PASTORAL LETTER ON SECOND CAREER VOCATIONS
- by -
Cardinal Paul-Emile Leger et al.

FOREWARD
- by -
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Second Career Vocations

- FOREWORD -

Thirty years ago, His Eminence Cardinal Paul-Emile Leger and the nine Suffragen Bishops of the Archdiocese of Montreal issued a Joint Pastoral Letter on the subject of Second Career (Adult) Vocations. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only Pastoral letter on Second Career Vocations ever written. And although it was composed three decades ago, its message (except for a few minor points), is just as meaningful and relevant today, as it was when first promulgated. In fact, we venture to say that the specific recommendations of this Letter are even more applicable and au courant today than they were in 1953.

Our reason for this statement is that the need for vocations in the Church is much greater than it was during the period just prior to the Second Vatican Council. It is no secret that vocations to the Catholic priesthood have plummeted dramatically in the last two decades. The shortage seems to be endemic to Western Europe and the American continents, On the other hand, some of the Third World countries (and strikingly, Poland and Yugoslavia, etc.), are literally deluged with vocations. Their seminaries are overflowing with students and these countries are ordaining more priests than they need. They are now ‘exporting’ priests to such ‘missionary’ countries as the United States.

In the midst of this spiritual drought in the United States and Canada, the Second Career Vocation Program appears as a bright light on an otherwise dismal horizon. An increasing number of older and more mature men are beginning their studies for the priesthood of Jesus Christ. And, as the Montreal Pastoral Letter indicates so convincingly, the special needs of this age group must be addressed, in order to maximize its full potential in the service of Christ.

And because this unique Pastoral contains so many timely and helpful insights, we have asked Frs. Francis O’Hara, M.Ss.A., M.A., and Francis Lescoe, Ph.D. of the Faculty of Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut, to prepare an English version of the French text of this Montreal Pastoral.

As the Letter indicates so clearly, second career vocations are not a ‘novelty’ in the Catholic Church. Every one of the original Apostles was a second career vocation. Over the centuries, the Church has numbered men like St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Charles Borromeo, St. John Bosco, St. Alphonsus Ligouri, St. Thomas Becket... to name only a few among its second career vocations.

Accordingly, it is our fervent hope that his Pastoral Letter on the subject of second career vocations will receive the widest possible readership. More importantly, we pray that it will be a direct instrument of grace in inspiring men ‘to answer the call’, no matter how late in life, and to become dedicated workers in the vineyard of Jesus Christ.

Very Rev. Eusebe M. Menard, M.Ss.A.
Founder and Superior of the Missionaries of the Holy Apostles
Second Career Vocations

A PASTORAL LETTER
OF
HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LEGER
ARCHBISHOP OF MONTREAL
AND THEIR EXCELLENCIES THE BISHOPS
OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE
OF MONTREAL
ON
PRIESTLY VOCATIONS OF YOUNG MEN
AND OF ADULTS, KNOWN CURRENTLY AS
SECOND-CAREER VOCATIONS

We, by the grace of God and the Apostolic See, Archbishop and Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Montreal,

To the priests of religious orders and secular clergy, to religious communities, and to all the faithful of our dioceses, greetings and blessings in Our Lord,

Dear Brothers in Christ,

1. The Our Father, first spoken by the lips of Our Lord, introduces us to the center of divine thought from its first petitions. In the light of this teaching, it is clear that all Christian energies must tend, before all else, toward the Kingdom of God, through the sanctification of His Name and the accomplishment of His Will. But how can this be done without the function of the Catholic priesthood, which in the Church is the source from which shine truth and love, the essential elements of this divine loyalty?

Therefore, dear Brothers, you will not be surprised that the recruitment and sanctification of priests have become a constant preoccupation in the Church. You will understand easily the efforts that we ourselves are making to multiply the number of workers at a time when the harvest is becoming more abundant and is unfortunately in danger of being lost due to lack of harvesters.

POPE PIUS XI:

2. We would not want to deceive you; the recruiting of priestly vocations in our area has suffered a considerable decline, which certainly alarms us. To what can we attribute this lack of evangelical workers, which exists to some extent everywhere? Would God’s calls to the service of the altar be less frequent today?

In his Apostolic Letter Officiorum Omnium of August 1, 1922, on the training of priestly aspirants, Pope Pius XI, of saintly memory, replied to this question:

“Since the destiny of the clergy and that of the Church are very closely related, it cannot be doubted that at each period God calls to the priesthood a sufficient number of men, otherwise it would have to be said - an impious statement - that God at times fails His Church in an essential matter. Nevertheless, in this case, as well as in all those which are necessarily related to the

* Translators’ Note: The English version of the Montreal Pastoral Letter includes the following departures from the original French: 1) a number of headings have been introduced into the text for easier reading and documentation; 2) a portion of Section 30 and all of Section 31 have been omitted, since they dealt with matters specific to the Montreal Archdiocese.
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salvation of souls, the law of Divine Providence intervenes by virtue of which we can be heard only by means of abundant prayers. Is this not the clear significance of those words known to all: ‘The harvest indeed is abundant, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest.’” (Mt. 9, 37-38)

SECOND-CAREER VOCATIONS:

3. What can be concluded from these clearly significant words if not the urgent duty of everyone to work in the field of vocations? That is why, dear Brothers, we believe the time has come to bring to your attention one of the particular aspects of priestly recruitment. We wish to speak of second-career vocations. Perhaps we have neglected somewhat this area which <century?, the centuries>—old experience of the Church nevertheless shows to be most fertile. How men, even of a fairly advanced age, would not hesitate to clothe themselves in the sacred garments of the Apostles of Christ if opportune aid coupled with wise direction facilitated the pursuit of this ideal?

4. This problem of second-career vocations is vast, delicate, and of vital importance to the Church. We desire that everyone, priests and laity alike, be more intensely enlightened on this subject and consequently better prepared to discern, support, and guide these true vocations, which are just as divine as those of boys and adolescents.

We appeal particularly to the fathers and mothers of families, whose collaboration in this important work seems so precious. May also many young men called to the priesthood see obstacles disappear which have interfered with the fulfillment of their generous intent and hear with greater ease our pressing invitations, the echo of the Master’s words:

“Go, you also, into My vineyard.” (Mt. 20, 4)

WHAT IS MEANT BY SECOND-CAREER VOCATION

5. God, Who varies infinitely the manifestation of His invitations, is pleased also to indicate the hours, as is explained in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt. 20, 1-16).

In all that happens, but even more in what concerns vocations, God has His very precise hour, and it is not for man to fix the moment of this mysterious and divine intervention. But it can be posed as a general rule that the divine call is heard at three different ages: 1) from early boyhood, 2) during adolescence, 3) later at adult age.

Among the workers of the latest hour, there are found those who, having heard the call in their earliest youth, were not able or did not wish to respond at once, keeping the hope of realizing their apostolic dream for a later age.

THREE VOCATION AGES:

These three ages correspond to what may be called: vocations of young boys, vocations of adolescents, and adult or second-career vocations.

6. In his excellent book, Vocation to the Priesthood, Most Reverend Wilhelm Stockums, Auxiliary Bishop of Cologne, analyzes masterfully these three vocation ages.

I. BOYS:

He speaks first of all of those young boys for whom, thanks to the influence of a profoundly Christian home, added to the spiritual direction of wide-awake educators, vocation develops progressively through the normal exchanges of conflicts and peace until its final blossoming.

II. YOUTHS:

7. Speaking next of those youths who have been touched by the grace of vocation at the beginning of
adolescence, he attributes this somewhat later manifestation to the influence of diverse causes, and, in certain cases, a bad orientation of studies. We think here especially of the numerous students in our high schools or in commercial academies. Very often there exists in the souls of these youths riches of spiritual energy and latent generosities, waiting to manifest themselves only the impetus of a zealous apostle, who will repeat to them the words of the Master: “You also, go to work in My vineyard” (Mt. 20, 4).

III. ADULTS:

8. Finally, the third group: vocations of older youths and adults. At present the least numerous, this group is growing constantly and presents some first-class recruits. Since we are dealing most often with men mature in life and experience, the Church must give them particular attention and almost maternal care. Their decision to seek the priesthood is born, in effect, of a deep conviction and a fair comprehension of its requirements. By reason of their origin or development, these vocations can be divided into two categories: vocations simply late in coming, and late vocations properly speaking.

9. The case of simply late vocations concerns youths or even men who, during their early youth, seriously thought of the priesthood and heard the divine call. But because they lacked the necessary resources or for some other reason, they were not able to undertake the necessary studies. After a number of years of courageous waiting and at times even of hard work to support needy parents, the favorable moment at last came. The family situation had changed. A benefactor was found. The young man could leave his worldly job or profession for the seminary. Despite the difficulty of the studies, his soul is alive with joy. The altar will become the ineffable reward of his long perseverance. What eminent priests have come to the Church by similar vocations!

10. Late vocations, properly speaking, appear under quite a different aspect.

TWO CATEGORIES:

It is proper, here also, to consider two distinct categories: the educated, and the workers (artisans, manual laborers, clerks, etc...). In the first category, the aspirant has completed the cycle of secondary studies and even those of the university. Absorbed in occupations common to the world, he followed a profession. His studies and training permitted him to hold an important place in society. From this fact, the fascinating advantages of life have made the thought of the priesthood totally strange. Then one day he finds himself confronted by events which impress him: the persecuted Church, the misery of workers, the ravages of war, a distressful trial, a sad bereavement. He feels depressed and discovers the vanity of worldly things. A change takes place in him; he understands the importance of salvation, for himself and others.

The second category includes very often those who have not completed even their primary studies. They had to face life very young and to submit to the apprenticeship of a trade in order to join the ranks of the working class. Like their educated brothers, they one day discovered the true image of the Church. In the light of the Gospel, meditated on in the study clubs of Catholic Action, they came to understand that the Lord wanted them in His service.

A number of priestly vocations of note have had a similar origin, especially in France and Germany, following the two world wars. In these recruits of the last hour, we can expect to see the principal sign of a true vocation: purity of intention in all its fullness. Pius XI recalled this sign with fervent force in his Encyclical Ad Catholici Sacerdotii Fastigium. It will therefore not be surprising if several of these men of mature age, once they are priests, show that they are giants of sanctity in the apostolate. We need only recall Saint Augustine, Saint Ignatius, Saint John Capistran, Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, Saint John Marie Vianney.

ALLOCATION:

11. When he was Secretary of State, Pius XII proclaimed this doctrine with incontestable authority in an allocution delivered January 31, 1932, in the church of the Trinite-des-Monts, Rome:

“Vocation is not always an easy ascent, imperceptible, which facilitates the passage. Under the influence of the first impulse, with special vivacity in soul, thoroughly good, it resembles the
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instinct which God has given to all His creatures and which directs them toward Him, ‘across the ocean and the being (land)’ (Dante, Par. 1, 113-114). At other times, there are in life, troubled hours when the soul is tossed between illusion of error and the bitterness of deception, between the ideal which transports very high on the great wings of sacrifice toward regions not of the earth and the sirens of a thousand faces who offer to eager lips the inebriating cup of pleasures and earthly loves. Then vocation becomes a hard path, a fruit, a crown, won at the price of difficult combats and painful intimate struggles. Some other vocation presents itself as a calm and virile decision, as the seal of intrepid victory over the allurement of fleeting affections and human passions. It is certain that in some fashion and at some hour of the day Our Lord sends workers into His vineyard, the vocation that is always divine.”

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LATE VOCATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

12. It suffices, dear Brothers, to consider the origin of the word priest to establish the antiquity of late vocations. Priest, as we know, signifies an ancient elderly man, and by extension a wise and prudent person. The Roman Pontifical, for the day of ordination, notes that the Lord ordered Moses to choose “among the ancients of the people seventy helpers on whom he would confer his spirit.” He added: “You will be the worthy successors of these venerable elders,” for the Old Testament is the figure of the New. Following Moses’ example, did not Our Lord Himself choose for His first apostles, if not elders, at least men of mature age?

APOSTLES AS LATE VOCATIONS:

In his report of 1912 to the Alliance of the Major Seminaries, Father de la Porte, at that time Superior of the Major Seminary of Versailles and afterward Bishop of Mans, said: “Our Lord has blessed little children and shown them His preference. He has loved the rich young man and invited him to follow Him. But He chose to preach the Gospel and convert the world men who were occupied at a trade and of whom several were undoubtedly married.” Such was the vocation of Peter and of all the other Apostles. Peter was a fisherman, Matthew, a tax collector, John had his own house where he would retire with the Mother of God after the death of the Saviour. Thanks to these Apostles (late vocations) who had the courage to abandon everything, the Gospel has been preached and propagated throughout the world.

THE FIRST NINE CENTURIES:

13. But the late call of the Apostles, including that of St. Paul, is it unique? The history of the Church furnishes the answer. The calendar of the saints is most revealing. A large number of saints marked with the sacerdotal oil have come more or less late to the priesthood. During the nine first centuries, it was by the knowledge and virtue of venerable priests called late to the priesthood that the Church won renown. At that time there was scarcely any other kind of recruitment known.

THE TENTH TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY:

14. From the tenth to the sixteenth century, there were several popes, numerous canonized bishops and priests, who came to the priesthood only at an advance age: St. Norbert decided to become a priest at age 33; St. Thomas Becket remained chancellor of England a number of years before becoming a deacon, then Archbishop of Canterbury; St. John Leonard began his studies only at the age of 26; a lawyer and married, St. Cajetan, Doctor of Law, and St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, Doctor of Medicine of the University of Padua, practiced their professions before becoming priests; St. Francis Borgia was the father of a family when he began priestly functions; St. Philip Neri was ordained at 58.

SOME WELL-KNOWN SAINTS:

15. The Council of Trent, in its 23rd Session, promulgated its saving decree. With it, the foundation and organization of seminaries took the force of law. Boys at least twelve years of age would be received in view of the priesthood. This did not prevent late vocations from increasing. In the Calendar of the Universal Church shone the
following names: St. Alphonsus de Liguori, who was first a brilliant lawyer of the Naples bar; St. Fidel of Sigmaringen, lawyer for the poor at Colmar, left his profession at age 35 to join the Franciscans; St. Paul of the Cross, soldier at Venice, gave up marriage to embrace the cross of Christ. St. John Mary Vianney began his studies at age 19, and St. Camille de Lellis at 33. It would be necessary to add a number of others to complete the history of these priests consecrated later in life to the service of the Church and who contributed so greatly to the spreading of its glory.

THE CANADIAN CHURCH:

16. It would be unjust, dear Brothers, not to underscore the enormous contribution that authentic late vocations have made to our Canadian Church. By a happy coincidence, the group of our holy martyrs presents two vocations of early boyhood: St. Isaac Jogues and St. Noel Chabanel; two vocations of adolescents: St. Charles Gamier and St. Gabriel Lallem; two late vocations: St. Anthony Daniel and St. John de Brebeuf. Anthony Daniel, at age 20, abandoned the study of law to enter the Novitiate of the Jesuits. As to St. John de Brebeuf, he hesitated a long time reflecting, and entered the Jesuit Novitiate only at the age of 25.

17. There are many examples in the annals of our religious history. We have but to leaf through The Biographical Dictionary of French Canadian Clergy to verify the outstanding role which second career vocations have played in the beginnings and development of our country.

ST. CHARLES BORROMEO:

18. Second career vocations are not something new. In the course of its long history, the Church has always been especially interested in such an important matter. Even if we do not insist on the example of the College of Apostles - which is the most celebrated school for second career vocations - we recall the very productive beginnings of St. Charles Borromeo. After the Council of Trent, St. Charles, who was the chief inspiration for The Decree on Seminaries for Boys, immediately undertook the establishment in his diocese of:

"...another seminary for older aspirants, a special house where, thanks to an accelerated course of two or three years, these late arrivals could acquire sufficient knowledge to complete their studies, which had been previously judged to be insufficient."

This attitude of St. Charles Borromeo is most significant and it is impossible to overemphasize its importance. The great Cardinal of Milan had shown the way but, unfortunately, very few followed him.

ST. JOHN BOSCO:

19. In spite of a few noble attempts, we had to await St. John Bosco to see the movement take firm roots. This giant of evangelization established the first truly special program, exclusively dedicated to the cause of second career vocations. Influenced by the spiritual needs of the Christian and pagan world, St. John Bosco immersed himself in exploring all possible resources for priestly recruitment. As a result of divine inspiration, he established his program of Marie-Auxiliatrice pour les Fils de Marie.

"Priestly vocations are decreasing at an alarming rate," he wrote in 1879 in a Report, which he was preparing for his forthcoming audience with Pope Leo XIII:

“One very effective means of overcoming this shortage is the Program for Second Career Vocations, recommended by Pope Pius IX. Its objective is to enlist men, young and old, who possess good will and sufficient aptitude to lead them to the priesthood.

“My experience has been that for every 100 boys who begin studies with the intention of becoming priest, only 6 or 7 persevere, On the other hand, for every 100 adults, 90 become ordained to the priesthood."

St. John Bosco’s testimony is confirmed by facts in institutions dedicated to second career vocations, where a rigorous screening process eliminates those who have little chance of persevering.
Second Career Vocations

In 1875 (four years previously), St. John Bosco had established a Program for Second Career Vocations. His biography states that by 1884, the Program already numbered 140 students. It prepared hundreds of recruits for diocesan clergy and the Salesian Congregation. It also educated large numbers of missionaries, who became leaders among the clergy, both in Europe and in foreign lands.

FATHER BERTHIER:

20. Twenty-five years later, Father Berthier, the well known LaSalette missionary, decided to follow, despite his advance age, the example of St. John Bosco. He established the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family:

“For the purpose of educating missionaries and of increasing their number by fostering vocations (especially second career vocations) for the missions.” (Art. I. of the Constitutions).

Despite the difficulties of beginning any new project and despite two World Wars, the young Congregation has enjoyed, since then, a spectacular growth. It is established in many countries; it has missions in Norway, Indonesia, South America and elsewhere. It has given to the Church hundreds of priests - most of whom have been second career vocations.

In Europe and especially in France, Germany and England, seminaries for second-career vocations are multiplying at an ever-increasing rate, principally since the two World Wars. The results have exceeded all expectations.

FRENCH CANADA:

21. Our dear brothers, we are happy to emphasize the fact that French Canada has been one of the first to participate in such a highly inspired movement. Today, we have two such institutions, specially dedicated to the training of second career vocations: 1) the Seminary of Saint-Victor-de-Tring in the diocese of Quebec and 2) Holy Apostles Seminary in the diocese of Saint-Jean-de-Quebec. Let us keep in mind that Saint-Victor-de-Tring Seminary was the first institution of its kind in Canada and the New World. It began as a night school, opened by Father Bernier who was, at the time, assistant pastor at Saint-Victor-de-Beauce.

HOLY APOSTLES SEMINARY:

A similar idea inspired Father Eusebe Menard, a Franciscan priest and founder of Holy Apostles Seminary. He first established his institution in make-shift and temporary quarters in Montreal-Nord, under the name of Ecole and later Missionary College of Saint-Pascal-Baylon. Later, it was officially established at la Cote-Saint-Catherine. On September 6, 1952, His Excellency the Coadjutor officially opened the seminary. The following day, Archbishop and future Cardinal Leger of Montreal, presided at the seminary’s solemn blessing.

This institution, which is the only one of its kind in the entire ecclesiastical province of Montreal, already seems to have fulfilled its highest expectations. This is the reason why we have decided to promote, with all our resources, such a highly apostolic undertaking.

It answers most fittingly the chief preoccupations of both bishops and pastors, namely the recruitment of priestly vocations.

**Translators' Note. The following passage is excerpted from the 1984-85 Catalog of Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut:

“Holy Apostles College and Seminary is sponsored and administered by the Missionaries of the Holy Apostles, a Roman Catholic Society of Apostolic life, whose purpose is to provide priests and religious leaders for the Universal Church.

“Holy Apostles College and Seminary traces its origin to Holy Apostles Seminary, founded in 1956 by Very Reverend Eusebe M. Menard, O.F.M., a Canadian priest who saw the need to provide American adults inclined toward the Catholic priesthood with an education and seminary environment suited to their age and background. The Seminary Division of Holy Apostles College continues Father Menard's work for adult vocations today.
WHAT WE EXPECT OF SECOND CAREER VOCATIONS

22. Since the beginning of this century, Programs for Second Career Vocations have trained several thousand priests in Europe. In Canada, only the seminary of Saint-Victor-de-Tring has been established long enough to make an evaluation. We note that it has supplied more than 400 priests. Is this not an encouraging outcome in the fact of a crucial need of workers in the Lord’s vineyard? Is it not consoling to know that of every 100 prudently and carefully chosen candidates, more than 75 persevered in their objective?

Despite the importance of numbers in priestly recruitment, we must be careful not to overlook the intellectual and moral qualifications of the aspirants. Existing institutions have been maintaining very high academic standards. Still better, according to Father Berthier, they have seen to it that only adults of a "certain 'temperament' in studies would be admitted to the priesthood."

CURRICULUM:

In Canada and in many European countries, the more mature students in the Second Career Program follow the same courses and take the same examinations as all the other college and seminary students. A scheduling and distribution of courses, which are better adapted to their age, allow them to pursue their studies at a more accelerated pace than the younger students.

Thus, the fundamental principle enunciated by Pope Pius XII is most clear:

“The literary and scientific education of future priests should be, in no way, inferior to that of lay students who follow the same studies.”

SPECIAL FACULTY:

Another sensitive matter must be considered, namely, the need for a faculty trained in teaching this type of aspirants to the priesthood. Fortunately, we have been able to benefit from many experiences and the days of pioneers, as for example of our most esteemed Canon J .A. Bernier, are over. Since 1949, Superiors and Professors of Second Career Vocation Programs have been meeting every year in France. These very productive gatherings and others no less enriching, have enabled us to arrive, without further delay, at a pedagogy that is sensitively progressive and oriented to this special type of apostolate. Our two seminaries for second career vocations have already prepared competent Professors, who are sensitive to the special needs of a work from which they themselves have benefited.

SOCIETY OF HOLY APOSTLES:

In addition, a new religious family, under the name of The Society of Holy Apostles, has just come into existence under the patronage of His Eminence, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Montreal and of His Excellency the Bishop of Saint-Jean-de-Quebec.

As a Franciscan priest in retreat work, Father Menard counseled hundreds of men aspiring to the priesthood. Before long he realized that a critical key to problems of the current shortage of priests could be found among men in middle and late life, who were being drawn to priestly service as a ‘second career’. Aware of the inevitable difficulties encountered by the average older man seeking admission to a seminary adapted to the needs of younger students, Father Menard established a seminary college for Canadian older aspirants to the priesthood in 1946 with the backing of his Franciscan superiors. The first school geared to the college education of ‘adult vocations’ in Canada met with immediate success and was soon followed by another seminary of this type.

After many Americans had applied to these seminaries, Father Menard made plans for the first seminary college in the United States primarily for ‘adult vocation’ to the priesthood: Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut. It opened with 18 students in the fall of 1957. Since then over 200 graduates from the Seminary have been ordained or are presently completing theological studies.
The distinctive, if not exclusive, purpose of this Society is to prepare candidates, who will be qualified to direct this Seminary for Second Career Vocations and - as need arises - to establish similar institutions in this country and elsewhere.

MORAL QUALITIES:

24. Father Berthier speaks, with good judgment and from experience, about the necessary moral qualities of those who aspire to the priesthood. He says:

“It happens more than once that young men, who have known how to protect themselves in the midst of worldly dangers, are more likely candidates for becoming saints than young boys who have led a sheltered life and do not know how to endure the hardships of conflict.”

On the other hand, when we think of the courage, perseverance and, at times, heroism which these young men must possess in order to reach their goal, there is reason to be assured about the purity of their intentions and firmness of their virtues.

In his address of September 23, 1930, to the Catholic Clergy throughout the world, His Holiness Pope Pius XII said,

“Even though they have entered the priesthood late in life, they are frequently endowed with greater and firmer virtues, because they have undergone the test and they have steeled their hearts by contact with life’s hardships; and they have already been involved in work closely allied to priestly ministry.”

These words alone, coming as they do, from our Holy Father the Pope, should be sufficient - if it were still necessary - to dispel any prejudice that one might have, in some areas, on the subject of second career vocations. The restlessness of soul and an active dedication to apostolic work, have already prepared these men to go into the midst of the people with feelings of love and compassion of the divine Redeemer, who said, “I have compassion for the multitude” (Mk 8, 2).

Hence, we must guarantee our people a religious education. We must give them all possible assistance in the moral and social order. We must protect them from all who would try to exploit them, for the priest has not only a strictly religious mission to perform in the sanctuary. In imitation of Jesus, the Eternal High Priest, he must be an agent of consolation to hearth and home, a benefactor of the poor and oppressed, a guardian of the people’s moral life and a defender of their rights.

LETTER OF CARDINAL PIZZARDO:

25. In a letter addressed to the Founder and Superior of Holy Apostles Seminary (dated April 27, 1951), His Eminence Cardinal Pizzardo, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, writes:

“In the text of the Exhortation Menti Nostrae of his Holiness Pope Pius XII, your perspicacity quickly discerned, without any doubt, certain discreet but very expressive words, where the Shepherd of Shepherd shows how valuable are these aspirants to the ‘holy army’.

“These men knew how to prepare themselves by serving in the various branches and undertakings of the Catholic apostolate, and this, even though they came to the priesthood late in life.

“These words should be sufficient to justify (if it is still necessary), and to praise, as it deserves, the magnificent work to which you have dedicated yourself, and in Which you always continue to spend yourself along with your confreres.

“The Sacred Congregation hopes that your example will inspire many to imitate you and that there will soon arise, in countries which still lack them, institutions like yours, which ensure greater
numbers of holy priests, whom the Church needs so much in order to accomplish its work of redemption and salvation here below, entrusted to it by its divine Founder.”

His Holiness Pope Pius XI had already enthusiastically encouraged and blessed the efforts of Don Bosco in support of second career vocations. His Holiness Pope Leo XIII was a firm supporter of Father Berthier in his establishment of the Institute of the Holy Family for Second Career Vocations and he overcame all obstacles that might have prevented him from a total dedication to this cause. Similar encouragement was given by His Holiness Pius XI to Father Debrel, the great French Apostle of Second Career Vocations.

TESTIMONY OF HISTORY:

27. At a time when the Church is persecuted so violently in far too many countries, is it not due to a special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who governs it, that we see developing this Program of Second Career Vocations?

The Superior of a French seminary recently observed:

“Second career vocations arise in greater numbers, whenever the faith is on the wane and almost on the verge of extinction; and sometimes these vocations are more numerous in times of hostility to the Church than in most Christian epochs; the greater the erosion in faith the more numerous the vocations.”

This fact was strikingly demonstrated in England on the eve of the Protestant Revolution. A similar situation took place in France at the beginning of the century. Young men, who are twenty years and older, are less intimidated by a life of austerity and hardship, than are young boys. Often the thought of struggles to be faced and dangers to be undergone - far from frightening them from the sanctuary - attracts them and fires them with zeal.

A French university student, who had recently entered the seminary, corroborated this psychological truth in the following words:

“In the presence of momentous events which are conducive to serious reflection, we are witnessing an increase in the number of vocations. Thus, in the year following the defeat, there were nine university students who entered the seminary or the novitiate.”

The entire question of second career vocations is in the forefront today and it needs, more than ever, the concern of those who are dedicated to the glory of God, the future of the Church and the salvation of souls.

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WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN SUPPORT OF SECOND CAREER VOCATIONS

28. Dear Brothers, we must now consider what we should do in the interest of second career vocations. As Catholics, we should all concern ourselves - each in his own way - with the cause of priestly recruitment. But in view of the great influence which priests, parents, and religious and lay teachers exert on souls, they should use all their zeal in nurturing the divine call to the youth who are entrusted to them. They should likewise be alert to second career vocations, which they can encourage within the context of their own noble work.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

In the broad area of such activities as Scouting, Third Order, Youth Work, Study Groups, Catholic Action Movement and closed retreats, a perceptive and zealous priest will certainly recognize beautiful and strongly tempered souls, who desire only to devote themselves to a holy cause. These souls need perhaps only a word, look or gesture to commit themselves definitively to the Lord’s vineyard, What a holy ambition for a priest: to recruit apostles who will mark in a trail of light, the paths of his apostolate.

The following words which Father Lackner wrote about his country are, perhaps, even more true of our own:
Second Career Vocations

“Certainly a number of questions are important but even more worthy of consideration is the number of authentic second career vocations, which lie dormant in the midst of our Catholic laity. They never evidence themselves because their fortunate owners either do not recognize the possibilities, which are offered to those who follow them, or because of their humility, they do not even dare to think of them. Christ also calls such individuals to His vineyard.”

29. Our colleges and even universities have large numbers of young men who are unable to give their lives a useful direction. And, unfortunately, how frequently, it seems to us, they have little concern for the higher interests of Church and society. The various Faculties in the universities are forced to make judicious choices in the face of an ever-increasing number of applicants, Only the vocation of ‘saviors of souls’ does not experience such an overcrowding. Could we not hope that a more equitable apportionment be made in favor of God and souls?

30. For all the other faithful, there are two very powerful means in aiding vocations, namely, prayer and financial help. The day when Our Lord said, “Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers,” He emphasized the overwhelming efficacy of this means of supporting vocations. And, most fortunately, this means is at the disposal of all the faithful, no matter in what state of life God has placed them.

Let us therefore put this sublime intention in our prayers and let us support our petitions by offering daily sacrifices.

Those who have been blessed with earthly riches should consider it not only their duty, but an honor to contribute, through their alms, to the formation of future priests. Money invested in such a vital work is capital placed in a heavenly bank, which pays an interest in eternity.

CONCLUSION

31. And now, dear Brothers in Christ, we wish to invite you, once again, to support and encourage everywhere a high regard for priestly vocations, to pray continually for the recruitment and formation of future priests, and to work prudently and generously, in accordance with your means and station in life, for this very holy and vital cause.

We do not wish to close this letter without recalling those sublime words of our distinguished Apostolic Delegate on the incomparable dignity vested in God’s ministers:

“If I look at the beauty of the heavens and the ravishing splendor of the sun, I find a much more brilliant light shining in your persons, O priests of God. If I consider the marvels and riches of the earth, I discover that a more precious treasure lies hidden in your hearts. If I meditate on the immensity of the oceans, I see a more vast power in your mission.

“If I contemplate the dignity of the angels, who serve at the throne of God, I discern a much more sublime dignity in you. If I am enraptured by the miracle of the Maternity of the Holy Virgin Mother, I am elated when I realize that she has given us Jesus Christ once, while you, O priests of God, give Him to us every day, again and again, in a perpetual incarnation of love.

“O priests, you are inferior only to God, Who has created you. But St. Gregory reminds us that by reason of the dignities and honors received, the responsibilities are awesome and formidable. And this is why we beg you to help our priests by your prayers and constant petitions.

“‘I entreat you,’ said St. Paul, ‘by Our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Holy Spirit that you help me by the prayers which you offer to God for me’ (Rom 15, 30).”

Given in Montreal, the second day of April 1953, on the Feast of the Institution of the Priesthood.

+ Paul-Emile Cardinal Leger,
Archbishop of Montreal.
Second Career Vocations

+ Joseph-Alfred Langlois,
  Bishop of Valleyfield.
+ Joseph-Arthur Papineau,
  Bishop of Joliette.
+ Anastase Forget,
  Bishop of St-Jean-de-Quebec.
+ Emilien Frenette,
  Bishop of Saint-Jerome.
+ Gerard-Marie Codette,
  Bishop of Egee,
  Coadjutor of St-Jean-de-Quebec.
+ Conrad Chaumont,
  Bishop of Arena,
  Auxiliary of Montreal.
+ Lawrence P. Whelan,
  Bishop of Opos,
  Auxiliary of Montreal.
+ Edouard Jette,
  Bishop of Tabe,
  Auxiliary of Joliette.
+ Percival Caza,
  Bishop of Albule,
  Auxiliary of Valleyfield.
REFERENCES: