanish."

Charlie's words are very enlightening when he talks about vocations. He told us: "the vocational calling is not just a general calling that God makes, it's an individual and personal calling; that why we should live our own vocation by our own experience and not pretend to live someone else's life. God called me, Charlie Leidel, and I want to live this vocation as Charlie Leidel and not someone else."

Message to the youth

Charlie tells us in the last instance the question to which we should all be responding and specifically the youth is: "What way does God want me to love? That's why I tell the youth don't be scared to throw yourself into this adventure since our hearts were made to love a certain way." He adds: "The faith of Hispanic youth is so big that they are not scared to express it in the moments of adoration through their body, through their language, through their voices, something that others don't do. That's why I tell them don't be scared to show the world who you are. All of you have a purpose here and the values from your Hispanic inheritance gives you

something the United States of America needs. You don't have to be so easily carried away by the pressure that the local culture puts on you. Conserve your sense of belonging, because the way that you all have to live your faith has a place in the Church. Finally, he says: "Things are simple, you have to love and everything else will fall into place."