



Into Your Hands

Archbishop Robert G. Casey

A friend of mine began discerning priesthood soon after his First Communion. From the age of eight, he dreamed of the day when he could be a priest and celebrate Mass. This was not me. I did not consider a vocation to the priesthood until the end of my junior year in high school. I had been asked by the pastor of my parish if I had ever thought about being a priest. My response? A resounding “no.”

However, after that moment, a spark ignited in my mind and heart. And as that spark began to grow brighter, giving light to the path forward, I saw that perhaps priesthood was the way forward for me. By the fall of my senior year in high school, I wrote a letter to my parents revealing my curiosity about priesthood. With my father’s recent death this past December, I came across that exact letter as my family sorted through my late parents’ memorabilia.

Reading that letter after so many years, I recalled how I had attended a weekend retreat sponsored by my Catholic high school. As part of the retreat, all of the students were asked to write a letter to their parents. The priest conducting the retreat told us that he would mail the letters upon our return home. This made me happy, knowing that I would have a few days to drop some hints to my mom and dad before the letter would arrive by mail, revealing to them my hopes for priesthood.

When the bus arrived at the high school from the retreat center, we were informed that our parents had been gathered in the chapel to receive us. After parents and sons were

seated together, the priest brought forth the stack of letters and declared he wouldn’t put them in the mail but would distribute them that night. I was in shock. Out the window went my plans to have a few days to prepare my parents. Suddenly, my father was sitting next to me holding that fateful letter in his hands.

My mother was at work that evening, so I instructed Dad not to open the letter until we were home so Mom could be there also. As parents throughout the chapel were crying and hugging their sons, I was in a state of panic. How would my parents respond when they learned their son was considering becoming a priest? I knew that my parents loved me and loved the Church, but I wondered what they might think. Would they support me?

My mother arrived home after her shift at work, and I handed her and Dad the letter and went to my bedroom to await the verdict. Soon there came a knock on my door and my parents offered me hugs and words of reassurance. They said they would support me. They encouraged me to listen to what God was calling me to do and seek a path that would make me joyful in life. They would neither push me towards priesthood nor pull me away from priesthood but would walk by my side as we discerned God’s will for me. Their unconditional love was the greatest gift my parents could have given me.

That journey, from October of 1984 to May of 1994 when I was ordained a priest, taught me some great life lessons. As I discerned the call to priesthood, I learned that a vocation is

not simply God calling someone, but the response of the one called to serve, and the endorsement of those being served. If God, the individual, and the immediate community are not all onboard, a vocation has little chance of survival.

Since my days as a seminarian, I have learned the importance of surrendering to God's will. My motto as a bishop is "Into Your Hands." We must place our discipleship into the hands of God for the people we have been called to serve. Especially when the path ahead seems unclear and doubts and uncertainties get in the way, we must trust that God knows best. Developing a life of prayer and learning how to recognize the signs offered by God become quite important to our vocation, helping us each day to surrender ourselves more willingly into God's hands.

Pedro Arrupe, S.J., a Spanish Jesuit priest and a man of great spiritual depth, once said, "More than ever I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life from my youth. And this is still the one thing I want. But now there is a difference; the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in God's hands."

In our surrender unto God, we come to discover that God already holds us. The prophet Isaiah assures us of God's commitment to us: "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" (Isaiah 49:16). In God's hands we find our safety and comfort; we are held with tenderness, secure and protected. In God's hands we can confidently say "yes" to His call.



A dark-themed banner with a gold border. At the top center is a circular portrait of Archbishop Robert Casey, a man with glasses wearing a purple clerical shirt. Flanking the portrait are two gold Maltese crosses. Below the portrait, the text reads: "Welcome, Archbishop Robert Casey. Sending you our prayers and best wishes." Further down, it says: "Thank you, Archbishop Dennis Schnurr. Wishing you peace and a joyful retirement." The bottom half of the banner features a photograph of six men in clerical attire standing in front of an ornate altar. Below the photo, the text reads: "The Oratory of Saint Philip Neri" and "THE CHURCHES OF OLD SAINT MARY & SACRED HEART".

A blue-themed banner with a white border. At the top center is a circular seal of Saint Michael the Archangel, showing a winged figure with a sword, surrounded by the text "SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL" and "FAMILY OF PARISHES". Below the seal, the text reads: "Saint Michael the Archangel" in a large serif font, followed by "family of parishes" in a smaller script font. A list of parishes follows: "Mary, Help of Christians in Fairborn † Sacred Heart in New Carlisle † St. Augustine in Jamestown † St. Brigid in Xenia † St. Luke in Beavercreek † St. Paul in Yellow Springs". At the bottom, it says: "offers prayerful best wishes to Archbishop Schnurr & a warm welcome to Archbishop Casey".