

November 3, 2018

Three men were sailing in the Pacific Ocean, their ship was wrecked and they found themselves on a deserted island. They had plenty of food but their existence was different than their lives in the states. They were walking by the seashore one day, and they found an ancient lamp. One of them picked it up and rubbed it. Out popped a genie! The genie says, "Oh freedom! For getting my freedom I'll grant each of you a wish; one. (Of course he put some stipulations on there.) "No falling in love no extra wishes, anything else is legit. The first guy says, That's fantastic! I'm a rancher from Wyoming, I can't wait to be back there, I want to go home. Poof ! He was in Wyoming. The second man said, I'm a stockbroker from Manhattan and I want to go home. Poof ! He was in Manhattan in his office with all the stuff he liked. The third man was kind of more laid-back and he said, "You know I really like it here, I've been enjoying myself, but you know I'm going to be lonely, I miss my two friends I wish they were back here. Poof ! Poof !

This week starting today we have the "National Week of Vocations in the Catholic Church" where they ask us to pray and talk about vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Noah just got part of that little deal there. Not only that, think about it but pray about it. There may be a reason you're the only one in Life Teen right now.

I want to talk about a saint whose feast day is today. This particular saint has done more for the Catholic Church as far as clergy and things in Europe, than almost anybody else. He started out the son of a count in Italy. His mother belonged to one of the four or five richest families in Europe at the time, the Medicis. The Medicis were responsible for building most of the basilicas and cathedrals in Europe today and also for the tremendous artwork that we have. When he was 12 years old he decided, "I'm going to serve the Church." That's very vague, to serve the Church in religious life or the clergy so his uncle gave him some family income from the Benedictine monastery they owned. Back then, monasteries had lots of land and property, lots of income and so you could own a monastery as a layperson and get rich. That was interesting because he put that aside he didn't spend it. The other thing was Charles suffered from speech impediment, he stuttered and everyone thought he was slow and dumb. But, he amazed them when he aced his Latin exams and went on to become a canon and civil lawyer with doctorate degrees. Because he was the oldest son even though he was third in line, he was the oldest son so responsibility for household finances fell on his shoulders. He was a teenager and he had a reputation for being short of funds. This would happen the rest of his life, he was always short of money even though he had some in the bank, he was spending other people's. His uncle, his mother's brother became Pope Pius IV. Pope Pius IV saw how intelligent his nephew was and he said, "I want you to come to Rome and I'm going to do something for you." So he made him a Cardinal deacon. Remember, he's a layperson right now; a Cardinal deacon. There are three kinds of Cardinals: Cardinal bishops, Cardinal deacons, Cardinal priests. And it all depends on your responsibilities. Currently there are only six Cardinal bishops. A priest can be a Cardinal deacon, a bishop can be a Cardinal deacon, the last layperson who was a Cardinal was 1915. He had to advise the Pope, full-time, he had to be in charge of the papal states because at this time the Pope was just a regular royal prince and he had all kinds of lands and things. He also was the supervisor of the Knights of Malta, the Franciscans, and the Dominicans, all at the age of 23. He promoted learning in the Vatican and he kept notes and he gave lectures. This was a unique thing because the church wasn't always about learning. It was always about service but it wasn't always about learning. Then they named him ecclesiastical administrator of the archdiocese of Milan, even though he was a layperson. (Of course his uncle was the Pope.) It was then that Charles thought, "You know, wait a

minute, I'm in charge of a diocese maybe I should be at least a priest." Well, while he was thinking about that he went out and founded a college. This guy is something else. His only brother died so his family said, "Hey you are still a layperson, give it all up, come home, get a wife and have kids to carry on the family name." He said, "No." And then he was ordained a deacon, a bishop, and a priest within six months. His uncle died so he stayed in Milan. It was corrupt during this time; the Church was very corrupt and they had the Protestant reformation going on, there were wars going on about faith, and priests were not doing what they were supposed to do, monks weren't doing what they were supposed to do so he saw it as his job to clean up his diocese. His strategy was very interesting; he decided to educate the priests. Prior to this there was no school specifically set aside for educating priests. So Saint Charles Borromeo started the seminary system we use in the world today to educate priests. He was solely responsible for that move.

I went to St. Charles Borromeo in Philadelphia. There is this huge portrait of him in the hallway. We had to wear our cassocks and surplices every morning to go to Mass and we would process down the hallway into the chapel. We would go by this portrait (and the seminary is not a nice place to be, it's a miserable existence, you can't wait to get out) and we'd point at him every morning and say, "It's your fault!"

He stopped many things: selling of indulgences, hiring your brother to be a priest, he ordered monasteries to reform themselves, and he made visits all around his diocese. He also did something most people don't realize was happening for a couple hundred years before he was born. The Medici family and all the rich families decided they wanted to outdo each other in how they decorated churches. So the churches became so ornamental, so amazing to look at, it distracted from God and the Mass. He went in and said, "Take it down." He also went to his mother and said, "Mom, you know all the graves of your relatives that you've decorated really fine? You've got to stop that, you've got to change it, you've got to take it down." History does not record what his mother said when he told her she was going to have to change the cemetery. People complained about the changes; they didn't want to become strict and follow the rules so one monk decided to take it upon himself to stop the problem. He got a pistol. We're talking the 1500's you know how accurate the pistols were, not very. If you were more than six or seven feet away from me, I could miss. He missed. He tried to assassinate Charles but he missed. But Charles just took it as, "You know what? If that's what they're doing then I must be doing the right thing.

A famine struck Milan following the plague, the wealthy and powerful fled the city but he stayed. He used his own money that he had set aside in the past, to feed 70,000 people a day. It bankrupted him. They started using funds but everything got better before he ran out of those from the Church. Then he traveled to Switzerland. He looked around Switzerland and he said, "You know what? They need a college here." He founded another college. This guy founded colleges like I go to Safeway. I can't believe it. Eventually, his life's work began to take a toll; he died very shortly after getting a fever at the age of 46. He did all this in twenty years. He was very very busy. Beatified and now we have his feast day today.

The reason I want to look at him and mention him is because he didn't think about any of this until he was called. The call to vocation is key. Somebody said to him, "You need to work in the Church." From there he realized he needed to be a priest. If you ask seminarians, (in the seminary, we did this with each other) why they were there. It's because somebody called them. Somebody said, "You should think about being a priest. You should pray about being a priest. Have you ever thought about being a priest?"

And it's the same thing about the others, "Have you thought about being a sister? Have you thought about being a nun?" All vocations come with calls. If you are not called, the seed isn't planted. I planted the seed in Noah this morning. I may not live to see where it goes, but you know, I planted it. That's what we do. When I was growing up, when I was in high school in Utah, I was working at the local parish and Father put me to work as a landscaper working in the flower beds. People would come up to the parish and say, "Excuse me Father." I was like, "That's weird." Now, okay it's normal. But it was weird. Father would say, "That's alright because you have a priestly demeanor." Well, in high school what does that mean? But all through life, even when I was working in industry people would say out of the blue, "You would make a good priest." And I was thinking, I haven't made enough money yet. So, eventually it filtered in and I thought about it and of course, here I am.

All vocations start with a call. I can't tell you how many men have told me, "You know Father, (and this is from earlier ages when women didn't expose everything) I was walking along the neighborhood and all of a sudden I saw by this bush this most beautiful pair of legs and I knew I had to find out who owned those legs." And now they're married. That's a call, believe it or not. She was calling and she just didn't know it. That's a call. You know what another call to vocation is? It's time! The baby's coming! That's another call to vocation. It almost killed my Grandfather. My Mother and my Aunt were carrying their babies at the same time and on September 25th 1959, my Mom was staying with him because my Dad was overseas in the military, and she came down the steps and she said, "Pop, it's time to go to the hospital." So getting ready; the phone rang. My Grandfather did something he never did for years; he picked up the phone. It was his daughter, my Aunt, "Dad, it's time to go to the hospital and Keith isn't here!" He started going crazy, he didn't know which direction to go and he started running and he almost choked himself to death on the phone cord, it got wrapped around his neck. He got the call for two different guys that weren't his babies. But the call comes. Somebody makes the call. I was reading one time about Arnold Schwarzenegger, and he dated Maria for eight years. Finally somebody just looked at him as they were sitting at lunch and said, "You know Arnold, it would really do you good to marry her." So he married her. That was the call.

We all have calls to vocations but this week we focus on the religious life and the priesthood. So, if you know somebody, a boy, a girl, a young man, a young woman, a middle-aged man, a middle-aged woman, that are single and they look like they could be a good candidate, ask them. Even if they don't look like a good candidate to you, ask them because you don't know what the Holy Spirit can do.

We have lost fifteen priests this year in our diocese alone. That's one fifth of the priests in this diocese. If we had people asking people about vocations, we would have more. So it's up to you. Father can do that and you say, "Oh that's Father, your supposed to do that." But when it comes from you guys it has a great weight, to call somebody. This week, think about it, pray about it. If you are thinking about a vocation or are interested in one, pray about it. If you think you know somebody that you could ask, ask them. One bishop in this country, when he comes for confirmations to the parish, he tells the pastor, "I want five teenage boys to have dinner with me and he talks to them. Over time, three out of every five have become priests because he made it known. He said, "Have you thought of this?" Nobody asks. In my first parish there was a couple, both of them were 80 years old. She was born and raised Catholic, he had married her young, had a lot of kids, and he'd gone to church every Sunday and every holy day, he read the bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. He knew more about the Catholic Church than I did. I finally went up to him and I said, "Do you want to be Catholic?" "Yes Father but nobody's ever asked me before." Can you imagine, he is 80 years old and he's waiting for someone to say, "Would" His

own wife didn't ask him. So anyway, she was overjoyed but she said, "You know Father, 80 years ago it was a different rite, I want him baptized in that rite too." "Yes maam." So we did that. You don't know unless you ask. This week, look around, see if there is anybody you can say, "Hey, have you thought about...." You make the call.

God bless you.