

Vocations in Western Society

Benoît Dubigeon, Canterbury, the 14th of January 2010

I would like to share with you my thoughts about the question of vocations, not only in the Church, but in society. Why are there less young people who desire to give their whole life for a just cause?

My reflections take place especially in the Western world.

Firstly, I want to say that the position of the priest has changed in society. Before 1960, they had an important place, like the primary school teacher or the mayor of a town. It was a promotion to become a priest because you became a leader, and sometimes had more authority... Even parents and policemen have lost their particular place. But nowadays, society has rejected authority and tries to be more democratic. Sharing responsibility and power is a good thing and we have to encourage this goal, but to deny every form of authority ("it's forbidden to forbid") isn't a good thing.

Furthermore, society now offers us many more advantages than the Church could give in the past, when it used to control all relationships: health, teaching, wellbeing, security and so on, and probably society does it better than the Church did. Nonetheless, for example, our society has many difficulties in providing medical treatments without destroying human relationships, whereas the Church succeeded. In other words, manpower is, today, so expensive, whereas it was free in the past, when the Church involved many people without any salary. So, today we don't need these benefits from the Church any more. Only spirituality, listening and mercy.

Now, families reduce the number of their children: no more than two children, if not only one. Contraception can now regulate the number of children and families don't have more children for financial reasons. They don't want to have children they can't bring up for financial or time reasons. In the past, the place of children was tiny, but the situation has reversed. Parents are now able to provide all their needs and sometimes they want to achieve in them, what they didn't realize in their own lives. But children are used to becoming kings in their family, in their classroom and in the street.

Priorities in our lifestyles have changed! We are living in a very consumeristic and materialistic society. You judge your success on what you have, much more than what you are. For example, parents are both working, so they are not at home to talk to their children when they get home: they are left to themselves. They don't take time to talk: they are in front of the computer or behind their *ipod* to chat with virtual contacts. Their spiritual life gets ignored. They used to be more attentive on the rights of being human than their perceived entitlements. They have everything; whatever they ask: it's not unusual for young people to have a car before going to university and finally, they lack need.

In addition, our country now has an important crisis of confidence in the Establishment, with all forms of authority and any institutions: the state, the police, teachers, trade unions, the power of money, the Church and even parents... For example, there has been a breakdown in family and society relationships: divorces are numerous; we are losing the sense of order, and the classes (upper, middle and working classes) are no longer relevant and people can no longer associate themselves with any particular group. As a result, we have many difficulties in believing each other: doubt is everywhere and in every one. The time when youth clubs involved teens and their parents together have disappeared, young people can only find authority in the street, in gangs and with peer pressure.

As a consequence, can we have any confidence in the future when we decide to have no more children? Can we have any confidence in the faith when we believe that God is dead? Can we have any confidence in politicians, when we know they abuse society with lies and their search for power? Are the bishops becoming managers, too far from the faithful and losing touch? We have lost trust in the Establishment.

Consequently, young people find it too difficult, nowadays, to commit themselves to one cause, such as a human cause, a religious or political cause, particularly in the case of marriage. Young people now have

confidence in their own experience: so that, what is good is what they experience. When they don't feel happy any more in their way of live, they have to change it, and adopt a new way of life, a new husband, a new wife, a new companion, even if the suffering caused is great.

Now, a lot of young people have a sort of immaturity in their relationships, they even have their sexual relations much earlier than in the past. Very often, they change partners very easily.

From my point of view, the main reason we are suffering in lack of vocations is that the secular society relies too much on itself and no longer on a transcendent reality, maybe God. So, giving his life for somebody who perhaps doesn't exist or can't be proven to exist, or unable to feel anything of Him, may make any religious vocation much too difficult.

Consequently, what are the solutions? How is it possible to re-connect the youngest people to society? How can we connect with them and promote the unity between their body, their intelligence and their spirituality?

Have you any questions or any proposals to share?

I would enjoy receiving all of your observations.

Let's share our ideas.

Divorces, alcohol

Témoignage d'une vie joyeuse,

Prier et vivre

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