



## *Speaking the truth in love*

*Eph: 4:15*

# A Pastoral Message about Vocations

From Most Rev Anthony Fisher, Bishop of Parramatta

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The world needs priests because the world needs Jesus Christ.

Christ came to call us to repentance, to teach and heal us, to communicate the Father's love and enable our union with God. His Church continues that work.

The Church is a *communio* – a community that seeks and enables spiritual union with God and the saints – especially through worship, proclamation and service.

Every community needs its leaders. Spiritual communions need spiritual leaders.

If communion for us comes through prayer and sacrament, we need leaders in worship – priests who sanctify us as Christ did.

If communion for us comes through receiving God's Word, we need leaders in proclamation – priests who teach us as Christ did.

If communion for us comes through service in the world, we need leaders who animate and coordinate – priests who shepherd us as Christ did.

Put simply: no priests, no Catholic Church.

Of course deacons, religious and lay people – today more than ever before – engage in many aspects of the Church’s mission. Permanent deacons assist bishop, priests and people in worship, preaching and charity. Religious give us the witness of Gospel radicalism, in their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Married people build up the Church and community through rearing children. Lay people in parishes and Church agencies do much of the legwork of the local Church.

But no matter how many good things *other* people do in our world, the continuous real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life, depends upon priests. The continuous outpouring of divine mercy through Reconciliation depends upon priests. The continuous healing touch in anointing the sick depends upon priests.

More than ever our world needs priests who are courageous, passionate, hope-filled men; men who love God and people and want to bring them closer together; men who love the Church as the principal means of achieving that communion.

St John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, never felt worthy to be a priest, but he dared to be one because he loved the priesthood and knew God would always support His own. He once said that if we really understood the priesthood we would die not of fright but of love for it!

Like marriage, priesthood is a big decision, one with life-changing consequences. But like marriage it is not merely life-changing but life giving and fulfilling.

I love being a priest. It is the best of lives. When we truly give ourselves to Christ, to being His instrument in the world, we are offered real joy, freedom and friendship. Such graces far outweigh the challenges and struggles in every life.

The world needs men and women willing to lay down their life for others. The world needs the radical witness of religious, the service of deacons, the fidelity of spouses, the fruitfulness of parents, and more. All of those need the spiritual leadership of priests, men of faith, hope and love. The world needs such heroes. Are you ready to answer this heroic call?

Yours sincerely in Christ



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