

Homily based on the readings from July 8, 2025 (Genesis 32.23-32;  
Matthew 9.32-38)

“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” It is an interesting coincidence that we have heard this sentence twice at Mass over past three days – once on Sunday in the Gospel of Luke and once today in the Gospel of Matthew. From our own perspective, this statement could not be more timely. As most of you know, the Diocese of Norwich – our local affiliate of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church – is *desperately* in need of laborers for the harvest. Although three wonderful young priests were ordained just over a year ago, we currently have no men in formation for the priesthood. Given the amount of time it takes for somebody to get through seminary, it is entirely possible that Richard Reidy – our much beloved new bishop – will never have the opportunity to ordain *anyone* to the priesthood before he retires.

It is no wonder, then, that our diocese – beginning when Archbishop Coyne was still serving as administrator – has been *intensely* focused on fostering priestly vocations. As you may be aware, there is now a priest – Father Jeffrey Ellis – whose full-time ministry is to serve as the diocesan vocations director. In fact, Father Ellis will be celebrating and preaching at a number of Masses here at Saint Brendan the Navigator over the next two weekends.

While it is encouraging that the diocese is taking concrete steps to deal with this issue, it is important to remember that this responsibility cannot rest on the shoulders of a single clergyman – or even *all* the clergy of the diocese. Potential priests do not emerge spontaneously from some sort of mythical “vocationland,” but grow up – as all of us do – within a human family. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters – everyone plays a part in creating the conditions through which young people identify the calling God has chosen for them. It is essential that we take this obligation seriously – through our words, through our actions, and – above all else – through our prayers.

From a practical perspective, the way for us to have the greatest *impact* is to give witness to what brings us the greatest *joy*. All of us are abundantly familiar with the hollow counterfeits the world offers in place of authentic happiness – self-indulgence, self-importance, self-righteousness. In fact, true contentment can never come through seeking our own fulfillment, but only through looking beyond ourselves – through giving ourselves *totally* to the service of our brothers and sisters and to the worship our Lord and Savior. As Christians, we have an obligation to offer a *loving* and *vibrant* alternative to the dominant narrative – not just for the sake of fostering priestly vocations, but for the healing of our society.

And so, as we continue to pray for new laborers for the harvest, remember that no matter what happens – no matter how bad the numbers or the finances or the forecasts appear to be – our Lord will always provide us with what we truly need. As long as we remain faithful to *him*, we will never be “sheep without a shepherd.”