

Letter for Vocations Sunday – 11 May 2014

“As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, ‘Follow me’ and he got up and followed him”.

I purposefully chose the Feast of St. John Vianney, the Patron Saint of Priests for my own ordination as Bishop last August, because the Curé of Ars exemplifies for me the true model of service in our Church rooted in the local parish. On that occasion, I spoke about the importance of every priest being a director and promoter of vocations. I said then, and repeat now that: *“diocesan priesthood is a call, not a career; a way of life, not a job; an identity, not just a role”*. I have been inspired in my journey around the parishes by the witness and example of priesthood evident in this Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin.

Pope Francis in referring to the work that is in need of attention, uses a very powerful image when he describes the Church as a *‘field hospital’* after battle. In his own words, he contextualises the remark for us: *“I see clearly that the thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity”*. This work is central to priesthood. If you are interested in healing wounds, extending compassion, warming hearts and offering forgiveness, then priesthood may be for you. Priests are called to be accessible, approachable, and available to people and their concerns. I thank all our priests for their hard

work and for their example, as we remind ourselves that our young people are attracted to the priesthood by priests who themselves live a joyful, happy priesthood. It remains true that *“the best examples of priesthood are joyful priests who love their faith and who love the Church”*.

Thankfully, in the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin we have three seminarians – Sean who is due for Ordination this July in Portarlinton, David who begins his pastoral placement in Graiguecullen next September, and Mark who is in his early years of formation. But, as you read or hear this letter, perhaps you might ask yourself: when was the last time someone was ordained from our parish? ... let us just take a moment to reflect on that key question ... and the follow up question: How could I actively promote vocations? I believe that potential vocations are all around us - in our football clubs, in our bands, in our schools, in our colleges, in our families. Young people are interested in making a difference and in living a meaningful life which can be expressed in priesthood. The parish that prays regularly for vocations will generate vocations. Pope Paul VI said that vocations are an *“inescapable indicator of faith and love of individual parish and diocesan communities”*. Thank you to all of you who pray for, and promote vocations at the parish level. Sometimes all that is necessary is for someone in the parish or the diocese to suggest the notion of a vocation to a younger person. You can be that someone today.

Parents and friends need to encourage, not discourage; young people need permission and reassurance to talk about and consider priesthood - my prayer is that this conversation will now begin.

I invite our young people to consider choosing priesthood – it offers an opportunity to live a meaningful life with a clear purpose in a variety of different situations. Priesthood offers you the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the Christian community by bringing hope and healing to many. If priesthood appeals to you, please contact me directly for a conversation, or contact any of the priests in your parish or in the diocese. I commend Fr. Ruairi O'Domhnaill and the Diocesan Vocations Team. I applaud the formation staff in the seminaries at Maynooth and Rome. I acknowledge deeply the work and support of St. Joseph's Young Priests' Society.

Thank you for making me feel so welcome here, and for encouraging me in my vocation. Let us continue to build the Diocese and the Church of tomorrow as we pray for vocations, talk about vocations and encourage vocations. In prayer we place the work of vocations under the mantle of Mary and St. Joseph.

Bishop Denis Nulty