



Archbishop of Montreal

Homilie
Friday, May 1, 2020

Mass for vocations (bilingual homily) (Jn 6, 52-59)

How can we find the will of God?

Are you looking for the will of God? How would one even do this? How can we find the will of God in the experience of daily life, when we look for orientation in our lives?

In several places, the Bible reminds us that God has a plan for humanity. It is God's plan of love for humanity. God has a plan for creation. The salvation of humanity is also part of God's plan.

We are all called to participate in this divine plan, both in the plan for creation and in the plan for salvation. In some regards, we participate all in the same way, but in others, we have a unique calling. Each person is unique!

One of the first things that we read in the Bible, almost at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, is that all of us are created in the image of God. What a beautiful reality! What an inexpressible reality! What an astonishing reality that the Bible, for several thousand of years, tells us that the human being is created in the image of God.

What we see is the world around us. What we see are rocks, mountains, trees, animals, birds, and fishes.

Among all these, the human being is one being among many others in the world. But the Bible tells us that even as we share the world with all the other creatures, the human being is also more than all of these by being created in the image of God. This is a truly revolutionary change in the way we look at the world!

When I look at my neighbor, do I see someone who is created in the image of God? When I look at my deepest self, the foundation of my soul, spirit, heart, and body, do I see myself as created in the image of God? Do I recognize the dignity of the other, no matter who? No matter who they are! Do I recognize my own dignity as God's creation?

Not just any of God's creatures but created in the image of God! What a great gift! What a wonderful gift! What gift, what kind of gift! A gift not only for a little while, a few years, maybe even a few decades.

No, it is a gift forever! If today I am the image of God, I must always be the image of God. After all, what is an image? It is a reflection, it reflects the reality of which it is the image.

We have many vocations, as we are called by God in many ways, but the most fundamental of all vocations is to reflect the reality of God. To be the image of God in the world—what a vocation!

To be in the world as visible signs of the invisible God is a calling that goes beyond our being. How can we be this sign of the invisible God when what is visible is so important to us?

We can read a little further in the Book of Genesis: “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. A man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Right from the beginning of the Bible, we are reminded not only of the dignity of the human being as created in the image of God, but also the importance of vocation. It is the vocation to the married life. In this vocation, we see the archetype of vocation as giving oneself to the other in a community of persons, the vocation to open up one’s life in love that is fruitful. Within it, there is the vocation that is God’s call to every human being, whether they are married or not. The heart of the vocation to the married life is the universal vocation to love. Love is the fundamental vocation is each human being, always one among many, called to love.

Now we have a way for being the image of God in the world: The reflection of the invisible God is the love that becomes visible. Love is visible! Love is manifest! Love communicates! Love expresses itself! Love shows itself and proves itself!

In a general sense, our call to love, through our vocation to love in married life as a couple or as a family, is a path on which we carry the image of God into the world.

The vocation to marriage is a vocation in its fullness. Life as a couple is a vocation in its fullness. Openness to life is a vocation in its fullness. In these vocations, we become visible signs of the invisible, signs of God in the world. And as these are vocations to love, these signs are visible signs of the love of God, a love that is invisible but becomes manifest throughout the work of his creation.

How do we know an artist who may have died centuries ago? We consider their works! We study their works! Michelangelo, Raphaël, and all the others. Rembrandt. And there, in their works, we try to feel and get close to the artist. The one who composed this work, who created this work. In this way, we learn something about the artist.

The vocation of creation as a whole is to proclaim as a visible sign the invisible God, to be a visible sign of the love of God, the God who is love! God is love!

In the book of Genesis, we read right at the start that the human being is created in the image of God, and then not much later, that the married couple is the image of God. This is because these images of God overlap. Each human being is in their own dignity the image of God, but the life of the couple is also the image of God. It is so as the image of the love of God for humanity, the love of Jesus Christ for his Church.

But as the same time, whether lived celibately in consecrated life or in one of the million ways in which individuals can be in the world to serve and to love, our individual life itself can become a visible sign of the God who is love. In our active life, our service, our gift, our self-giving gift, we become visible signs of the invisible: signs of the love of God and the existence of God who is love.

When we go deeper into the question, the question becomes how to live this vocation to love, realized in the vocation to marriage or realized in the gift of self, of service, of one’s life. The call to love accompanies us, animates us, motivates us and, most importantly, gives meaning to our lives.

Giving meaning to our lives and making sense of our lives is looking for the way of my participation in God’s creative work, looking for the way God calls me, my vocation, the way that I am to go.

Being created in the image of God, being created as a call to love, means quite simply being created, being created as gift and called to look for a way to give oneself, to make my life a gift for others.

I invite you to turn to the Lord in prayer.

In this pandemic, there are long moments of inactivity with not enough to do. Especially in such moments, the question of the meaning of life becomes more acute. Maybe we have just lost our job, and we try to make sense of our life. Maybe life in the family is not easy right now, with everybody together all the time, something unusual and maybe uncomfortable, and we try to make sense of our lives.

In such moments of confusion as we experience right now, let us remember that the answer to the question of the meaning of our lives is always found in being the image of God, being visible signs of God's love. And the path on which we are called to walk is the path of self-giving gift. Jesus Christ comes to us, to call us to give ourselves, thus giving meaning to our lives.

When we are looking for our vocation, what are we looking for? We are looking for how we will accomplish in our life our vocation to love. Our vocation to love is the basic foundation for everyone, for every human being.

To be a human being created in the image of God is to have a vocation to love. We are called to love that is self-giving, love that through self-giving reaches the communion of persons. A love that through self-giving and communion of persons reveals truth in this world and the eternal life.

So this vocation to love becomes a question for reflection on what is my vocation! On what path of self-giving am I called to walk? What is my path of self-giving, of communion, of fruitfulness? God has a plan for each one of you! God has a plan personally for you! God calls you personally on a path of self-giving, a path of communion of persons and fruitfulness.

A vocation to marriage is a vocation to love. A vocation to celibate life in the world and to serve, this is also a vocation to love. Vocation to work is a vocation to love! Work is service, service for the common good, service for the good of society. Service is work to create a better world! Thus, to work is to be called to serve, and therefore it is a vocation to love.

Consecrated life is when one is called to give personally to answer to the love of God through an exclusive gift of oneself to Jesus Christ; it is a vocation to love! Priesthood as a giving of oneself to Jesus Christ is to serve Christ in His Church: this, too, is a vocation to love and to serve!

Our human life staying in the hand of God becomes rich in meaning. Separated from God's hand, we forget that we are created as the image of God. We forget that our deepest vocation is the vocation to love! We forget who we are! We need Jesus Christ! We need to never forget who we are in our own dignity as a human being. We need Jesus Christ to believe in our vocation to love! Until the end Jesus Christ loved us, he loved us right until the Cross, and then He rose to new life! We are called to that kind of love, to give everything to express a total gift of oneself.

When we give ourselves totally in the context of family, in the work place, in society, in religious life, consecrated life, in the priesthood, then we walk this path of self-giving, we enrich our lives, we give meaning to our lives, and we serve. We serve the Church, we serve society, we serve humanity! We participate in the building of the Kingdom of God by participating in His work of Creation and His work of Salvation.

In this time of pandemic, it is like we are frozen in time, and many things are on pause; it is a time to reflect on our own life. Maybe some years ago, even some decades ago, you discovered your vocation, got married, or became a priest, or begun consecrated life. But it does not end there! Along the way, the desire to serve, to serve the love of God, to serve His Church, to

serve humanity grew in you. It is an ongoing process! It is not something that you do one day and then it is over and done. You cannot say "I'm ok, I found my path, I can stop there, because I know the meaning of my life!" It really is a process without end! A process of always looking for what love am I called to today, here, and now!

So there is always the vocation inside the vocation! The vocation to be a husband, but what kind of husband? A wife, what kind of wife? A nun, what kind of nun? A priest, what kind of priest? There is always the vocation inside the vocation. It never stops. And as we move ahead, vocation becomes not so much something that we know about us, but something that we live. We live our vocation because we live every day in serving to the call of love. The call of Jesus Christ to love here and now!

Vocation is about tomorrow, but it is also about today. Let us turn to God and ask for the Holy Spirit to help us grow in our vocation to love, every day here and now.

Prayer to Mary

O Mary,

You always shine on our path

as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Healer of the Sick, who, at the foot of the cross shared the pain of Jesus kept strong your faith.

You, the Salvation of the Roman People,

you know what we need

and we know that you watch over us

so that we may, as in Cana of Galilee,

return to joy and celebration

after this moment of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,

to conform ourselves to the will of the Father

and to do what Jesus tells us to do,

He who took upon himself our suffering

to lead us, through the cross,

to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.

Under Your protection we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God.

Listen to our pleas, we who are in a time of trial,

and deliver us from all danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal