

Homily based on the readings from June 13, 2026 (1 Kings 19.19-21;
Matthew 5.33-37)

As you all know, we take a few moments – at basically every Mass – to join together in praying our diocesan prayer for vocations. In a very practical sense, we are asking the Lord to take care of the immediate needs of our local community – because we *need* more priests, and we *need* them as soon as possible. Beyond the imminent crisis, though, it is always important to lay the foundation for the next generation of ministry. Even if we had enough priests to handle the current workload – which, in our case, we most certainly do *not* – a living and vital Church constantly requires renewal and regeneration.

In our first reading, we see the beginning of such a generational shift – from the renowned and courageous Prophet Elijah to his new and untested successor, the man who would become the Prophet Elisha. The emphasis today is not so much on the call itself, but on the *sacrifice* Elisha makes in preparation for his public ministry. Not only does he

leave behind the security of his former life, but he makes absolutely sure he can never return – burning the equipment and slaughtering the oxen that were necessary for his work. (It is difficult to say how great Elisha's material resources actually were, but apparently a single yoke of oxen could plow an acre in a day – so, with twelve yokes, he must have owned a substantial amount of land.)

The sorts of sacrifices people make today, of course, are typically somewhat different. Not many of our potential seminarians have an agricultural background, and – even if they did – that kind of work now relies more heavily on machines and technology. Nevertheless, anyone who is preparing to dedicate his life to the Lord must still give up a tremendous amount – even in the earliest stages of discernment. When young men prepare to enter seminary, they set aside careers, homes, and relationships – as well as a great deal of their own personal autonomy. By all accounts, going to seminary is not an unpleasant experience, but it requires a substantial and irretrievable commitment – with the prospect of ordained ministry at least seven years down the road.

When it comes to the priesthood, of course, the sacrifices do not stop with ordination – in fact, they are only getting started. The ministry of a priest, while uniquely fulfilling, requires an exhaustive, lifelong commitment. It is not simply a job or a career, but an all-encompassing, all-consuming *vocation*. As the Catechism reminds us:

Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to “the affairs of the Lord,” [priests] give themselves entirely to God and to men. (1579)

In other words, priests are not just following in the footsteps of Elijah and Elisha, but of Christ himself.

The essential nature of the priesthood, of course, in no way diminishes the contributions the rest of us make to the Church. Even under the best of circumstances, no more than one Catholic out of five hundred will be called to this particular ministry. Nevertheless, we *all* have an obligation to offer our unceasing support – both to the *young* men who

are considering the priesthood and to the *older* ones who are already living it – with our *words*, with our *actions*, but above all with our *prayers*.