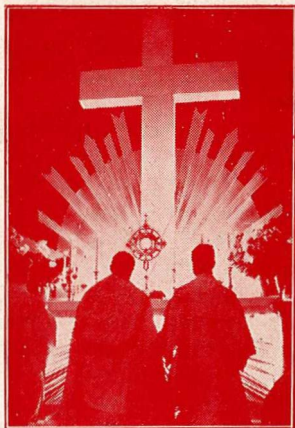


Box A31

*"Come,
follow Me"*



THE FORMATION AND LIFE
OF A
BLESSED SACRAMENT FATHER

St. Francis' Church,

Melbourne, C.1.

Dear Friend of Christ,

Have you read "Is Christ Calling Me?"—and talked it over with your Divine Master? If so, and if, deep in your heart, you often feel a longing to be very close to Our Lord, an indefinable happiness in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, you have good reason to hope that Christ is calling you. For this attraction, this longing to be near the Blessed Sacrament, is the first sign that Our Lord may be wanting you for His full-time service, to be one of His personal staff, and, as well, an Apostle of the Eucharist. Perhaps all your life is before you, yet already you feel that nothing the world has to offer in the way of a career, wealth, friendship, will ever give you the contentment of heart that you know when you are kneeling before Our Lord in His Blessed Sacrament. Or perhaps the Master's call is sounding in your ears only after several years of seeking for that elusive thing called happiness: there has been some measure of worldly success, and natural joy, yet never true peace of mind and heart, unless when you are in the presence of your Divine Friend

in the tabernacle. As time goes on, you are beginning to understand the depth of meaning in those words you have sung from your earliest years, to realise that nowhere else in this life will you find a haven: "Where restless yearnings cease, and sorrows all depart."

But what next? And what will be your life in the years ahead; how will you spend your days? This letter is intended to give you some idea of the formation of a Blessed Sacrament Father and of his life's work.

School Years.

If you have already heard Our Lord calling you while you are still in the Primary Grade and it seems likely that you will prove to have the requisite qualifications for the life of a Blessed Sacrament Father, we will, if necessary, be able to help with your school fees. Thanks to generous friends, this can be done during your two Intermediate years and later at one of our best Catholic boarding schools while you are studying for your Leaving and Matriculation certificates. The study of philosophy and theology requires at least as much in the way of ability and preliminary education as is needed for success in a University course, and the two years of boarding school life

will be a valuable preparation for the community life which will be yours from the commencement of the novitiate.

Postulancy.

After you have matriculated, or, should yours be a later vocation, if your earlier studies reached an equivalent standard, especially in English and Latin, we will welcome you into our community, as a postulant, to make a trial of the Eucharistic vocation. You need only bring with you sufficient clothing for a year, and, if you wish, your favourite books of piety.

The period of postulancy lasts from one to three months. During this time you wear your ordinary clothes, except that you vest in soutane and surplice before entering the sanctuary. During the time of your postulancy your life is exactly the same as that of the novices, except that the adorations which you make are for half-hour and not for one-hour periods.

If at the expiration of the time of postulancy your superiors are satisfied that you give promise of having a true vocation, you next make a retreat of ten days and are then admitted to the novitiate by the ceremony known as the Clothing, or Taking of the Holy Habit.

An Immediate Harvest.

Ten years will elapse before you are fully qualified to enter upon the arduous and delicate work of the active ministry, but it is a continual inspiration to recall that, from the very beginning, you have been fulfilling the primary object of your vocation, namely adoration. What an encouragement to think that you began to win souls for God from the time when, as a postulant, you first took your place on the prie-Dieu. Thenceforward you may well hope to have been gaining a great harvest of souls during the thousands of hours of adoration you will have performed in the course of your years of preparation for the Priesthood. Only when you enter upon your eternal reward will you know how much you did for God during those seemingly inactive years. Saint Teresa has told us that if we but pick up a pin for the love of God we can save a soul. How many souls, then, may we hope to save by even one hour of adoration!

The Religious Life.

From the day of your Clothing, you will wear a black soutane, its colour symbolising the death to self which is the object of the religious life. For Our Lord has made it very clear that such is

the condition for our admission to His intimate friendship: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Nor can we hope otherwise to accomplish anything for God: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." Because of these words of Our Lord, we, who have been called to be in an especial way His ministers, His personal attendants, the bodyguard of Our Lord in the Sacrament of His love, take what are known as the three vows of evangelical perfection, the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Poverty.

By the vow of poverty we renounce the right every man has to the due enjoyment of his own property or income. The moderate enjoyment of the goods of this world is of course lawful and pleasing to God, especially when we are generous towards His poor. But Our Lord told the rich young man what pleased Him still more: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come follow Me."

Chastity.

By our vow of chastity we dedicate our manhood to God, renouncing the rights of the married state not only that we may serve God with a single mind but also that, in a very special way, our souls may be espoused to the Holy Spirit. This is something which very few can appreciate, yet speaking of the celibate state Our Lord said: "He who can take it, let him take it."

Obedience.

By the vow of obedience we make what is really the hardest sacrifice of all, the surrender of our own will, giving up the right to have one's own way in things that are lawful. But we do so in order the more closely to imitate our Divine Master: "In all things I do the will of Him Who sent Me." The religious who is faithful to his vow of obedience can with confidence say the same thing; since he knows that the superior of his community holds the place of Our Lord and that the least action done in virtue of obedience is as pleasing to his Divine Master as if done at His direct command.

Effect of the Vows.

Every good action done in virtue of one's vows has a double merit in the sight of God, the merit of the virtue concerned and the merit of an act of religion. And so acceptable to God are the vows of the religious life that theologians commonly hold that the making of one's first profession is in one way equivalent to a second baptism, inasmuch as all the temporal punishment due to past sins is remitted, so purifying are the dispositions of love which prompt the making of the vows.

The Hundredfold.

Hard though the prospect of such a life may seem, it is not long before one experiences the reality of the hundredfold in this life promised by Our Lord to those who have left "house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or lands" for His sake. Faithfulness to the vow of poverty brings freedom from all concern with regard to money matters. Faithfulness to the vow of chastity brings a lightness of heart and clearness of vision which is a foretaste of the joy which virginal souls will know in heaven, to whom it is promised that they shall ever be in the company of Our Lord: "These follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth." Faithfulness to the vow of obedience

brings complete peace of mind and deliverance from all anxiety as to whether one is doing the right thing and at the right time; it is only necessary to do what one is told to the best of one's ability to be sure of God's blessing on the work in hand: "An obedient man shall speak of victory."

The Novitiate—Adoration.

The novitiate lasts for two years, during which time the candidate is submitted to many tests of obedience and humility. It is a time of probation, intended to ascertain whether the novice is being called by God to the life of evangelical perfection. But even as a novice you will have the happiness of chanting the Divine Office in company with the professed priests before your Eucharistic King, praising God in the inspired words of Holy Scripture, honouring and thanking Him with mind and heart and tongue. Moreover, you will take your place in an adoration group with the professed priests and brothers, spending from one to two hours each day and an hour during the night on guard before the King of Kings. Especially meritorious and consoling will be the hours spent in the quietness of the night, alone with your Divine Friend in the midst of a great city. While the world sleeps, you will be adoring Our Lord on behalf of

your fellow men, thanking Him for His goodness to them, making reparation for their indifference to His Presence, beseeching graces for them. What happiness to recall that you are directly responding to the poignant plea made by your Master in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Could you not watch one hour with Me?" And that your vigil in far-away Australia 2,000 years later had its place in the consolation which the Angel of the Agony afforded that night to the sorrowful Heart of Jesus.

Life of the Community.

Apart from the manner in which the time away from the sanctuary is employed, the general features of your daily life as a novice will be much the same as that of the professed religious. The rule provides for about two hours of recreation (somewhat more for the novices) taken after the mid-day and evening meals, and seven and a half hours of rest. One afternoon each week there is an outing to the country or outlying suburbs. Monthly visits may be received from your relations. Once a month there is a one-day retreat for all the religious, and every twelve months an eight-day retreat. Apart from recreation time and necessary communications, silence is observed as a help to closer union with God, but during these days of

retreat all ordinary duties are suspended as far as possible, so as to facilitate the spiritual stock-taking which is the purpose of a retreat. The monthly day of retreat is followed the next week by a day at our seaside villa, where also the religious go in groups for a three-week vacation every summer, blessed with the presence of Our Lord in the little oratory, and, each morning, the Holy Sacrifice, and an hour of adoration, terminating with Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

First Profession.

At the end of the two year novitiate, if the superiors decide that there is evidence of a true vocation, you will be allowed to make your first vows, binding yourself to the state of poverty, chastity and obedience for twelve months. Before doing so, a will must be made, leaving any present or future property to whomever one wishes, and also provision has to be made for the administration during one's lifetime of any property and for the disposal as one pleases of any income one may have. A ten-day retreat precedes the Profession.

The day of one's First Profession is a truly joyful one. As mentioned earlier, it is in some way equivalent to a second baptism and the

realisation that your Divine Friend has accepted the gift of yourself made by your vows brings indescribable happiness and peace of soul.

Ecclesiastical Studies—Ordination.

After profession you enter what is known as the Scholasticate and begin the study of philosophy and kindred subjects, a three year course, during which one renews the three vows annually until at the end of the third year there comes the great day of Perpetual Profession, when you bind yourself to Our Lord's Eucharistic service for the remainder of your life. Then commences the five-year course of theology, the most fascinating of all subjects to which man can apply his mind. During these years one receives first the tonsure and then the various Orders preparatory to the sacerdotal state, culminating, half way through the fourth year of theology, in the supreme happiness of ordination to the Eternal Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Thenceforth life centres round one's daily Mass, renewing the Sacrifice of Calvary, applying its infinite merits to the needs of individual souls—the most sublime action man can perform.

The fifth year of theology is an immediate preparation for the active ministry, and serves as a

revision of all one has learnt during the period of the scholasticate. At its close one is ready to go into action, to engage in the battles of the Lord, fighting under His Eucharistic standard as a Priest-Adorer and Apostle of the Blessed Sacrament.

Prayer.

Having received your commission in the service of Christ the King, your life will, in the first place, be ever one of prayer in the presence of your Divine Master and Friend, honouring the Eternal Father by your Holy Mass, Divine Office, and Adorations, gaining graces for the souls with whom you are in contact and for countless others who will be unknown to you until the next life.

Apostolate.

Your primary duty of prayer having been fulfilled, there are limitless opportunities for the Eucharistic apostolate. The hearing of confessions, that work of healing and encouraging souls so consoling to the heart of every fervent priest, especially characterises all our centrally situated shrines of exposition. Referring, in the first instance, to His Crucifixion, Our Lord once said: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to Myself," but His words seem also literally ful-

filled when He is "lifted up" by being enthroned in the monstrance. Elsewhere shepherds of souls must devote themselves to visiting the homes of their people in order to get the erring members of their flock to the sacraments, but where Our Lord reigns from the monstrance it is of continual occurrence for men and women long years away from God to find themselves drawn to "pay a visit," and next, almost before they realise it, they are unburdening their souls to a waiting priest.

A little known aspect of our work, as yet undeveloped in Australia for want of priests, is the preaching of retreats, the Forty Hours, Eucharistic Days, Holy Hours, and other forms of Eucharistic devotions—a wide field here for our Australian Fathers in future years.

Nor is there any limit to what we can do towards making our Eucharistic King better known and loved by the writing of Eucharistic articles and the publishing of Eucharistic reviews. In countries where the Blessed Sacrament Fathers are fully established they maintain a flourishing Eucharistic press.

Moreover, as our Australian vocations increase in number, we will be able to give more attention

to the development of the Eucharistic works proper to our Congregation, such as the Eucharistic League for Priests and the People's Eucharistic League (also known as the Archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament), and to the promoting of Nocturnal Adoration Societies and other means of making the Blessed Sacrament better known and loved.

The Future.

Much else is there to be done, but enough has been said to indicate what a wide and varied apostolate awaits our Australian Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament in the years ahead, when, please God, Our Lord will have a throne of exposition in all the principal cities of Australia. How soon that time will be in coming depends in large part on the response of our Australian youth to the call of their King. Truly do Our Lord's words apply to the Eucharistic vocation: "The harvest indeed is great but the labourers are few." We ask our friends who read these lines, but who cannot respond with the gift of their personal service, to join with us in fulfilling the injunction which followed: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send labourers into His harvest."

A Chosen Few.

Admittedly it is a vocation which calls for considerable sacrifice, and we are often told that the life of a Blessed Sacrament Father is too hard to appeal to Australian youths. But we have no anxiety on this score. Recalling Australia's record in two great wars, rather do we expect their response to be more generous than in many a country where our work is flourishing. Nevertheless, our Founder, Blessed Eymard, foretold that we would never be a numerous Congregation. This because of the very nature of our work. A commander-in-chief has very few officers on his personal staff, compared with the number required for his forces; so too with our Divine Leader. But can there be a greater privilege in this life than to be chosen to be an officer on the staff of Christ the King? And what an incentive to recall that the more devotedly and intimately we are associated with our Divine Master in His Eucharistic abasement in this life, the more wonderfully will we share in His friendship in the splendour of the Beatific Vision for the unending ages to come!

If, having pondered and prayed, you want to volunteer for service with Christ's staff corps, either

write to us or call at the first opportunity. May God grant that it will prove the beginning of a devoted life of Eucharistic service here below, so that when you are called to give an account of your stewardship you will do so, not to a severe Judge but to a loving Friend, grateful for the countless hours you spent with Him in His Eucharistic desolation.

Pray much to your Blessed Mother, who is also Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, that you may know whether her Divine Son wants you for His Eucharistic service.

God bless you.

Sincerely in Jesus Christ,

The Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament.

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Blessed Sacrament Fathers
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