

NOVEMBER 2014



Our Faith in Action

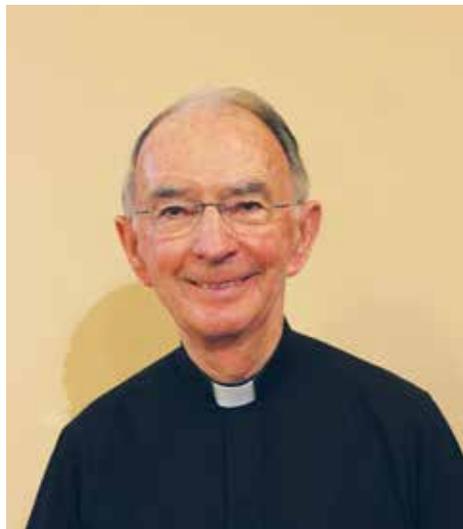
American Martyrs Catholic Community

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR *Saying "Yes" to the Call*

Dear Parishioners,

Over the years, people have asked me, "When did you decide to become a priest?" My answer is always the same – "I did not decide to become a priest. I kept hearing the call of God in many ways, and I decided to say 'yes' to the call, vocation." As you know, I grew up in an Irish Catholic family. I had parents who prayed and witnessed to their faith by the way they lived. Contrary to many Irish family stories, I did not come from a family with "a priest history." No one on either side of my heritage had been a priest.

I went to regular schools. As I approached my senior year I, like all of my classmates, had to decide whether I went on to university, as we termed college, or work towards a city, county, state or banking profession. During that process, Cardinal McIntyre came to Ireland on a "vocation hunt." He was a friend of my local bishop and



there was an open invitation to meet him there. I went, and he painted such a challenging and exciting picture of Los Angeles' great need for priests who desired to serve on the Missions that I pursued the possibility. Suddenly, my careless desire to study law took the back burner. I was quietly supported by my parents (who at first were a little less enthusiastic about my leaving my home diocese) and by my aunt and godmother. Once I decided to pursue my studies for the possibility of the priesthood, I had to insure my university acceptance that always came in a newspaper announcement, no pressure! This announcement came in the middle of August, and I was on my way, with my place at UCC, a local college in my back pocket.

My years at All Hallows were challenging but exciting. Three years before my ordination, my father passed away and many suggested I should

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DAN MANSON BRINGS VOCATIONS TO THE FOREFRONT AT AMERICAN MARTYRS



Visiting religious at the Vocations Fair



The Vocations Fair at American Martyrs

Dan Manson is on a mission to enlighten parishioners about their vocation and discern what path God is calling each of us to follow. Dan became the Chair of the Vocations Committee at American Martyrs last year, and he works with a dedicated group of parishioners to help bring awareness and information about different vocations, particularly the religious.

“I had the opportunity to spend time around a lot of young, energetic nuns a couple years ago, and it reminded me of when I was in Catholic grammar school – [the daily interactions] give you a good sense of the nuns as people and not just religious,” Dan says. “Often, brothers and nuns aren’t teaching at Catholic schools anymore, and children don’t know how to relate to the religious – that they are people, too. All of the attention is on hard-to-get, high-visibility careers, such as rock stars and athletes. So people don’t often pay attention to their vocational calling.”

Dan was born and raised Catholic and attended Catholic grammar and high school, as well as Loyola Marymount University. Dan has been a parishioner of American Martyrs since 1986 – he and his wife, Summer, were married at Martyrs by Msgr. Barry in 1988. Dan has another connection to priests and religious. His brother, Fr. Brendan Manson, left his career as a financial consultant at age 25 to follow his calling to the priesthood. He currently serves as a priest and administrator for St. Edward the Confessor Parish in Dana Point, and

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VOCATIONS *continued from page 2*

regularly writes on a blog to help others understand the joy and fulfillment he experiences as a priest. Fr. Brendan's example further encourages Dan in his journey to help others, especially the youth, discern their vocations.

"My brother wants people to realize that he still does things for fun, has hobbies – being a priest does not mean you just pray and say Mass," Dan says.

The Vocations Committee was started in 2012 and with the help of the Serra Club, has facilitated a Vocations Fair at the parish for the last two years. The Vocations Fair consists of visiting religious who provide information for children or youth attending the event, and incorporates food and fun activities for the participants.

The Vocations Committee meets on the second Thursday of the month from 7-8 p.m., from October through June each year, and regularly provides information and articles in the bulletin regarding vocations. Dan is working to create a vocational blog headed up by a seminarian at the parish, and ultimately would like to implement a rotational program through which visiting religious could spend a length of time teaching and working with the children at American Martyrs.

"Then when children are asked about the religious, they would think of those they know and realize that they have fun and are real people too," Dan says.



The youth taking part in games and activities at the Vocations Fair

"Often, brothers and nuns aren't teaching at Catholic schools anymore, and children don't know how to relate to the religious – that they are people, too. All of the attention is on hard-to-get, high-visibility careers, such as rock stars and athletes. So people don't often pay attention to their vocational calling." – Dan Manson

To learn more about the Vocations Committee or to get in touch with Dan Manson, email vocations@americanmartyrs.org.

BE A GOOD STEWARD OF YOUR TIME THIS ADVENT

Are you ready to navigate the after-Thanksgiving sales? Let's review the drill:

Willingly toss aside the relaxing and heartwarming pace of "Turkey Day," and dive headfirst into the mad Christmas rush. Then, fight heavy traffic and dense crowds just for the chance to save 25 percent on a gift that your father doesn't even need.

Does this sound good?

An uninformed onlooker would certainly find this transition absurd. But for some reason, it transpires each year, like clockwork!

What are we to do? How can we find balance in the Christmas season?

We should not worry. It is not necessary to abandon every shopping plan and renounce the practice of gift giving in order to preserve our sanity. We can instead openly acknowledge the outright invasion of secularism into the holiday season, and then avoid this enticing and gnarly trap by keeping our focus squarely on what is most important: Advent.

Advent is the preparatory season of the Church that marks the beginning of a new liturgical year, characterized by an eager longing for the coming of Christ at Christmas. It is the perfect time to open our hearts to the humility and simplicity of the Christian life, and to respond to our call as stewards of God's gifts.

One of the most effective means of fighting

the materialistic current of the Christmas season is through traditional Advent practices. Although relatively simple, these important practices provide highly effective means of preparing our minds and hearts for Christmas.

As a rule of thumb, it is best to start slowly. Don't overzealously adopt every practice in the book. Instead, take full advantage of one or two solid customs. There are many available resources from which you can gain ideas, including Michaelann Martin's essay *Catholic Traditions for Advent and Christmas* at www.catholiceducation.org and search 'Advent'. This article provides information about a variety of Advent customs, from the Jesse tree to the Advent wreath.

Another great resource is *Building Catholic Family Traditions*, written by Paul and Leisa Thigpen. This book not only proposes ideas for family Advent customs, but it also demonstrates how to carry these habits throughout the entire liturgical year.

It is possible to maintain a religious focus amidst the hectic holiday craze, as well as to transform this holiday season from a mad rush of materialism into a watchful and prayerful experience of longing for Christ. Your simple efforts in upholding Advent customs will open the door to a truly joy-filled Christmas season.



FR. RICK PRINDLE

Discerning Through the Detours

When it comes to discerning God's will, it is not an easy road to travel. Sometimes there may not seem to be an answer – or maybe there is an answer, but it's not the one we want to hear. Sometimes, we are headed down one pathway, only to be shown a new direction. But God does have a plan for each and every one of us, and as we can learn from Fr. Rick Prindle's discernment story, sometimes the peaks and valleys and detours are an important part of the journey.

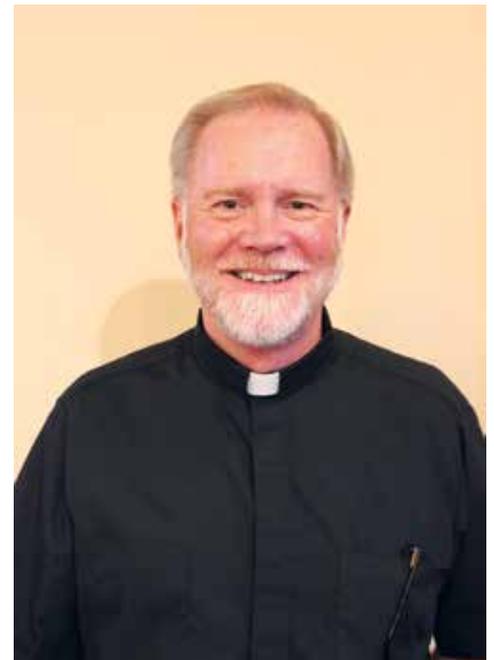
"The important thing to remember in discernment is to stay open to the movement of the Holy Spirit," Fr. Rick says. "Sometimes, you may not know where you are going to go, but there is not just one pathway to salvation. There will be detours along the way. But ultimately, you will find your way and come out a different person."

Of course, every discernment journey has to begin somewhere, and in Father's case the seeds were planted early in his childhood. His parents were strong Catholics who were very active in their parish, St. Christopher's. Since his father was the choir director and his uncle was a priest, Fr. Rick says he was influenced by good men who served God and who set an example. Additionally, the sisters teaching at the parochial school were strong proponents of religious vocations, and so

Father actually began thinking about being a priest when he was just in the second grade. By the time he finished the eighth grade, he had made the decision to attend a high school seminary, after which came four years of college seminary where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, and finally four years of graduate school. In 1978, he was ordained into the priesthood.

What some may not realize is that no matter what vocation we have chosen, whether it's a vocation to religious life, married life or the single life, discernment still continues on a daily basis because, as humans, we continue to grow and change. And so it was with Father. While working at St. John's Seminary as Director of Spiritual Formation and as Assistant Professor of Spiritual Theology, Father made an important decision – one that meant leaving behind the familiar and venturing into the unknown.

"In my role as Spiritual Director, I always stressed to seminarians the importance of being totally honest with themselves," Fr. Rick says. "This includes working on personal growth and dealing with personal issues head-on. And one day, I turned this advice on myself and announced that I would be taking a leave of absence from the active priesthood to take care of my mother and to do some thinking. I was still a priest, but I would be



leaving active priestly ministry."

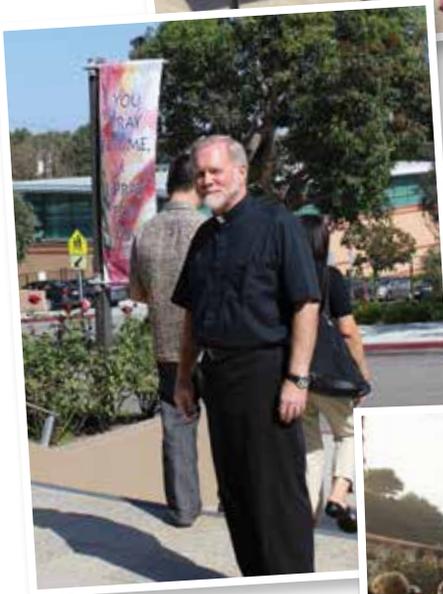
It was not an easy decision, but it was one Fr. Rick says he needed to make in order to grow. During this time, he continued discerning while doing facilitation work at both the National Conference for Community and Justice, as well as the Kaleidoscope Institute. To be sure, he never left his faith. In fact, his faith was the reason he made the decision he did, and his faith was the guiding force which, a little over a year ago, told him that it was time – that he was ready – to return.

Father's first assignment since returning to active ministry has been here, at American Martyrs, where he is serving as Associate Pastor. He notes that he is a different priest today than he was before he left active ministry, and that his 10-year discernment detour made him a more humble person and one who is aware of his dependence on God.

A LOOK AT PARISH LIFE FOR OUR PRIESTS

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This month, our community reflects upon and considers the importance of religious vocations to our Catholic faith. We also extend our gratitude to our parish priests – Msgr. John Barry, Fr. Joe Kammerer and Fr. Rick Prindle – for the many ways they serve our American Martyrs family!



FR. JOE KAMMERER

Finding the Joy

For some, the call to the priesthood is totally unexpected, resulting in a change of direction they had never imagined. Such is the case with Fr. Joe Kammerer who admits that, as a young boy, the idea of the priesthood never even entered his mind – despite the fact that he was raised in a very traditional Catholic household.



“I was not a product of Catholic education, so all my religious formation came from my parents,” Fr. Joe says. “Both my parents were strong Catholics, but it was my mother who made sure we followed the liturgical celebrations of Advent, Lent and Easter. We prayed before meals and at bedtime. During the summer, she would call us in to pray the Rosary, and I would tell my friends to give us 10 minutes and that we would be back to finish the game. In looking back, it’s because of my parents that I am where I am today.”

During high school, Father had the opportunity to attend a “Come and See” weekend at a seminary. Because he remembered his Confirmation retreat in the ninth grade as helping him to re-focus on his priorities, he was actually looking forward to the weekend. But when he got there, he was disappointed that there were no girls. When it was explained that the retreat was solely about priestly vocations, he announced that the priesthood just wasn’t for him. In fact, he would have left right then and there, except for the fact that his parents had already driven away and he was, in a sense, stuck there for the duration of the weekend.

“After that weekend, I was sitting on a bench outside the college chapel waiting for my parents to come and pick me up,” Fr. Joe says. “I remember a sense of quiet, peace and serenity. A bird flew down and was twittering on a branch, and I thought that this could be a good place for me. Later, when we arrived home, my mother was busy cooking brunch, my father was watching a football

game, and I remember thinking how noisy everything was because my awareness was still heightened from the retreat.”

When he was 17 and just beginning to think about college, an application to the seminary arrived in the mail one day – something that was a surprise, because during the “Come and See” weekend, he had opted out of receiving any information. Since things were not lining up the way he had planned with his college applications, he decided to fill out the seminary application. Just two

weeks before classes were to begin, Fr. Joe received his acceptance letter and found himself packing to go to the seminary.

“That first year of formation, I was known as the ‘gregarious one’ and they kept trying to quiet me down and make me more prayerful,” Father says. “So in the back of my mind, I was kind of hoping they would tell me to go. But when I went for my end-of-the-year evaluation, they told me that I was a wonderful asset and that I added life and vitality to the seminary. And I remember thinking, ‘Oh, Lord.’”

Ultimately, the decision to attend seminary does not mean that the decision to become a priest has already been made. Rather, it’s a gift of time to fully explore the idea. For Fr. Joe, during those first three years, he was open to the idea of leaving. However, God showed him time and time again that he was meant to stay. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and continued his seminary studies where he participated in an immersion mission trip to Mexico and finally found peace, clarity and acceptance about his vocation.

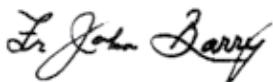
“God kept lining things up, the retreat, the application letter, the seminary,” Father says. “Even though I was thinking one thing, God showed me differently. That’s what a vocation is, putting aside what you want to do and following God.”

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SAYING “YES” TO THE CALL *continued from front cover*

take time out to help with my younger siblings. My mother would not even consider it. “If you wish to leave, it must not be to come and help with the family responsibilities. If you feel the priesthood is not your calling, then come home.” I thank God for my parents and family for being my quiet vocation directors and praise God every day for the privilege of serving my Lord as a priest. It has been an exciting and fulfilling life for me, and I pray that others hear that call and write their story 60 years from now.

In Christ,



Rev. Msgr. John F. Barry, P.A.
Pastor

Our Faith in Action is provided by the American Martyrs Stewardship Commission

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday, 5:00 p.m. | **Sunday**, 7:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday/Thursday, 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. | **Saturday**, 8:00 a.m.

Holy Day, 5:00 p.m. (Vigil), 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m.