

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

What About the Rest of Us?

In the last two columns, we discussed the Sacraments of Vocation – Holy Orders and Matrimony. However, these two Sacraments do not cover all of the Vocations to which God calls individuals. In particular, there are many people who are called to consecrated life, and those who are called to the single life.

Let's back up a little bit before we discuss these specific vocations to a state in life. Through the virtue of our baptism, we are all called to live the universal call to holiness. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] states this universal call in all facets of life this way: "Lay people share in Christ's priesthood: ever more united with him, they exhibit the grace of Baptism and Confirmation in all dimensions of their personal family, social and ecclesial lives, and so fulfill the call to holiness addressed to all the baptized." [CCC 941] In *Lumen Gentium* [LG], the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, the writers state, "Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect." [LG 11, cf. MT 5:48]

If we are all called to holiness in life, it is in how we live out that call that we find our vocation. As mentioned above, some of those vocations are marked by a Sacrament. Also, some vocations are marked by a special ceremony or rite in which the person vows to live their holiness through the evangelical counsels – vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Included in this group are those who are vowed religious brothers and sisters, as well as those in secular institutes and

societies of apostolic life. [cf. CCC 920-21, 925-29] These groups generally live out the evangelical counsels as a community. Also, included are those who choose to follow the evangelical counsels as consecrated virgins and widows, who generally live out their consecration as individuals, but may gather into associations. [CCC 922-24] All of the above named groups have a "public" ceremony or rite in which they accept the evangelical counsels.

However, there are some people who are not called to these states of life, but are called to live out their call to holiness in life as single persons in the world. They may not have a formal Sacrament or rite, but in the depths of their hearts, they have accepted to live the life to which God has called them. "Already destined for him through Baptism, the person who surrenders himself to the God he loves above all else thereby consecrates himself more intimately to God's service and to the good of the whole Church." [CCC 945]

Whether vows are publicly taken or the commitment is made in the secret of one's heart, the availability of the single person gives them the possibility of greater openness to God and to others. "To follow and imitate Christ more nearly and to manifest more clearly his self-emptying is to be more deeply present to one's contemporaries, in the heart of Christ." [CCC 932]

Next week, we begin our discussion of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and an extended look at the Mass.

