

VOCATION CORNER

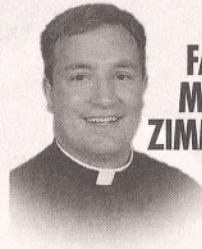
Parents and parishes: Vocations start with you

Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith.

Because of this, they are the primary and most important “vocation directors” in our archdiocese. As a vocation director, my first responsibility is to support parents as they teach their children how to answer a call to a religious vocation.

This can be unfamiliar knowledge for parents to attain and to pass on, especially if there is not a priest or religious within the extended family to serve as an example.

The reality is that with fewer priests



**FATHER
MITCHEL
ZIMMERMAN**

and religious serving more and more Catholics, parents must make an even greater effort to know priests and religious and to introduce their children to them.

The most important thing for parents, I think, is to let their children know how fortunate they would be if God calls them to priesthood or religious life,

and how supportive the family would be of such a calling.

It is hard for a vocation to grow if the parents are only marginally supportive. It is right and proper for parents to assume that their child has a religious vocation until proven other-

wise, rather than vice versa.

Even if there is not a priestly or religious vocation within one’s extended domestic family, there are priests and religious in our extended parish families.

After parents, parishes are next in line in responsibility for teaching young persons about religious vocations. It is within the parish that we realize our identity as the heavenly family that God is building to live with him forever.

We should be constantly inviting our young people to consider spending their lives building a family that lasts for eternity. The best compliment parishioners can give their young people is to tell them that you see in them the potential to teach God’s people by

word and example how to set their hearts on the kingdom of heaven.

“Whoever loves father or mother, brother or sister more than me, is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:37). This is not an excuse from our Lord to love our earthly families less, but an invitation to join him in a special way in building a family that is destined to inherit eternal life.

Religious vocations should be the fruit of a parish that is becoming just such a family, a family that truly loves the kingdom of heaven that has been opened through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Father Mitchel Zimmerman is the archdiocesan vocation director.

FROM THE SLIPED

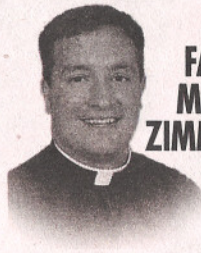
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Want your son to be happy? Encourage the priesthood!

I live with Father Steve Beseau at the St. Lawrence Catholic Campus Center at KU, and last week Father Steve mentioned a brief story on CNN regarding the happiness of clergy versus those in other careers.

Overwhelmingly, clergy are the most satisfied of all workers. On the heels of this TV story, I opened Time magazine. Once again, in a survey of all careers, the clergy had the highest quality of life. Sixty-seven percent of clergy described themselves as very happy. Second place went to firefighters.

When most of us think about the priesthood, one of the first things we think about is the promise of celibacy



**FATHER
MITCHEL
ZIMMERMAN**

made by a priest — the fact that he has sacrificed the possibility of a biological family in order to serve as a husband and a father to the church.

This is a difficult sacrifice to ask of a young man, and a difficult one to make. However, as we can see in the statistics above, the sacrifice opens up new possibilities of fulfillment and happiness through single-hearted service of

God and his chosen family, the church.

Isn't it interesting that firefighters and clergy are the two most fulfilling professions? Firefighters literally save people from flames, while clergy, as people set on fire by the Holy Spirit, also will go to great lengths to save God's people from the evil that might

harm them.

As we say at the end of each decade of the rosary — "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy!" This is the vocation of a priest — to be a shepherd of souls!

Like a husband and father who has the vocation to provide for his family and to protect them from danger, so a priest is to courageously shepherd his flock and to protect them from the evils that threaten the eternal life they have received in baptism.

Because the priesthood is not simply a profession, but also a vocation, a priest does not have to search for the meaning of his life apart from his day job. The two are inseparable in the life of a priest! No wonder the profession

ranks far above all others!

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you" (Mt 6:33). This is the vocation of a priest. In offering his life completely to God, he receives back from the Lord a life of deep meaning and lasting happiness, even as he makes a sacrifice that does not make sense to the world.

If every young man in our archdiocese would entrust his happiness to the Lord and to service of his church, we would have more applicants to the priesthood than we could accept. Let's all pray for that day to arrive sooner rather than later for our archdiocese.

Father Mitchel Zimmerman is the archdiocesan vocations director.