



# Called by God

>> **Father Ron Hutchinson** is director of priestly vocations for the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids.

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he importance of any calling depends upon the position of the one who calls, and the nature of the work to which the person is being called. As with Peter and Paul, and all the apostles, every priest is chosen by God himself to continue the work of God's divine Son here on earth. "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Has anyone ever been called by someone more important than God, or to a task more vital than the one for which the Son of God gave his life?

I am often asked by various people when I first felt called by God to be a priest. I must start by first saying that it wasn't as dramatic as some of the biblical accounts, such as when God called to Moses from the burning bush and commanded him to lead the people of Israel out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt. Nor was it made clear to me by an elder, as it was for Samuel when Eli told him that it was the Lord who was calling for him in the night and that he must respond "Speak Lord for your servant is listening." Rather, it was just a feeling I had when I was about 12 years old. I just felt that I was meant to be a priest when I grew up. It was one of those gut-level feelings that is hard to explain. However, as I grew older, the lure of materialism changed my sense of what was important and I decided that I was meant to do something that would make money. I never stopped to consider if that was what God wanted for me.

It wasn't until I had my first job after graduate school that I realized I didn't like where my life was headed, nor did I really find satisfaction in what I was doing. That led me to turn to God in prayer and ask for guidance. However, without a spiritual guide, I ignored all the signs God sent me (which I only realized in hindsight). Finally, and I might say luckily, God saw fit to make it abundantly clear to me what he wanted for my life. As the words of the Gospel were read that Holy Thursday (1987), I knew that I was being asked to follow in the footsteps of Jesus' disciples and give my life in service to the good news.

Like all priests who, in one way or another, have heard that call, I asked myself in amazement, "Why me?" And the only answer I received back was "Why not you?" From that moment until today, I have responded to God's call with total and Christ-like surrender. Like others who have heeded God's call and chosen to follow, I figured that if God wants me to be a priest, he will give me the grace and strength that I need for the mission. In essence, I have had to put my trust in God and be willing to go where he leads. That is not to say that the road to my ordination was without its pitfalls, but each and every time I was faced with doubt and despair, I placed my trust in God and his plan for my life.

Whenever I have the opportunity to speak about vocations to the priesthood, I say that I have no doubt God is still calling men to serve the church as priests. However, I go on to say that we have to help these men to hear God's call. The world is a very noisy place and so many different voices are telling us what is good, better or best for our lives. I would like to encourage all members of the church, especially our catechists and youth leaders, to become like Samuel and invite our young people to seek the Lord's voice above all others. In addition, we must encourage men in whom we see potential to consider the priesthood. (Remember, a forfeited opportunity to encourage a future vocation to the priesthood may mean that we didn't cooperate as an instrument for God's plan.)

Above all, we need to pray without ceasing that young men who feel or have a sense that God might be calling them will have the courage to follow God's call without hesitation or fear. I have no doubt that the power of such prayer will mean that many more men from our diocese will be given the grace to wholeheartedly offer their lives in service to the church and the people of God.

The challenges and responsibilities of being called by God are great, but the rewards are priceless!

Catholic Diocese of  
Grand Rapids  
online vocational  
resources:



Priestly vocations  
[dioceseofgrandrapids.org/vocation/welcome.htm](http://dioceseofgrandrapids.org/vocation/welcome.htm)

Religious orders  
[dioceseofgrandrapids.org/clergy/religiousorders.htm](http://dioceseofgrandrapids.org/clergy/religiousorders.htm)