

Our 1st Concern

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“How many seminaries, churches and monasteries will be closed in the coming years due to a lack of vocations? God knows.” This was Pope Francis' first concern in his address opening the general assembly of the Italian bishops' conference.

These days vocations are a big concern for all the religious organizations. In India also, we are familiar with those news of the closing seminaries for lack of vocations. Today this can be a big concern as I am just back from the work of recruiting. Fortunately, I got few boys to join Brotherhood. But the overall number of the formation house is very disappointing. That is one of the reasons I have decided to pen this article.

Our congregation is known for its quality of education. We initially worked very hard to bring that quality. We have created an unadvertised brand in the field of education. We are proud of it. We are completely focused to maintain that standard in the field of education. But is that only our mission? If there are no vocations, how can Montfort live forever? Is not inspiring, promoting, encouraging vocations our mission?

Theologically, calling of the disciples are similar in gospel according to Mt & Mk. It's a dramatical event or scene where the disciple followed Jesus, without knowing Him. (Mt 4;18-22). Jesus takes initiative to call them and they followed him unconditionally. In the gospel according to Lk, no call narrative but to peter. It was a miraculous event, where Simon Peter experiences miracles (Lk 4;31) and follows Jesus later. In John, it was an experiential event (1:35-42) disciples followed Jesus as they heard “behold, the lamb of God”. Then Jesus asks “what are you seeking?” they replying where are you staying? Jesus invites them to have an experience- “come and see”. Here those two disciples experienced first and they brought others to Jesus. This is very inspiring for me. Remember, the Samaritan women who experiences Jesus then brings whole village to Jesus. a perfect example of a missionary.

Here there are at least four aspects – 1. In our context disciples go to master to be his disciple but here the master takes first initiative to call his disciples. 2. Total commitment – they left everything and followed him – a radical path in following Jesus. 3. They are called for companionship – Jesus needed collaborators. Jesus

sends these unlearned men throughout the world. 4. There is also lot of diversity in the disciples.

Jesus, before He could talk or walk, as a missionary, was actively involved in God's mission. Attracted others to him like you, me and that of faith seekers (the Magi), rejection of the Messiah (on the part of King Herod), an encounter with the Lord (the Magi meet Jesus in Bethlehem), and even persecution (the slaughter of the innocents and the flight of the Holy Family). To become a religious Brother is not an achievement but this a gift from God. He knows our limitations, yet He gifted us this special gift.

Today we are all called to be missionaries. We are specially chosen to be men of God. Its our turn to attract others and lead them towards God. There are many chosen like you and me to follow this path of life. We need to trigger their minds to realise that God's call in them. If all of us do so, there could be nearly 100 of them in our houses of formation. I still remember the sentence of our Bro. Provincial, Bro. Pratap in one of the circulars **"each one catch one"** (regarding recruiting boys). If all of us are really interested in promotion of our province we can get plenty of vocations. Lets all try our best to recruit boys for our Province because this is also a mission of God. **"The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few' matt 9:37.**