



## Christ in Our Neighborhood

31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Prayer

Loving Father,  
help us to be instruments of Your will on earth. For the times  
we disrupt Your will, we ask forgiveness. Let us see  
Your hand in our lives each day. Make us Your instruments.  
Amen.

### Commentary

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:**  
**Malachi 1:14 - 2:2, 8-10**

We are in the third week of our vocations  
series: “All In!”

How many times have we heard Pope Francis  
berate priests, seminarians, bishops, and  
religious for not going “all in” with their  
response to God’s call?

On one occasion, His Holiness challenged new priests to be  
generous in their mercy. He pointed out the times when  
priests in confessionals were particularly hard on people  
— people who came to seek forgiveness. He said, “[Such  
hard-hearted priests should ask their bishop for a desk job  
and “never walk into a confessional again.”

Pope Francis has challenged priests and religious to be  
shepherds of the people. To make room for the wayward  
sheep and to get the smell of sheep on their vestments.

All of this, of course, stems from our God’s command that  
priests, prophets, and leaders of faith are to be the Lord’s  
instruments and not lords themselves. They have made a  
mockery of their vocation and have failed to give God the  
glory. They lost their will to go “all in.”

For this reason, God rebukes the priests in our First Reading.  
“You have turned aside from the way,” says the Prophet  
Malachi. Because of their lack of fidelity, God lays a curse  
upon the faith leaders.

### Question

What do you expect to find in a leader of faith?

### Commentary

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9, 13

Our First Reading revealed the way in which leaders of faith  
can abandon their calling. Instead of abiding in the love of the  
Lord and caring for His flock, they tend to their own needs.

St. Paul offers another way of shepherding. Although he may  
appear to be bragging about his service to the faithful in  
Thessalonica, he is reminding them that he was  
never there to harm them (Apparently, there  
were other pastors who began teaching the  
Thessalonians in ways that were contrary to the  
Gospel, and Paul was warning the faithful about  
them).

Paul reminds them that he and his companions  
were kind to their community. They were like  
“nursing mothers” and leaders “determined to  
share the Gospel.”

No one can argue this fact that St. Paul, through “toil and  
dudgerly,” would proclaim the Gospel throughout his ministry  
to the Gentile world. He died a martyr proclaiming the Gospel.  
And, he did this with gentleness and compassion, always giving  
thanks to God for those who received his word.

There are many sisters, priests, deacons, lay men and women  
leaders who follow Paul’s lead. With heartfelt compassion and  
dedication, they serve the Lord daily by serving the Church -  
the people of God.

### Question

Who is a dedicated leader of faith in your life?

This is the third of a four-week series,  
All In!

Information: [dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood](http://dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood)

## All In!

### Vocations Series: Part 3 of 4

## Commentary

### Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12

Never leaving an opportunity wasted, Pope Francis spoke to a visiting group of seminarians training for the priesthood. He urged them to avoid the trappings of the Church - the titles, the clerical vestments, etc.

He warned against “narcissism”, and reminded the seminarians that their “vocational journey” will only be possible by if they remain vigilant against this temptation.

In the Gospel, Jesus warns the people of faith to be wary of narcissistic religious leaders. Such leaders have turned in on themselves and have lost sight of the Lord’s flock.

While we can see some examples of narcissism in our hierarchy and religious communities, most of our priests and religious really do have dedicated and compassionate hearts for their parishioners and communities.

In the Diocese of Phoenix, we have a vibrant vocations culture. At this time, 42 men are in formation for the diocesan priesthood. We have about 30 communities of religious sisters and some 28 communities of religious brothers and priests serving.

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, there were 451 men to be ordained to the priesthood in 2022. As of that same year, there were 34,344 priests nationwide.

## Question

Do you know of a potential priest or sister in your community just waiting to be asked to respond to a vocation?

Have you asked him or her?

## This Week’s Task

Ask your pastor to have a vocation day where a priest, sister, and/or seminarian could share their story about how they found their calling. Consider inviting youth or young adults to the event.

## Group Prayer

*The group prays the following Prayer from the U.S. Bishops:*

Father, we’re your people,  
the work of your hands.

So precious are we in your sight that you  
sent your Son, Jesus.

Jesus calls us to heal the broken-hearted,  
to dry the tears of those who mourn, to give  
hope to those who despair,  
and to rejoice in your steadfast love.

We, the baptized, realize our call to serve.  
Help us to know how.

Call forth from among us priests, sisters,  
brothers and lay ministers.

With our hearts you continue to love your  
people.

**Continue with Psalm 131**

## Psalm

**In you, Lord, I have found my peace.**

O LORD, my heart is not proud,  
nor are my eyes haughty;  
I busy not myself with great things,  
nor with things too sublime for me.

**R. In you, Lord, I have found my peace.**

Nay rather, I have stilled and quieted  
my soul like a weaned child.  
Like a weaned child on its mother’s lap,  
so is my soul within me.

**R. In you, Lord, I have found my peace.**

O Israel, hope in the LORD,  
both now and forever.

**R. In you, Lord, I have found my peace.**

**Conclude with an Our Father**