

My Vocation

By Father John Catoir JCD-6/20/18

My vocation is based on a lengthy conversation I had with God that began in 1945 during my senior year in high school. I came home from a retreat dreaming about being a priest. The idea had never really hit me so hard before, even though I had been an altar boy for three years in grammar school. The conversation I had with God was straightforward, and I kept telling Him, “I’ll think about it”.

I was thirteen at the time and began noticing the girls. Soon the idea of a vocation began fading from my consciousness. I became a normal teenager and never told a soul about my priesthood dreams. I had previously made a deal with God about getting into heaven and agreed to strive for holiness by staying in the state of grace. So, my roving eye was pretty much impeded from any serious action, even though I still had an eye for the girls. I wanted to marry one day and have a family. The desire to be a priest never went entirely away. All through college and the military service it would come back, at times with intensity.

In 1953, after graduation, as the Korean War was winding down, I was drafted, and served stateside as a Military Policeman for a year, and a Chaplain’s Assistant for my last year. I worried constantly, “What am I going to do when I get out?” It finally came time to make a decision. I realized down deep that I wanted to be a priest more than anything, but I was afraid of failing and didn’t want to risk it. God’s grace relieved me of my fears, and I surrendered at last, “Yes Lord! I’ll risk it! But you must promise to strengthen me and help me to bear rich and abundant good fruit. Alleluia! He agreed, as I knew He would, and

the deal was made in cement. This final surrender gave me the peace I needed to move forward, and I never looked back.

The rest is history. I had to delay entering the seminary a year because my mother was sick. I entered in 1956, and four years later I was ordained on May 28, 1960. It was the happiest day of my life. I served in the active ministry for forty years but had to retire because of prostate cancer surgery. I don't make any distinction between my active and retirement years because they were all part of the same deal I made with God. I offered my whole life.

Now instead of parish work and being the Judicial Vicar of the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, and later being Director of The Christophers for 17 years, with a nationally syndicated TV Show, and finally running a soup kitchen and homeless shelter before retiring; I now fiddle with my syndicated column and my Tweets on Social Media. So far, I have nearly 16,000 of them with 5000 regular followers who re-tweet my spiritual messages to millions of readers worldwide.

This sounds like bragging I know, but I promised God that I'd make it clear to everyone that a girl-crazy teen could not have pulled this off on his own. God gets all the glory, and I thank Him with all my heart.

Everyone has a calling to become holy. May the Lord be your strength and your joy as you work through your vocation.