

# VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

## Ged Clapson interviews Archbishop Vincent Nichols

Archbishop: We call the Priesthood a Vocation, because it has its conviction and its strength in what each person perceives to be God's will for them and that personal perception is then ratified, strengthened, accepted by the Church. So it is a vocation from God that is sensed by an individual and formalised, accepted by the Church.

Q. How does a person recognise their vocation?

R. Well, look at it this way. When you are baptised you are drawn into the life of God. You are given a name. And when you are confirmed you are deepened into that belonging to the life of God and you are given a name. Those names point to us that God knows each one of us personally and that God has a plan for each one of us. But the business about finding your way through life is trying to listen hard enough so that you can hear just what God's call is for you. That's what a vocation is and to sense it you have to listen very hard, and to believe that there God is speaking to you. You must believe that God will speak to you and God will direct you, hint, give you nudges, indications as to what he wants of you.

Q. Is it easy to answer a call like the Priesthood?

R. Well, I didn't find it easy. I found it quite disturbing for quite a long time. The big step is when you then say "Well, I will go and talk to somebody about this. So I went and talked to the priest in the parish where I lived as a youngster. He was very encouraging actually, and he helped me to understand what this might mean and what I should do about it. But I did feel very uncomfortable to begin with. I'll tell you why. I used to go and watch Liverpool, and I used to go and stand on the cop and I used to think to myself "Why do I have this sense inside of me that I have got to do this? Why can't I just be like everybody else - just lost in the crowd? Why is there something special for me? I didn't want to be different. I just wanted to be anonymous. But that is not what God wants us to be. God wants us to be ourselves, individuals, working together with others to build his kingdom.

Q. You have talked about some of the difficulties about accepting a vocation. What about the joys?

R. Oh, it is a wonderful life, partly because I know that what I am doing is what God wants. This, in the end, is why I find that most days I am content. It is not that the work makes me content - that is very satisfying - but sometimes it is very difficult and very upsetting - but deep down I think 'this is where I should be' so I can go to sleep OK each night. But in the work, too, you really do get to share what people live, and you can walk with people, accompany them - this family, that family, this group of people, this parish and you are very, very trusted.

## TASKS

1. What guidance does Archbishop Nichols give to a person who wants to discover his/her vocation?
2. Should young people be encouraged to consider a vocation to the Priesthood or Religious Life? Give reasons for your answer.