

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER  
FOR THE 50th WORLD DAY  
OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

21 APRIL 2013 - FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

**Theme: *Vocations as a sign of hope founded in faith***

1. Hope is the expectation of something positive in the future, yet at the same time it must sustain our present existence, which is often marked by dissatisfaction and failures. On what is our hope founded? Looking at the history of the people of Israel ... we see one element that constantly emerges, especially in times of particular difficulty like the time of the Exile, an element found especially in the writings of the prophets, namely remembrance of God's promises to the Patriarchs and sealed forever by the life death and resurrection of Jesus.
2. At every moment, especially the most difficult ones, the Lord's faithfulness is always the authentic driving force of salvation history, which arouses the hearts of men and women and confirms them in the hope of one day reaching the "promised land". This is where we find the sure foundation of every hope: God never abandons us and he remains true to his word.
3. To have hope, therefore, is the equivalent of trusting in God who is faithful, who keeps the promises of the covenant. Faith and hope, then, are closely related. "Hope" in fact is a key word in biblical faith, to the extent that in certain passages the words "faith" and "hope" seem to be interchangeable.
4. What exactly is God's faithfulness, to which we adhere with unwavering hope? It is his love! He, the Father, pours his love into our innermost self through the Holy Spirit (cf. *Rom 5:5*). And this love, fully manifested in Jesus Christ, engages with our existence and demands a response in terms of what each individual wants to do with his or her life, and what he or she is prepared to offer in order to live it to the full. The love of God sometimes follows paths one could never have imagined, but it always reaches those who are willing to be found.
5. Just as he did during his earthly existence, so today the risen Jesus walks along the streets of our life and sees us immersed in our activities, with all our desires and our needs. In the midst of our everyday circumstances he continues to speak to us; he calls us to live our life with him, for only he is capable of satisfying our thirst for hope. He lives now among the community of disciples that is the Church, and still today calls people to follow him. The call can come at any moment. Today too, Jesus continues to say, "Come, follow me" (*Mk 10:21*).
6. Accepting his invitation means no longer choosing our own path. Following him means immersing our own will in the will of Jesus, truly giving him priority, giving him pride of place in every area of our lives: in the family, at work, in our personal interests, in ourselves. It means handing over our very lives to Him, living in profound intimacy with Him, entering through Him into communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit, and consequently with our brothers and sisters. This communion of life with Jesus is the privileged "setting" in which we can experience hope and in which life will be full and free.
7. Vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life are born out of the experience of a personal encounter with Christ, out of sincere and confident dialogue with him, so as to enter into his will. It is necessary, therefore, to grow in the experience of faith, understood as a

profound relationship with Jesus, as inner attentiveness to his voice which is heard deep within us. This process, which enables us to respond positively to God's call, is possible in Christian communities where the faith is lived intensely, where generous witness is given of adherence to the Gospel, where there is a strong sense of mission which leads people to make the total gift of self for the Kingdom of God, nourished by recourse to the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and by a fervent life of prayer.

8. Deep and constant prayer brings about growth in the faith of the Christian community in the unceasingly renewed certainty that God never abandons his people and that he sustains them by raising up particular vocations ... so that they can be signs of hope for the world. Indeed, priests and religious are called to give themselves unconditionally to the People of God, in a service of love for the Gospel and the Church, serving that firm hope which can only come from openness to the divine.
9. By means of the witness of their faith and apostolic zeal, therefore, [priests and religious] can transmit, especially to the younger generations, a strong desire to respond generously and promptly to Christ who calls them to follow him more closely. Whenever a disciple of Jesus accepts the divine call to dedicate [their life] to the priestly ministry or to the consecrated life, we witness one of the most mature fruits of the Christian community, which helps us to look with particular trust and hope to the future of the Church and her commitment to evangelisation.

*From the Vatican, 6 October 2012*

## **BENEDICTUS PP. XVI**

### **Prayer for Vocations:**

St Peter Chanel  
you left your homeland  
to proclaim Jesus,  
the Saviour of the world,  
to the peoples of the Pacific.  
Guided by the Spirit of God,  
Who is the strength of the gentle,  
you bore witness to love,  
even laying down your life.  
Grant that like you,  
We may live our daily life  
in peace, in joy and in love.  
May your prayer and example  
call forth from our midst  
many workers for the Gospel,  
so that God's Kingdom  
may reach the ends of the earth.  
Amen



**Statue of St Peter Chanel**

**Lamartine, Belley**