

## THE PARENT'S STORY

We asked the parents of some priests and seminarians how they felt when their son wanted to become a priest and what impact it has had on their family and lives...

### STORY OF A SEMINARIAN'S PARENTS

When our son told us he wanted to be a priest we told him, "You are not suited to the Priesthood." To this he said, "But do you know what priests do?" His question really challenged us because we had to admit we did not know. We knew that priests celebrate Mass and the other Sacraments, but beyond this we had no idea. As he related to us what he had been led to see during his calling we could not help but notice the joy, awe and wonder with which his calling had captivated him. We had to review what expectations we had for our son. We thought he would be happy if he had a successful career, so when he began speaking about his vocation we realised that we had not been giving enough attention to our own vocation as a married couple. If our son becomes a priest we are happy that he will give testimony to many people in like fashion that eternal realities deserve attention.

### STORY OF A PRIEST'S PARENTS

When our son told us that he wanted to become a priest we thought that it was just a phase he was going through. We wanted to be assured that he was being objective, realistic and not 'caught up' with some 'outside' influence. Even if he was thinking clearly, we were not sure if we should try to hold him back on account of his age. So we asked him questions such as, "Is your 'calling' just a brush with idealism? How can you make such a life changing decision when you are so young? Do you really understand the sacrifices to be made, the commitment necessary, the pressures you would endure?" His future happiness was all important to us and so we were open to what he was thinking and feeling. As Catholics, we know that human fulfilment has a deep spiritual dimension that is integral to life and so when he persisted in his response to his calling we understood his yearning.

When he saw the Director of Vocations we discovered that those who apply to enter the seminary do not enter straight away. They are put through tests and assessments for suitability. This relieved any pressure we might have felt and put us at ease. Unlike marriage, when a son wants to commit himself to the Priesthood he has



7 to 8 years to think about it and even to do 'work experience'! We knew our son would be given opportunity to re-examine his motives and commitment. Some did indeed leave the seminary during his time, while others grew in their milestones along the way and these days we often see him on his days off and during other breaks. Apart from the admiration we feel for the great work our son is doing, we know he has found great personal fulfillment. He is well grounded especially by his brothers and sisters who remain very close. There are difficulties we all encounter in life, but fundamentally he runs on 'love' for God and His Church and he gets it back threefold.

## A PARENT'S PRAYER

Dear Lord,

You love our son and you want him to be happy, fulfilled and at peace. Reveal your face to him. Guide his choices.

May he grow to be a man of wisdom, to know the vocation to which you are calling him; and a man of courage, to answer that call.

Help us to encourage our son to seek your face each and every day of his life so that his life can be spent in your service, bringing love, hope and peace to the world. Help us to trust you with his fulfilment and happiness.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- To what vocation could God be calling your son? Could it be to the Priesthood?
- If your son said 'yes' to the Priesthood, how would you respond?
- How do you measure success? In terms of dollars and power, or service and giving?
- Would you ask your son to consider Priesthood?

## WAYS TO FOSTER YOUR CHILD'S VOCATION

- Invite priests and religious to your home as role models for your children.
- Pray for your child's vocation.
- Give your children stories of the saints.
- Talk to your children about their vocation.
- Watch films with your children which have meaningful messages about vocation.
- Talk freely about your own vocation.
- Encourage your son to participate in ministries at Mass and the youth group in your Parish.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. WE ARE TROUBLED BY CASES OF CHILD ABUSE BY CLERGY WHICH I HEAR ABOUT IN THE MEDIA.

Sexual abuse is a terrible evil. It has no place in the Church or in the Priesthood. The Church is deeply committed to bringing justice and healing to victims of sexual abuse and to doing all that it can to ensure it never happens again. Working with lay people, good faithful priests have an indispensable part to play in continuing to make these commitments a reality.

Priests are rightly held to a higher standard of conduct, and the vast majority of priests provide a great example of Christian faithfulness, compassion and service. Yet their good works are rarely reported. They are part of the frontline of the Church's work, caring for 1,349 local communities in the network of parishes throughout Australia.

### 2. WHAT CONTRIBUTION WILL MY SON MAKE IF HE BECOMES A PRIEST?

Through its priests and parishes, the Catholic Church makes an enormous contribution to the Australian community. This includes 550 aged care services, 58 hospitals, 434 nursing and convalescent homes and 1575 schools. It operates major social services and aid organisations such as CatholicCare, St Vincent de Paul Society, Caritas and Catholic Mission. What's more, priests provide spiritual welfare to their parishioners and provide tangible opportunities to encounter Christ through the Sacraments.

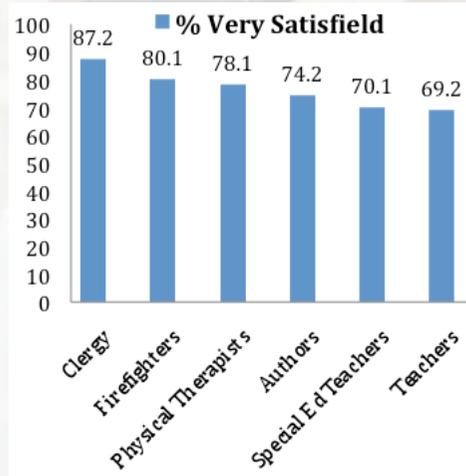
### 3. WE ARE WORRIED OUR SON WILL REGRET NOT GETTING MARRIED AND HAVING CHILDREN.

By giving up good things such as marriage and fatherhood, your son makes time and space in his life to devote to other good things such as being invited into special moments of people's lives. Although your son gives up expressing love physically with a wife, he does not give up loving others and being loved. If your son is called to the Priesthood it is because his heart is drawn to loving very expansively, beyond his immediate family group and he will be deeply rewarded and fulfilled in this way of life. Although he will not have physical children your son will be a spiritual father to many people. They are deeply fulfilled in helping others to discover God's love and grow in their relationship with him.

### 4. WILL THE PRIESTHOOD BE A HAPPY AND FULFILLING LIFE FOR OUR SON?

According to a report on job satisfaction in the United States the clergy ranked first in both job satisfaction and general happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Top Occupations in Job Satisfaction.



Another study recorded that of those priests polled 99% strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement "I am happy in my ministry."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tom W Smith, "Job Satisfaction in the United States", NORC/University of Chicago, 2007

<sup>2</sup> P. Perl & B.T. Froehle, CARA Working Paper Series Number 5: Priests in the United States: Satisfaction, Work Load, and Support Structures, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.), Sept 2002

#### CONTACT US

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Images: Ordination at St Mary's Cathedral 2009  
Photographs by Giovanni Portelli

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# MY SON, A PRIEST?

Information for Parents



"I address parents as well. May faith and readiness never be lacking in your hearts, if the Lord should bless you by calling your son or a daughter to missionary service. May you give thanks to God!"

Pope John Paul II, Message on World Mission Day Rome, Italy, May 22, 1994