

Many thanks to everyone who made Trunk or Treat so successful. It was a wonderful community event for the parish and our neighbors and friends.

National Vocation Awareness Week is November 3-8. What is the first thing that we think of when we think of vocations? Many would probably say, Vocations to the priesthood or religious life. But we also know that the married life and the single life are also vocations, basically all ways of life can be our vocation if it is what God wants for us.

We believe that God created the sun and the moon, the great oceans with all the fish and animals within, the beautiful land with all the animals and plants and God found all of creation GOOD. God then created humankind, and just as he found all of creation good, God found the creation of humankind in his own likeness as VERY GOOD. God created humankind to fill the earth and to be nurtured by the fullness of the land. God gifted us with different gifts and graces so that we could live with happiness and joy in loving service to our God and one another. Our vocation is the using of the gifts and graces that we have received from God in answer to his desire for our lives. This is why it is important to help our children and youth to not only prepare for what they want to do as they grow older but what vocation they are being called to.

Many will find themselves drawn to the vocation of marriage but this is much more than simply "falling in love." Marriage like all the vocations is an examination of the gifts and graces that we have received from God and a prayerful discernment of how we are being called to live. We see many marriages struggling in our day because they are entered into because of a feeling or desire. Unfortunately, when that feeling fades or the desire diminishes then there is no foundation for the marriage to stand. That is why the vocation of marriage always has God at the center because God never changes and keeps the marriage strong even in times of struggle. So as we celebrate National Vocation Awareness Week let us pray for all married couples, all preparing for marriage and all who will be called into this vocation.

The vocation of the single life is not always one that is deliberately chosen but one that is simply lived. But as with any vocation it is a way of using the gifts and graces we have received in the fullest service of the Lord. As we live the vocation of the single life it is important to focus on God's call and to be aware of the fullness of life that is provided by our God.

The vocations of priesthood and religious life are struggling in our day. We are all aware of the growing shortage found in these vocations and at the same time aware of the negative press surrounding the Church. It is easy to blame the problem on the bishops and priests who have committed horrendous crimes while being protected by the Church. The Church has finally begun to deal with the issue of sexual abuse but a great deal of damage has been done which the Church must seek to heal. With this climate it may be difficult for youth and young adults to answer the call to a vocation in priesthood or religious life but we can be assured that the call is being made. God is continuing to gift and grace men and women to enter into the vocation of priesthood and we must help them to answer this call.

The family is always an important influence on how children will answer their vocation. Do we talk to them about a vocation in the family as we talk about the future? Do we pray with that they may be open to the vocation God has prepared them to live? Do we discuss with our children that God has special plans for each one of us and we must listen to God and discern the gifts we have received so that we can follow God's plan?

Teach your children to use GPS. After Mass today, have a conversation with your children, asking, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" After a few moments of discussion, ask, "Who do you think God wants you to be when you grow up?" Emphasize to your children that God has a specific plan in mind for them, and that following God's plan is the surest way to happiness. Every life decision –which college to attend, whom to date, which job to pursue, whether to enter into the seminary, whom to marry, what religious order to join – should be undertaken only after praying for God's guidance. In other words, encourage kids to navigate life using GPS –God's Positioning Sys-tem.

All of us are called to prayer, faithful lives of discipleship and to encourage people to discern whether they have the gifts and graces they need to become a priest or religious. If you see a special gift or grace in someone, tell them, encourage them, and pray for them.

Fr. Larry McBride