

***Let's connect our mission to the need***

by Mary Sharon Moore

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In every parish I visit, I hear the question: “How do we increase vocations?” On church bulletin boards I see youth-oriented posters asking in big bold letters, “Have you considered becoming . . .”

In his recent World Youth Day address, Pope Benedict underscored the role of personal participation in the life of the Holy Trinity—a seemingly very inward and personal calling, but in reality one which will totally change you and hurl you directly outward to be the burnished presence of Christ for others.

In your parish, imagine the first faith formation question posed to young children being: “What is your *vocation*?” Imagine youth asking, “What is *my* vocation?” and young adults asking, “What *is* my vocation? *And what am I doing about it?*”

Here are four questions that parish leaders, formators, and visionaries might ask among themselves:

1. How do we imagine our parish, our diocese, fulfilling Jesus' mission? In 2018, do we still want to be ringing our hands over a shortage of priests? Or could we rather ask: How do we need to be Church today?

2. Who will bring us the anointing, the nourishment, and the fire to be the presence of the risen Christ in our world today? And how will we use that anointing, that nourishment, that holy fire?

3. How are we as a parish awakening current and upcoming generations to their singular and unique share in the anointing, the nourishing, and the fire of the Holy Spirit?

4. How do we animate and sustain men and women, no matter their age, to embrace their unique role in revealing the reign of God in this place and time?

“Vocation” has long been a word suggesting a culture of division—“clergy” on the one side, “laity” on the other. I propose that “vocation” become a word suggesting a culture of connection, focused intently on serving the Church's mission in the world.

The Church's “vocational culture” stands at the crossroads: Vocationally, either we stand apart or we connect, contribute, and get on with the work for which Jesus has anointed us.

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