

The Call to Holiness

Each person is called by God to holiness of life. This "call" to holiness is one's first and fundamental "call" from God - one's "vocation". One is further called to live out this primary "call" in another vocation in life - firstly in the single life; thereafter in single, married, widowhood, or religious (priesthood, brotherhood, sisterhood) life.

Although we may not have ever or often explicitly thought of it, the God-ordained goal of our lives is holiness - sainthood. Jesus expressed it thus: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt 5:48*).

How is one to live a holy life, to reach the goal of one's vocation, to become a saint? This was the question asked of Jesus by the man with many possessions of whom we read in the gospels. "Now someone approached him and said, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?'" Jesus' response to him was, and to us is, "If you would enter into life, keep the commandments" (*cf Mt 19:16,17*). If we would enter into life, we must keep the commandments.

At other times and in other ways, as recorded in the gospels, Jesus reiterated the call to holiness and indicated the means to attain it: living according to the Beatitudes; meeting the Conditions of Discipleship - "If anyone wishes to come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (*Lk 9:23*); observing the Great Commandments - "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (*Lk 19:27*).

Everything that our Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted to the Church - the gospel, the Mass, the sacraments- are provided to help us respond to the call to holiness and to attain it.

On Ash Wednesday (March 1) we begin the season of Lent. As we do so let us set our sights on the goal of life, holiness; and let us determine to use the means to attain it.

Fr. Patrick J O'Connor
Corpus Christi Church
Tahoe City, CA