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Weakness, Brokenness and Fear to become PRIESTS?

+Bp Ephrem Nariculam

Bishop of Chanda

The three dispositions that assist us to yield good fruit (Mt.12:33) may be expressed in three questions:

Are we *weak enough* to be priests/to become priests?

Are we *broken enough* to be priests/to become priests?

Are we *afraid enough* to be priests/to become priests?

Weak Enough to be Priests?

You need to be weak in order to be priests? It sounds very intimidating! But it requires for the betterment? Sometimes our own strengths become obstacles to manifest the grace of God in our life. Are we weak enough so that the power of Christ can shine through us. St. Paul reminds us ‘when I am weak I am strong’ (2 Cor. 12:9). He claims that in his weakness God shines better! We are not to be supermen in skills and talents. We need to be simple and normal so that God can work wonders through us. Our ‘weakness’ can be lovable before God. Through Beatitudes Jesus presents before us the weaknesses in human terms become strength in the divine realms (Mt. 5:1-12). Are we weak enough solely to rely on the grace of God? Are we weak enough to depend

on the mercy of God? We need to acknowledge our weaknesses. They are totally ours. We shall offer them to the Lord. Are we men and women of character and integrity? Are our private life and public life in proper unity and harmony? We are not angels. We are human. What is human is weak. Recognise our weakness, accept it and learn to overcome it by the blessings of God's power and benevolence. God can work wonders through weak and fragile human submissions.

Broken Enough to be Priests?

The body-broken and the blood-shed by Christ our Lord, brought eternal life to the world. As Christians and consecrated persons, if there is not enough 'brokenness' and participation in the passion and dying of Christ, we cannot be true missionaries. Our priestly/religious formation is meant to 'break' us until we are crushed fully! When you are crushed, God will put you back to be a beautiful mosaic. 'Unless the grain of wheat falls and die, it cannot sprout to new life (Jn 12:24) grow and yield. We have to be crucified with Christ to be born again new, to be new creation (Gal. 2:20). We have to be broken and dead, to be born again new (Cf. Jn. 3:1-10). As the bread is broken at the Holy Eucharist, so too we are crushed in life circumstances. Our most beautiful prayer in the Eucharistic participation is 'Lord break me to be parted, so as to be united by you - a beautiful re-formulation as per divine plan. We may be/have to be broken by others constantly - our superiors, our co-missionaries/workers, our subjects, our family members, our friends, our well wishers etc. We will be hurt by others, thus we will be refined - become finer in shape and beauty. There is no holiness without willingness to be broken like the body of the Lord. When others gossip about us, ignore us, take us for granted or calumnise us - thank God for the same because when others break us

then we partake in the passion of Christ. For it is by leaving his body to be broken that Christ redeemed the world.

Afraid Enough to be Priests?

A bit confusing to pose such a question, but the reflection is endearing solace to heart and mind. Are we afraid enough to be priests so that we can be good missionaries/religious? We must be courageous against erroneous teachings of others about the Church and Christian doctrines. But, we have to be afraid of sacrilege, amassing wealth for oneself, insincerity, gluttony, ambition, money-mindedness, comfort, seeking after name and fame, hypocrisy etc. In short be afraid of sin and turn to virtue. The sin and all its 'business' distance us from God, distract us from our spiritual/religious commitment and disgust with our earnings and learnings. God knows us more than we know ourselves. Fear of sin never fails!

So, Dear Friends - the great beauty is that even we are weak, broken and afraid - God wants to continue loving us. God bless you all.

(Based on the Homily delivered by **Bp. Ephrem Nariculam** of Chanda Diocese at Papal Seminary, Pune
on 11 July 2019)

On Priests

- “The end for which God has instituted the priesthood has been to appoint on earth public persons to watch over the honor of his divine majesty, and to procure the salvation of souls.” – St. Alphonsus Liguori
- “He made them, the vicars of his love.” – St. Ambrose
- “What tongue, human or angelic, may ever describe a power so immeasurable as that exercised by the simplest priest in Mass? Who could ever have imagined that the voice of man, which by nature hath not the power even to raise a straw from the ground, should obtain through grace a power so stupendous as to bring from Heaven to earth the Son of God?” – St. Leonard of Port Maurice
- “O my child, bethink you that just as the bee, having gathered heaven's dew and earth's sweetest juices from amid the flowers, carries it to her hive; so the Priest, having taken the Saviour, God's Own Son, Who came down from Heaven, the Son of Mary, Who sprang up as earth's choicest flower, from the Altar, feeds you with that Bread of Sweetness and of all delight.” – St. Francis de Sales
- “The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus. When you see a priest, think of our Lord Jesus Christ.” – St. John Vianney, patron saint of parish priests
- “For when you see the Lord sacrificed, and laid upon the altar, and the priest standing and praying over the victim, and all the worshippers empurpled with that precious blood, can you then think that you are still among men, and standing upon the earth? Are you not, on the contrary, straightway translated to Heaven, and casting out every carnal thought from the soul, do you not with disembodied spirit and pure reason contemplate the things which are in Heaven?” – St. John Chrysostom