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VOCATION CORNER: Facing your lions

The beauty that is present in art has inspired people since the beginning of time. This is especially true of religious art. One painting in particular that we can learn a lot from is "Daniel's Answer to the King" by Briton Rivière. This painting depicts the famous scene from the Old Testament when Daniel was thrown into the lion's den because of his refusal to turn his back on God. The artist made this very clear in that he painted Daniel facing a window and staring resolutely at the light coming through it (which represents the presence of God).



(Observer photo by S. Boehlefeld)

The most amazing part of this scene is what is behind him: seven prowling (and very large) lions! The reason this image is so inspiring is, in the face of very real threats, Daniel focuses on one thing: the presence of God. He turns his back to his fears and difficulties and doesn't al-

low them to distract him from God's love and protection. He understands that God's providence is more powerful than the most imminent threats or difficulties.

How does this apply to our lives? It is so easy to become consumed with thoughts of all of our day-to-day trials and in doing so to forget who is right there with us the whole time. Perhaps we want to follow God's call to become a priest, or a religious sister, or to enter into marriage but we are too focused on potential difficulties or pitfalls. If you find yourself in this position then it's time to turn your back on your lions so that you can experience the peace that comes from embracing the light!

— Father Keith Romke, Diocesan Director of Vocations; write to him at kromke@rockforddiocese.org.

Hearing a call?

About 50 men gathered at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Crystal Lake, Jan. 7, for the first of two Vianney Vocations dinners this month.

The group included, several young men who think they might be interested in the priesthood, along with "seminarians, priests, and one bishop," according to Father Keith Romke, diocesan vocations director.

A second dinner is scheduled Jan. 28, 5-8 p.m., at Christ the Teacher Parish, 512 Normal Road, DeKalb. The parish is also home to the Newman Center at Northern Illinois University. Bishop David Malloy will attend this dinner, too.

To sign up for the free gathering, call 815/399-4300, ext. 375, or send email to Father Romke at kromke@rockforddiocese.org.

Dinner may help you find an answer



(Photos provided)

Young men dine with Bishop David Malloy, priests and seminarians at a Vianney Vocations Dinner, Jan. 7, at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Crystal Lake.

RIGHT: Joe Grady (center), of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Algonquin, checks out how he looks in black, garnering approval from (left to right) fellow St. Margaret Mary parishioners Zach Cimaglio, Jim Read and Connor Orabutt (front).



YO FATHER

Q I go to confession at least once a month. Most of my friends in religious ed don't go as often, and some don't seem to go at all. A couple of my friends tell me I'm being OCD about it and I should get some help. I'm not sure how to tell them that they're the ones who need the help.

A Generally speaking, I think going to confession once a month is a great idea! It's a very good way to stay close to God and keep His grace alive in your life! The sacrament of reconciliation is a wonderful gift from God because it's His way of cleansing us of our sin and weakness. In His great love for us we are immersed in His Divine Mercy every time we celebrate that sacrament. So keep it up and don't let your friends

tell you differently.

As for trying to tell them that "they're the ones who need the help" let me suggest you do it in a very subtle and positive way.

The best way to tell them this is by your good example.

Share with them the blessings you see in your life by using this sacrament on a regular basis. Let your faith in God's grace shine forth for them to see. Often, when our friends see good things happening in our lives, they will want to imitate what we are doing so the more you can share the good fruits in your life with them the better.

Since you mention OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) let me also offer a comment on this struggle that some people deal with. I offer it as a general comment that some need to hear rather than presuming that this is your struggle. But it's worth mentioning since some people do struggle with this.

OCD is a very heavy cross. In the spiritual life it comes out in the form of scrupulosity. In this case the person becomes so focused on his or her sin that it

seems everything is a mortal sin and they can feel a need to go to confession all the time. In fact, some can feel as though they need to remember every last sin and offer every detail of their sins. And then after confession they may worry that they did not confess everything and feel a need to return to the confessional right away. This is a real burden.

What I have found to be helpful in this situation is for the person struggling with this to go to confession to the same priest each time rather than several different priests. This way the one priest, who is aware of the tendency to scrupulosity, can help that person to stay balanced in their confession. Over time they can start to be freed of their scrupulosity and begin experiencing the freedom that God wants for them. Our God is a God of abundant mercy and He wants us to know and experience that mercy.

Hope that helps clarify things. Keep up the good effort of practicing this wonderful sacrament!

YO Father questions are answered by Msgr. Aaron Brodeski. Send your questions to youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org.

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