

# CLIFF NOTES

by Fr. Clifford Smith

## Vocation Awareness

Many people think that "vocation" is a word that refers only to priests and religious. The truth is that God calls each of us to a particular path in life ... a path that will cut to the heart of our desires and who we are. At some point in our lives, each of us will be inspired to do something that we not only have been given the "tools" to do, but that will make us happier than anything else.

God wants us to be happy and to use our talents and abilities to do good work. As Christians, we take on the responsibility to follow Jesus and to find out the particular mission assigned to us (*our vocation*) at our Baptism. Of course, when most of us were baptized, we didn't know anything about vocations, or about Jesus for that matter. For most of us, baptized very young, the job of guiding us on the right path was left to our parents and godparents and others who loved and cared for us. Those same people were likely the ones who encouraged our talents and abilities.

Sooner or later, though, we all reach a point where we begin to wonder how we, as individuals, will make our mark in the world. We begin to make choices in the subjects we study in school. We develop new relationships. We start to ponder the type of work we want to pursue.

If we are wise, we will remember that God promises to lead us to a life that will bring us happiness. All we need to do is to ask, and then be open to the answer.

Our late Holy Father, John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation "**Pastores Dabo Vobis**", (*I will Give You Shepherds*), said that "all the members of the Church, without exception, have the grace and responsibility to look after vocations."

The Second Vatican Council also stated: "*The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community.*"

Simply stated, that means that all of us here at St. Mark the Evangelist, and the Church throughout the world, to share in the task of encouraging and fostering vocations to the Church.

In 2002, eleven hundred delegates representing the Church in North America – bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated and lay men and women, young and old, – gathered in Montreal for the Third Continental Congress on Vocations to the Ordained Ministry and Consecrated Life in North America. Out of that gathering came a pastoral challenge to create a Culture of Vocation in the Church of North America, focusing on five particular actions:

- To Pray
- To Evangelize
- To Experience
- To Mentor
- To Invite

It is the responsibility of all of the faithful to build a culture of vocations in the Parish of St. Mark the Evangelist and the Diocese of Dallas.