

I want to speak to you today about the gift of a religious order and why the Bishop went to great lengths to get another religious order to replace the Jesuits.

I want to start with the place of the religious order in the church. We are not diocesan clergy. Diocesan priests work in a specific geographical area for the local bishop. They are trained by the bishop for parish work, hospital work, etc. Diocesan priests work on the needs of each diocese.

What is the blessing of a religious order? They arise from a need in a specific time and place. Jesuits arose because of the Protestant split of church. There was a great need for educated and spiritual clergy. St. Ignatius started his order with 7 men who had graduated with the highest church degrees available at the time. They put themselves at the service of the Pope who had a worldwide view rather than simply a local view.

A religious order has special talents and graces to offer. Special graces are given to the founder that pass along to their order. St. Ignatius had the ability to find God and to order his life to God's will. He noted these special graces and how he learned them and reacted to them in his diary. He later systematized this in his *Spiritual Exercises*. A person who makes the *Spiritual Exercises* becomes even more aware of God's goodness, our ingratitude and sin, and then the new call to follow Christ in an ever deeper way. The *Exercises* teaches prayer habits and the habit of listening to one's experience and the Scriptures to enlighten and guide our life.

Jesuits are trained as teachers, as missionaries, and as spiritual directors. We are not specifically trained as pastors so we learn on the job. We are invited into a diocese by a bishop to give our special talents and gifts to that area. EG in Gulu, Uganda we are trying to set up a secondary school to normalize an area of warfare and raise up zealous young men and women to work for church and society in the area.

So why are the Jesuits leaving? In brief, a lack of vocations in this country. ½ of the Jesuits are older than me and have younger, but the older outnumber the younger 3-1. Thus the need for cutbacks and painful choices. We cut back on parishes because diocesan priests are very good at parish work.

We notified Bishop Harrington 3 years ago that we were leaving and Bishop Harrington began searching. He wanted the blessing of another male religious order in his diocese. He already had the Christian Brothers in Winona. He wanted to show his young men another type of call—to priesthood, to living in community and the grace of an order. Bishop Harrington found the Incarnate Word fathers (Instituto Verbo Encarnado in Spanish). He wanted the blessing of a priestly order in our diocese. He also wanted a group that could minister to the growing number of Spanish speaking people. He wanted a group that could preserve the Ignatian spirit the Jesuits brought to Ss. Peter and Paul.

Incarnate Word Fathers live a community life. They invite the parish into their prayer—their daily hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. You will be invited to that.

The Incarnate Fathers take and pray the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as novices and every ten years thereafter. They are formed by them and preach them in their parishes as

we have endeavored to do. They are very close to the Blessed Virgin and they will invite you into the depth of that devotion. Like the Jesuits, they take a special pledge to support the Holy Father and his teaching. All these special graces Bishop Harrington sought and found in the Incarnate Word Fathers.

And because they endeavor to preach the gospel in the culture in which they find themselves, they will search the Scriptures and internet, their prayer and the papers, to find how God or Satan is acting in our culture. And they will point this out, I am sure.

Today is a tribute to the Jesuits for all their work here for 134 years. Our task at first was to come to German-speaking Catholics and comfort them by preaching, hearing confessions and counseling them in their own language. The first pastors of this parish were German refugees. They fled Germany to the United States and then worked with German immigrants all along the Great Lakes. When Bishop Grace of St. Paul sought a religious order to take over here in 1974--an order because no one man could cover the 70 miles radius of German settlements--the German Jesuits accepted but only after they looked at a map. Mankato was about halfway from Milwaukee and Rapid City. The German Jesuits wanted to be missionaries to the Lakota people and here was their chance for a halfway post as well as a good mission on itself. They said **Yes**, and the rest is history. We are leaving the parish but we are staying on the reservation as one of our priority missionary assignments.

People ask: what will happen to you three? I will have a six month sabbatical for rest and attendance at a program in Santa Fe, New Mexico run by the Christian Brothers. In January of '09 I will get a new assignment or some tune up skills for a new assignment. My preference is retreat work.

Fr. Ted and Fr. Don will be moving to the former convent at St. Joseph the Worker. Fr. Don will have a 3 or 4 month sabbatical starting in July along with me, and Fr. Ted will be around for his weddings, Jesuit mission appeals and then disappear for a month for rest and retreat. Both Fr. Ted and Fr. Don will be Senior priests, that is, retired from an official ties to any one parish, but available for work all over as their health permits.

Finally today is a tribute to the Jesuits, but we Jesuits would be remiss if we did not say that this parish has responded to the leadership we gave. This parish has been a leader in Catholic education because of the initiative of Paul Lamm and Fr. Somereisen the founding pastor. This parish has been a leader in working with the poor--putting Elizabeth of Hungary, famous for her outreach to the poor in the first stained glass window. And the parish put in the other window St. Stephen, the first servant-leader of the church and the first defender of the faith to die a martyr. Service to the Poor and Defense of the Faith is what this parish stood for and will continue to stand for with the Incarnate Word Fathers coming. We Jesuits salute you for the way you have supported the Word of God in your midst and have faith that you will do so even more generously with the new energy the Incarnate Fathers will bring to the parish. God bless you all.

[New Pastor is Fr. Marciano Valera, IVE, age about 40, missionary to Guyana his ministry to this point; good with youth; bi-lingual.

Associate: Fr. Samuel Leonard, IVE, from Ohio; age 70; widower with 10 children; ordained 4 years and coming from being pastor at New Bedford, MA.]