

In 2005, my oldest daughter, Kristin, graduated valedictorian from Xavier. She was accepted into Notre Dame as a Notre Dame scholar, part of the top 2% of entering freshman. She began a double major in biology and theology and in the summer after her freshman year in school, she brought home a very polite, smart and Catholic young man who not only seemed to be a very good person, but also seemed to think the world of Kristin. As a parent, I would be lying if I said that I didn't see a very positive potential marriage for Kristin and excitement of the possibility of being a grandfather in the future.

In the spring of 2007, my daughter's sophomore year, we got a call from her. She had gone to a discernment retreat, felt a strong calling to enter religious life with a Dominican community in Michigan, and was planning on leaving Notre Dame at the end of the semester.

As a parent, I have to say that I was conflicted. While I was excited about her calling to religious life, I was also experiencing a degree of mourning over the loss of that vision I had had for Kristin of a happy holy marriage and grandchildren. And what about the Notre Dame education? Surely this was rushing things. What was the hurry? I tried to counsel her that if she truly had a vocation it would wait. She should finish her studies at Notre Dame and then enter religious life.

Fortunately, she was wiser than I was. She sought out wise spiritual direction from a priest she had known and trusted since High School and prayed about what God was telling her and the spiritual advice she was getting.

She withdrew from Notre Dame at the end of the semester and entered the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist in August of 2007. She now has her masters in philosophy from Catholic University of America in Washington, DC and is teaching at a high school in Lansing, Michigan where she inspires students every year to hear and answer God's call in their lives. Her life as a sister is filled with joy and I am amazed at all the ways that God has blessed her, my wife, Mary and me, and many others through her saying yes to God and answering His call with urgency. In fact, her example of taking a risk and answering God's call was such a witness to me, that it's one of the reasons why I'm standing here today as a deacon.

Our readings today, are filled with examples of God's call and urgent responses. In the first reading, God sends Jonah to the Ninevites to preach a message of repentance. In fact this story is interesting in the contrast between Jonah's response and that of the Ninevites.

Remember, when God first calls Jonah, he runs the other way and it takes three days in the belly of a fish to convince him to answer God's call. On the other hand, when he relays God's message to the people of Nineveh it's supposed to take 3 days to go through the city and tell everyone, but they're so responsive that the message spreads and within one day all have responded and donned sackcloth and ashes. That's urgency!

In our second reading, Paul tells the Corinthians that "Time is running out!" He goes on to tell us we need to change the way they look at the world, not being trapped by a limited secular material view of the world and our immediate circumstances, but to see beyond that to the greater, more beautiful, more joyful call that God has for us.

We see that urgency again in our Gospel. Jesus tells us "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

When I read today's Gospel about the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John I always used to wonder how they could just leave their boats at the side of the lake and walk off after Jesus. It seemed somehow irresponsible to me. However, after witnessing, with my own daughter, what God does with an urgent response, I realize that this is exactly how we are called to respond when we hear the call of God. If we don't respond with urgency, it's too easy to satisfy ourselves that we will get around to it someday, but know we probably never will. Delay feeds our cowardly impulses not to take action.

So what is the calling that God has for us? Vatican II tells us that through our baptism, each of us is called to holiness. You are called to holiness!

But each of us is not called to holiness in the same way. Calls can be lifelong, like God's call to a state in life, as a priest, religious, single or into holy marriage. Within all of our callings, God also may call us to many other things. As parents, God calls us to be purposeful in raising our children in the faith. God may be calling you to areas of charitable ministry or service to others like the immigrant family we are hosting here at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. God may call us to witness to our friends or coworkers in any variety of ways.

How can we hear God's Call? It starts with prayer. We must go to God in the quiet and ask. When we ask God what his call is for us, He will tell us His plans in our heart. We don't need to be afraid of His plans, because He knows us better than we know ourselves and His plans for

us are always to lead us into joy. Sometimes difficulty, but always our greatest joy. But it takes courage. Great courage to answer with urgency.

When we hear God's call to us through a regular habit of prayer, it is often helpful to get the advice of a wise and holy person, like my daughter did in talking to a trusted priest. This person can help us discern God's call in what we are hearing. This isn't a step that is intended to lessen the urgency of our response, but will help us to respond with greater conviction and prudence.

So the question we need to ask continually and prayerfully is this, "Where is God calling me to love others and experience His abundance of joy? Where is God calling me to holiness?" May God, through His great mercy and love make His will known to us and give us the courage to answer His call with urgency.