

Today, I want to offer a meditation on the priestly vocation, as applied to all Christian men, but in particular to married men and fathers (fatherhood, after all, is the key to our masculinity).

I'll be referencing primarily chapter 4 of Venerable Fulton Sheen's "The Priest is not His Own". The entire thesis of his book is that priests are called to be victims for the Church. The same applies to us as laymen; our lives are inextricably bound up with the cross. We're called to be holy, set apart, sacrifice and victim.

*"Live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* (Ephesians 5:2)

*"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* (1 John 3:16)

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We're called to be holy. The priest and his people are bound together in the Mystical Body of Christ. His holiness helps make the faithful holy, and their sanctity helps make him holy. So we, too, are called to be holy for the good of the Church and for our domestic church, which in turn help us to grow in holiness.

*"For their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. I ask also on behalf of those who will believe in [Christ] through their word."* (John 17:19-20)

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We're called to be leaders. Loving and serving our wives, even when they do that thing that annoys us. Getting up late at night with the baby. Taking care of them both when everyone is sick, including you. We said yes on our wedding day; we renew that yes physically when we make love; we renew it spiritually when we carry our cross and sacrifice for them.

*"For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands."* (Ephesians 5:23-24)

Commenting on Ephesians, St John Chrysostom exhorts us: *"Take the same provident care for your wife as Christ takes for the Church. Endure and undergo any suffering whatsoever — do not refuse it. The partner of your life, the mother of your children, the foundation of your every joy, ought never to be chained down by fear and menaces, but with love and good temper."*

As the shepherd, so the sheep; as the priest, so the people. Priest-victim leadership begets a holy Church. If we want our families and communities to be holy, we must live lives of generous, loving sacrifice. We must take our cross up daily. There is a ransom price on every soul. Some of them cost much. They require a great sacrifice. Christ wants to dispense His mercy through our hands. And unless our hands are scarred, His mercies do not readily pass through them. Blessings, power, healing, and influence get clogged by worldliness.

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We're called to be watchmen. Christ has placed us upon the walls of our domestic church, where we must pray and preach unceasingly.

*“Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.”* (Isaiah 62:6-7)

Like St Joseph, we're called to be companions, assistants, and upholders of our wives and children; to minister to their needs, and gird them about with our protection. (QP 3)

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We're called to live in and leaven the world. What we are, the Church is; what the Church is, the world is. The world and all it contains is a highway on which the Bride, the Church, goes to meet the Bridegroom, Christ, for the heavenly nuptials.

Be reliable and dedicated in your work. Remember, your desk is the altar on which you offer the sacrifice of your daily work. Like St Joseph, let us be of good heart and learn to be just. (QP 5)

When the shepherd is lazy, the sheep are hungry; when he sleeps, they are lost; when he is corrupt, they grow sick; when he is unfaithful, they lose their judgement. If the shepherd is not willing to be a victim for his sheep, the wolves come and devour them.

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We're called to pray and study. We will never achieve an intimacy of grace with the Lord unless we cultivate our prayer life. Conversions and vocations won't happen unless we pray for them.

People don't want to hear philosophers, they want to hear saints; that is, people whose life expresses the message they bring, and who offer an appealing witness. Work on your approach and preparation. Study to perfect your mind. Don't weary people with stale repetition.

*“Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”* (1 Peter 3:15)

The Church and the world yearn for holiness. And what the Christian community wants ardently, the Lord of the harvest will grant. It's all available potentially in the heart of Christ; it is our petitions that actualize them.

*"Lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest." (John 4:35)*

As a side note, we need to be praying for vocations. We need our wives to be praying. We need to teach our children to pray; yes, even for the call of God.

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We're called to be a creative minority. The influence of one good soul, one saint, works to the good of the whole community. God was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of a few just men. God could not strike as long as Moses stood between Him and the people.

We're the salt of the earth and the light of the world! Without good men, the world would be corrupted and in darkness. We do not save our soul alone; either we save it in the context of our neighbors and of the Mystical Body, or we lose it.

The faithful will always be a remnant. Great truths are revealed to and placed in the custody of the few who are dedicated to the battle of faith. The imposing appearance of great numbers may blind us to the need for God's help and make us overlook the necessity of forming good men to be priest-victims.

*"Consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)*