



# SCIVIAS

KNOW THE WAYS OF THE LORD

with Fr. Michael Zimmerman

## PART III: NO GREATER LOVE

EPISODES XIX - XXVII



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## WELCOME & HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

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Welcome to Part III of Scivias: Know the ways of the Lord. Hopefully by now you know that I'm Fr. Michael Zimmerman, assistant director at Vocations Boston and that I've been your guide throughout this series. But I also hope that you've gotten to know yourself and who God has made

you to be in Part I; and you've discovered some of the deepest desires that God has placed in your heart in Part II.

We've previously distinguished the priesthood from the diaconate and from consecrated life, but in the third part of the series, we'll finally be taking a closer look at the priesthood itself. We'll see how a priest is a father through his role as priest, a prophet, and a king. After a brief explanation of Ignatian discernment, you'll be invited to reflect on how you're called to lay down your life in love – to recognize what is your vocation.

"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." – John 15:13

As before, here is my advice on how to make the most of the Scivias series:

**1. Watch the videos.** The videos are an important visual aid, and will help you appreciate the joy, beauty, and wonder of pursuing God's will in a way that my words cannot convey by themselves. They're only 5 minutes each, so there's no reason not to watch them.

**2. Use this guidebook.** You can binge watch the videos if you want, but give yourself time to ponder them as well. This guidebook contains a summary of each episode to remind you of what was discussed, but then also includes reflection questions and scripture passages for your prayer. In case you want to go deeper, there are additional resources provided for each episode.

**3. Pray.** I encourage you to spend 30-60 minutes (all at once or broken up) in prayer with each episode's questions found in this guidebook, ideally in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. A relationship can't be rushed. BE REAL with God. Don't just say the pious answer you think God wants to hear. Be real. Tell God the truth, reveal your heart to him. Tell God what's going on in your life and what you think and feel. God wants to meet you where you're at, so you've got to be honest with Him and yourself.

A consistent prayer life is important for real discernment. Regardless of how long you spend with the reflection questions and Scripture that I suggest, if you really want to seriously discern God's will and your Vocation, you should spend about at least 30 minutes of mental/conversational/silent prayer with God. A daily rosary for the intention of your vocation and daily mass at least once a week in addition to Sundays is also highly recommended. As you grow in prayer and perhaps desire religious life, you may decide to introduce one of the Liturgy of the Hours to your prayer. If this would be a major jump for you, start slow and small – consistency is more important than intensity.

**4. Outside help.** Don't get stuck inside your own head. Talk to your local priest, a trusted spiritual mentor, or Vocations Director. Discuss what comes up from this series with them, it'll help you clarify your thoughts and feelings and God's voice. Conversation will help make it all the more real for you so that you don't think you're going crazy and to help keep you accountable to God's voice.

For access to the videos:

[Scivias Playlist](#)

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# PRIEST, PROPHET, KING

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## EPISODE XIX



### Summary

In the Old Testament, the glory of the Lord was revealed to Israel in three major institutions. The high priest – like Melchizedek or Moses' Brother Aaron, the prophet – like Elijah or Isaiah, and the King – like king David or Solomon. God blessed and spoke to and led his people through these positions. But Jesus Christ is the perfect Messiah, He brings them all together.

Because priests act in persona Christi (in the person of Christ), they share in his role as priest, prophet, and king – called the 3 munera. But it's not just for priests. Actually, priests act in persona Christi capitis, in the person of Christ the head; and every baptized Christian becomes a member of Christ's body, and shares in Jesus Christ's role as priest, prophet, and king.

As priest you are called to sanctify your life and the world around you. You're like Adam cultivating the earth and making it a better place, or Abraham or Moses interceding and praying for sinners, and you can bless others like a parent blesses their child. As prophet you witness to God with your words and actions, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with coworkers, friends, and family. Maybe you teach catechesis or simply by living uprightly and with charity towards others, you reveal God's presence in the world. As king, you order and govern your life well. God has entrusted you with time, talent, treasure, and expects a return on His investment. So you are called to regulate and govern your life well and the things entrusted to you.

The baptismal munera are for you and your relationship to the world. But the ministerial priesthood is ordered to your benefit, that's why it's called ordained ministry, it is ordered to the service of the Christian people. The priest sanctifies you, as prophet he preaches and teaches you, and as king he administers the Church's resources in your parish and diocese. With great power, comes great responsibility. Or rather, the priest has special authority through the three munera, because he has responsibility to serve the Church.

I encourage you to pray and reflect on how you are called to live out being a priest, prophet, and king in your state of life.

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### Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to be a member of Christ's body? What power or authority does that give you? How should that affect how you live?
2. Priests sanctify, bless, offer sacrifice, and intercede in prayer. How can/do you act as a priest?
3. Prophets speak reveal God's presence by speaking his word and acting on his behalf. How can/do you act as a prophet?

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4. Kings govern, rule, lead, create order and prosperity. How can/do you act as a king in your life the world around you? What has God entrusted to you: time, talents, treasures, family, work or school, friends, etc.?
5. How have ordained priests helped you through their ministry as priest, prophet, and king?

### Pray with Scripture

Read Hebrews 1:1-3. How are Jesus' ministry as priest, prophet, and king revealed here?

Read Hebrews 2:5-18. Thank Jesus for freeing you from the domain of death and making you a heir to the kingdom of God as a son or daughter.

Read Mark 6:4 and Luke 4:43. Ask Jesus for the grace to be prophet at home and abroad.

Read 1 Peter 2:9-11. Ask Jesus for the grace to witness to others through a virtuous life.

Read Revelation 1:4-8. Ask Jesus to come in His glory. Marantha!

Read Isaiah 60-62. Contemplate God's goodness and His salvation.

### Resources

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium. "The Laity", nn. 30-38. <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/dogmatic-constitution-on-the-church-1513>

Catechism of the Catholic Church. "The Lay Faithful" nn. 897-913. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P2A.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P2A.HTM)

### Notes

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# THE FATHERHOOD OF THE PRIEST

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## EPISODE XX



### Summary

The people of God have a longstanding devotion to calling their priests "Father", Padre, Mon Pere. We call the Pope, Papa from the Greek Pappas which means father, to the ancient desert monks calling their head of communities the Hebrew word for Father - "abba", which we still use today as abbot. Christians have long called their priests, "Father", but why is that? How is a priest father?

Let's look at the most obvious things that a priest does - the celebration of the Sacraments. In the baptismal font, the womb of the Church, the priest begets new sons and daughters of God. Like a Father, he blesses

his children, a man and woman's new life together in marriage. He consoles and strengthens them in their suffering by an anointing, accompanying them at the hour of death to meet their Father in Heaven. In the Sacrament of Confession, God is a Father, who using the priests' arms to embrace and forgives them, like the Father in the parable racing to His prodigal Son to restore him to his proper place in the family of God.

God is most perfectly Father because he eternally begets, or fathers, the Son. The Father is the Father because he begets the Son. Through the Eucharist, the priest also generates Christ upon the altar, like Mary bore Jesus in time, and the Father begets the Son from all eternity. The Father gives the Son, life to the world, and the priest gives Jesus' Body and Blood to nourish his people. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the life of the Church and the fatherhood of the priest, a most perfect reflection of God's Fatherhood.

Pray on these questions. A priest's living out of his fatherhood, his connection to the Father - like your discernment of how He's calling you to fatherhood - depends on a life of prayer, which we'll discuss next time.

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### Reflection Questions

1. How have you experienced God the Father's love? How has he provided for you and protected you, strengthened you, lifted you up when you fell?
2. In which of the sacraments do you experience the Father's love the most?
3. Has any priest been a father to you in any way? How?

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4. What is the difference between biological, natural, and spiritual fatherhood? Which is the greatest?
5. How is God calling you to be a father to His children?

### Pray with Scripture

Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-17. Thank God for those who have given you the faith.

Read Ephesians 3:14-21. Kneel before the Father and pray that you too might be a spiritual father like St. Paul.

Read John 10:14-38. John 14:5-21. Luke 10:21-22. Contemplate how Jesus reveals the Father's love. Ask Jesus to reveal the Father to you.

Read John 1:1-18. 1 John 3:1-9. Romans 8:5-17. Ask for the grace to live as a child of God.

Read 2 Samuel 7:8-29. Reflect on God's promises and thank Him for his fidelity as Father.

Read Genesis 1:27-28. Matthew 28:18-20. Ask Jesus to send you to father many children.

### Resources

Why Celibacy?: Reclaiming the Fatherhood of the Priest by Fr. Carter Griffin

Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, "Celibacy and Human Values", nn. 50-59. Encyclical by Paul VI on Priestly Celibacy. [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_24061967\\_sacerdotalis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis.html)

### Notes

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# A PROPHET TO PROFIT

## EPISODE XXI



### Summary

"If I don't pray, I've got nothing to say". A priest is a prophet because he speaks God word in his preaching and his teaching, but without a deep spiritual pool to draw from, his words will be shallow.

At his ordination, a priest promises to "maintain and deepen a spirit of prayer that is proper to" the priesthood. This includes interceding for others, uniting himself to Jesus, and celebrating the Sacraments, but most explicitly this means the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Liturgy of the Hours takes place five times throughout the day, in order to sanctify each hour of the day and season of the year, helping us enter into the mystery of the mass and the life and rhythm of the Church's seasons more deeply.

Ancient Jews would pray the psalms at set times throughout the day. Early Christian monks kept this tradition by praying all 150 psalms each week during

set times. Over time, other hymns, prayers, and readings from Scripture have been added, the cycle expanded to 4 weeks, and matched to reflect the liturgical seasons of the year, giving us the present Liturgy of the Hours.

Christians praying the Liturgy of the Hours share in one common prayer the whole world over praising God and interceding for the Church and world. Anyone discerning the priesthood should try praying at least one of the hours each day (Night Prayer is the shortest). The books involved can be expensive and confusing, so an app like ibreviary is a good place to start.

Besides participating in the prayer of the Church, we need a personal relationship with Jesus. The Eucharist is the beating heart of Church, so besides daily mass, spending time with the Lord in Eucharistic adoration during a holy hour is indispensable in the life of the priest, providing the grace that will sustain him. Jesus present in the Eucharist will also help you in your discernment, so get on your knees and open your heart to the Lord and beg for his help. The rosary also helps us review our lives and reflect on Jesus' life with His mother Mary. She's a mother of all Christians, and all priests too. Mary teaches us to say 'yes' to God in all things.

While all these prayer practices are a large part of the life of a priest and can be helpful in your discernment, don't start doing all of them right away. If you don't pray at all, that would be counterproductive for you, so start with small with just one of these suggestions, and work up from there as your desire for God grows.

### Reflection Questions

1. Do you feel like you should pray more? What does "more" mean? Have you asked Jesus what he wants your prayer to look like?

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2. When, where, and how do you pray best? What helps you grow in faith, hope, and love with God?
3. Have you ever heard God's word spoke to you in Scripture or the Liturgy of the Hours? Have you prayed enough with Scripture for that to happen? Have you asked for the Holy Spirit to enliven Scripture for you?
4. The Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church - Is it the center of your life? What would that look like for you?
5. How's your relationship with your Mother Mary? How can you grow in that? How can ask for her help in discernment?

## Pray with Scripture

Read Luke 11:1-13. Ask Jesus to teach you how to pray with confidence.

Read Mark 14:32-42. Ask Jesus for the grace to keep watch with Him and to say yes to His Father's Will.

Read Luke 24:13-33. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus in his Word and in the Eucharist.

Read Mark 9:14-29. Ask Jesus to help you believe and to open your mouth and ears in prayer.

Read Ephesians 3:14-19. Pray that you (and everyone!) might know the depths of God's love.

In the morning, pray with the church Luke 1:68-29. In the evening, join Mary in praise: Luke 1:46-55. On Friday, pray psalm 51.

## Resources

*Liturgy of the Hours Online:* <https://www.ibreviary.com/m2/breviario.php>

*The Everyday Catholic's Guide to the Liturgy of the Hours* by Daria Sockey

*Tutorial on the Liturgy of the Hours:* <http://prayer.rosaryshop.com/discoveringPrayer.pdf>

## Notes

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# FOR THE KINGDOM

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## EPISODE XXII



### Summary

Jesus teaches that His kingdom is very different from worldly views of power: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. It shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:25-28).

In the divine logic, a king is called to be a servant. Similarly, the Son most perfectly reveals the Father by being the Son, because the Son listens to His Father, and does His will. If a priest is to be a good King and reveal the Father, he must learn that by first being a loyal servant and a faithful son – a virtue he learns through his third promise: obedience to his bishop and the Church.

Obedience means recognizing that God’s plans are always greater than our own. We often have to obey

rather than insist on our way. Obedience means I recognize it’s not all about me. I have to make room for God, I have to listen more than I speak - the Latin word for “to obey” has a root meaning “to hear”. I have to trust, that the mission of the Church is in God’s hands; that the Church is being led by the Holy Spirit, which works incarnationally, in lives of others, even in sinners like me and you and especially in the authority of the Bishop. Obedience means I have to say, “he must increase, and I must decrease”.

This might mean I need practice saying “no” to myself, that I need to put to death some of my passions, which is called ‘mortification’. Examples of mortification includes fasting from social media, meals, or certain types of food, or sleeping on the floor or taking a cold shower. These little penances can strengthen our willpower to say ‘no’ to ourselves. We may pick our penances or crosses, but this is just training for the real cross, the ones we don’t pick but are rather given to us.

In the Our Father prayer, we say “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”. In Heaven, God’s will is done in all things. In order to prepare our souls for heaven, to make His kingdom reign on earth, and to be fruitful in our ministry, we have to seek to obey His Word as it is revealed to us. This is at the heart of responding to our vocation, and indeed even the very heart of our faith – to be faithful and obedient sons of a loving father.

Seek to be obedient in your everyday life, to your parents, teachers, supervisors, or even just the needs and requests of those around you. Obedience to others will make you more just king, doing the Lord’s will, giving your life in service.

### Reflection Questions

1. What happens when you’re in control or a position of authority? Do you expect other people to listen to you, or do you listen to other people’s needs?
2. Are you most likely to obey yourself, God, or other people?

(continued)

3. Does your body obey you, or do you obey your passions? Which of the passions (or seven deadly sins) are hardest to resist for you?
  - Gluttony: Can you let others have the last piece of food? Or can you skip dessert?
  - Pride: Do you always need to get in the last word? Can you let others have their way?
  - Wrath: Can you take an insult without lashing out? Or let others cut you off in traffic?
  - Envy: Can you be happy for others' success even if you're left out? What happens when you're forgotten by a group of friends?
  - Lust: Can you resist sexual sin? Do you lead people on by flirting?
  - Sloth: Will you help someone in need, even if you're inconvenienced or just looking to relax?
  - Greed: Do you buy more than you need? Or can even afford?
4. What mortifications or penances might help combat these struggles?
5. Do you turn to God for help with obedience and humility?

### Pray with Scripture

Read Colossians 3:1-17. Ask Jesus to put to death any vices and put on any virtues that stand out from these lists.

Read Ephesians 5:1-20. Ask for the grace to live in the light and be obedient to the spirit and not to the flesh.

Read Romans 5:12-21. Romans 7:14-25. Thank Jesus for setting us free from slavery and death.

Read John 14:15-31; 1 John 2:3-6; 1 John 5:1-5. Praise Jesus for revealing the Father through loving obedience.

1 Samuel 15:20-31. Ask the Lord for the grace to offer a pleasing sacrifice to Him.

Read John 13:1-17. Ask the Lord how He is calling you to imitate Him in service.

### Resources

*"The superior is to be obeyed not because he is prudent, or good, or qualified by any other gift of God, but because he holds the place and the authority of God" - from a letter by St. Ignatius of Loyola, SJ To the Members of the Society in Portugal: On Perfect Obedience.*

<https://www.library.georgetown.edu/woodstock/ignatius-letters/letter25>

*The Imitation of Christ by Thomas À Kempis*  
Accessible here: [shorturl.at/nuzK1](https://shorturl.at/nuzK1)

### Notes

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# FEELINGS

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## EPISODE XXIII



### Summary

The appetites of the spiritual life can be a lot like our hunger for food. Just like we want certain foods in certain situations or depending on how hungry we are, certain things can be more or less appealing based on our spiritual state. We should not only pay attention to our desires, but also our spiritual state at the time. This is part of what St. Ignatius of Loyola calls the discernment of spirits.

The two spiritual states, or spirits to pay attention to are: 1. A spirit of consolation, and 2. a spirit of desolation. Consolation is when I feel consoled by God, I feel close to him, I feel his warmth, his love, when it seems like things are going well in the spiritual life. Desolation is when I feel alone, abandoned by God, prayer feels futile, cold, dry, or distant.

Sometimes consolation or desolation result from what we're doing - am I praying or not; or am I in state of sin or not? But oftentimes God also gives us one or the other because that's what we need in that moment, whether we want it or not.

Being aware of consolation and desolation is essential when trying to discern based on our attractions or desires, because just like I might only like cheese sandwiches when I'm super hungry, I might only feel attracted to the priesthood, or marriage, or whatever when I'm in consolation or desolation.

For example, when I'm feeling close to God, and I feel inspired by His love to think, "Wow! The priesthood would be awesome, I'd really love to do that" – That's a sign that that is inspired by God. But when I feel far from God, in desolation – chances are I won't still feel attracted to the priesthood, but rather all my fears and objections will well up.

What comes up during a time of desolation can still reveal what's on our hearts, which is worth praying about, but desolation is not the time to make decisions. It's like being on a boat in a storm, you can't steer the boat during the storm, you need to weather it out and wait for clear skies and smooth sailing.

Because we have short memories, it's best to keep a journal to record how we're feeling spiritually and what we feel drawn towards or afraid of and why, and then try see if there are patterns over time. Meeting with a spiritual director with what comes up also helps you not deceive or confuse yourself with too much navel gazing.

Hopefully this short summary of St. Ignatius' second way of discernment will help you become more aware of your emotions and desires, and of your spiritual state to help you makes sense of those feelings.

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Reflection Questions

- 1. Have you ever experienced spiritual consolation? Spiritual Desolation? How is that different from feeling happy or sad?
- 2. When you feel spiritual consolation, what have you desired? When you feel spiritual desolation, what do you cling to or run away from?
- 3. Have there been persistent trends in this? Have you asked God what they mean?

Pray with Scripture

Read Proverbs 3:5-6. Tell the Lord what vocation you think you are most likely called to, and ask the Lord to confirm, clarify, or challenge that.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-23. Meditate especially on verse 21. Are there any attractions or repulsions to a vocation that you haven't brought to Jesus?

Read James 3:13-18. Ask the Lord for the Wisdom that comes from above.

Read Romans 11:33-36. Praise God for His plan for you.

Read 1 Peter 1:3-13. Thank Jesus for His plan for you, even if you don't know it yet.

Read Judges 6:36-40. Gideon felt the need to test the Lord even though he knew God's will. Ask for the grace to trust and do what he reveals.

Resources

*Discerning the Will of God: An Ignatian Guide to Christian Decision Making* by Fr. Timothy Gallagher

Notes

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# MIND OVER MATTER

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## EPISODE XXIV



### Summary

In this episode, we discuss the first and third modes of Ignatian Discernment. While a clear voice or vision is rare, this is the first way St. Ignatius recommends discerning. If God is explicitly telling you to do something (and it's in line with the Church as our guide), just do it. But if you don't get clear signs or visions speaking to you, St. Ignatius recommends the second way, the way of the Holy Spirit speaking to our heart, the way of our will and desire, which we discussed last time. But maybe, even after trying discernment of spirits for a while, we still don't have clarity. In this case, St. Ignatius recommends the third way – that of the mind, the way of logical reasoning, or

the intellect. If we invite God in, He can reveal himself and His will through our rational thoughts.

This can be done in several ways. The first is to make a list of pros and cons for option A, and pros and cons for Option B. Marriage vs Priesthood might be too big of a question, but it could be "Should I enter seminary this year or not? Should I break up with this person I'm dating or not?" Or conversely, "should I marry them or not?" And then list the advantages and disadvantages to each with God's help. Very often, there is an objectively better choice that becomes clear when we put pen to paper in this way. If it is clear, we should act with confidence and entrust it to the Lord, even if our emotions are still fearful. A spiritual director can provide a good sounding board for this too.

We can also use our minds by engaging our imagination. Imagine yourself on your death bed: how would you have wanted to live your life? What should to do to be at peace before God in judgment in heaven? What would you want to have offered Him with your life?

Take some time to consider how you might use St. Ignatius three modes of discernment to help you achieve clarity of your desires, your thoughts, and God's voice.

### Reflection Questions

1. What games did you play as a boy?
2. What is your favorite movie? Why are you drawn to it?
3. Who do you admire as a hero?
4. Have you ever wanted to save the world? How would you do it now?
5. Do you see your life as an adventure? Are you bored? Are you truly living or merely surviving?

*(continued)*

6. What would the 10-year-old version of you think of the present you now?

## Pray with Scripture

Read [2 Corinthians 11:21-12:10](#); [Philippians 3:1-21](#). Ask the Lord for the grace to live heroically and be great like St. Paul.

Read [Hebrews 11:1-12:3](#). Which of these great figures inspires you? Thank the Lord for their witness and ask for their intercession to live by faith.

## Resources

*Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge

## Notes

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# LOVE THAT DIRTY WATER

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## EPISODE XXV



### Summary

In this episode, I share how I discerned a call to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Boston. Knowing my academic interests, my family all asked, “why not the Jesuits?”. Or I thought, why not the religious brothers who ran the campus ministry at my college? Or why not the Salesians, whose charism I loved ever since serving on mission with them? Why not the Franciscans, many of whom I admired? Besides the specific congregations, I had a great love for the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. I also felt like community was essential for me. But despite these reasons I thought I would be called to a religious community, every time I asked God about it, He clearly responded that I was to become a priest for the Archdiocese of Boston.

It was a journey that took several years to really understand. First, I discovered I wasn’t called to be a religious brother, but rather a priest. I had regularly visited and for a few weeks lived with a community of brothers, which I loved, but I felt called to be a

spiritual Father, especially through the celebration of the Sacraments, which meant priesthood.

I also had an image of being drawn to “the backbone” of the Church, which I understood as the structure and center of life of the Church. Most people live their faith in their parishes, organized under a diocese, so diocesan ministry made sense.

And lastly, I felt called to specifically serve the people of Boston. Boston is a place that I love and I hate at the same time, which GK Chesterton defines as true patriotism. Not vain optimism that sees everything with rose tinted glasses, nor pessimism which despairs and despises, but true patriotism effectively desires the good, which means despising and working to change that which is bad, but loving it so much to believe it worth changing.

Also, my roots are in Boston, it’s where I’ve come to faith and received the Sacraments and grown in holiness. One time while praying at St. Don Bosco relics in Turin, I asked Jesus, “there are many saints in this city - Don Bosco, Madre Mazzarello, Don Cafasso, Domenico Savio, Pier Giorgio Frassati, and the list goes on - but where am I called to be a saint?” And the response I heard was in Boston. That’s where I’ve been fed, and it’s where, by serving as a priest, I’ll continue to grow in holiness. Many religious priests live and serve in Boston, but they move and serve where their community goes. As a Boston priest, I will always live and serve among the saints of this city.

I invite you to pray that God will give you clarity, about where on the “where” you are called to holiness.

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### Reflection Questions

1. Where have you come to faith and how have you grown in it? Who were the people, the communities, the events, the places that have shaped you?

(continued)

2. What is your current faith community and how do you grow in holiness? Who are your friends and family in faith?
3. Where do you think God calling you to be great saint?
4. Do you find it hard to stay put? Are you always looking for novelty? Why?
5. Do you feel more called to plant seeds or help foster and grow them?

### Pray with Scripture

Read Jonah 1:1-3. Read Acts 16:6-10. Where do you think you are called to be a missionary? (It may be in your own backyard).

Read Luke 9:51-56. Ask Jesus to make you firm and resolute in your mission.

Read Genesis 12:1-3. Ask the Lord to bless you wherever he sends you.

Read John 14:1-4. Ask Jesus for the grace to trust that He has a place prepared for you.

Read Luke 6:43-49. Where are you called to build a foundation and bear fruit?

Read Isaiah 30:15-21. Do you feel that your situation is preventing you from holiness? Ask the Lord to clarify whether the problems are the situation itself, or are simply coming from within your heart. There's a difference between running away from problems, and running after the Lord.

Read Jeremiah 29:4-14. Pray to trust in the Lord's plans for your peace and prosperity.

### Resources

*"Chapter 1: Of the several kinds of Monks."* *The Rule of St. Benedict*  
<http://archive.osb.org/rb/text/rbejms1.html#1>

*The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way* by Anonymous, R. M. French (Translator)  
[https://jbburnett.com/resources/french\\_way\\_of\\_a\\_pilgrim.pdf](https://jbburnett.com/resources/french_way_of_a_pilgrim.pdf)

### Notes

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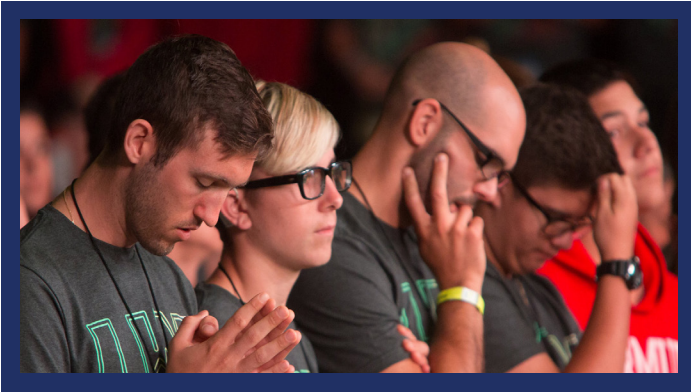
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# FREEDOM TO LOVE

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## EPISODE XXVI



### Summary

In Catholic Theology, we believe that our cooperation is essential for salvation. It is of course 100% God's grace, but he still gives me the freedom to resist and reject that grace, or to embrace and let it permeate my life. The same is true with our vocations, God has a plan for each one of us, but he gives us the freedom to accept it or not. Ultimately, He's the one who knows what's best for us and the world, but even once we know God's will, we have to choose to do it.

I've previously mentioned my mission trip with the Salesians in Panama, but maybe the most important vocational moment for me came during the training in New Jersey. There were several other volunteers there and one girl in particular caught my attention. She was beautiful, funny, smart, and we hit it off right away. Between the training and summer camp we helped run, we spent long hours together for several weeks.

Now I was really confused by all this. I was in college still, but I had already broken up with my girlfriend and discerned that God was calling me to celibacy,

so I had stopped dating. But I could see myself in a long-term relationship with this girl and it seemed like a good thing. So, I'd pray at night, "God, don't let me do anything stupid" and then I'd hang out and be flirty with this girl by day. I was very confused, and was begging God for clarity, but I was so mixed up that my prayer one day eventually was almost just like a grunt – "Ugh God, what do I have to do?!"

And in response, all of a sudden, it felt like I was in an open field and could go any direction, or was holding balancing scales. And in that I heard God say, "This is your life, you're free to do with it whatever you want".

Now, I still knew what He wanted. And I knew that while a relationship with this girl sounded great, I knew it wouldn't satisfy my soul in the long term. But it changed my response to my vocation from something I was just going along with. No longer as it simply: "OK, God told me this, so I'll do it". But it became a free act of will, it was also now my choice. Which meant it became an act, and a response, of love. You can't have a true free act of love without engaging the free will.

And so this trial strengthened me, because it became both God's will and my own will too. It took time to get over the emotional attachment to this girl, and since then I've formed other attachments and faced other trials, but each time God has called me back, and I've grown in a deeper understanding of myself, and the sense of my vocation has grown stronger.

If you're having doubts, or going through a time of trial, very often God is inviting you to go deeper, to make it an act of your choosing, to make the gift of yourself an act of love.

## Reflection Questions

1. Do obstacles, trials, or temptations mean that you should change your course of action? What is God inviting you to do with them?
2. Do you just want God to tell you what to do? Why? Are you more concerned with not wanting to make a mistake in following God's will, than focusing on just following Him? Do you want God to make the decision easy and not painful?
3. What is the most loving thing you've ever done? Was it by accident or by choice?

## Pray with Scripture

Read Matthew 19. Pray Jesus for the grace to appreciate the goods of marriage and family but still offer them freely if He is calling.

Read Philippians 3:7-21. Tell Jesus that you desire Him above all else.

Read Luke 9:57-62. Ask for the grace not look back upon whatever your vocation will have you give up.

Read Wisdom 3:1-9. Ask the Lord for the grace of perseverance in times of trial.

## Resources

The Suscipe Prayer by St. Ignatius of Loyola:

Receive, O Lord, all my liberty.  
Take my memory, my understanding, and my entire will.  
Whatever I have or hold, You have given me;  
I give it all back to You  
and surrender it wholly to be governed by your will.  
Give me only your love and your grace,  
and I am rich enough and ask for nothing more.

As we approach the end of the Scivias series, consider making a several day Ignatian discernment retreat (at least a weekend). Ideally these are done in silence with a retreat director who can meet with you each day to give you meditations to pray with. This time of silence and prayer can help you gain clarity and make resolutions for next steps. There are many retreat house available for this, here is one featured in the Scivias series.

<https://www.omvusa.org/st-joseph-retreat-house/>

## Notes

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# THIS IS THE END

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## EPISODE XXVII



### Summary

When preparing couples for marriage, I ask them to do an activity. They each get a sheet of paper, and each write 5 things that they view are absolutely essential to their marriage. Things they couldn't imagine living without. Family, Faith, Communication, Trust, Physical intimacy, humor; I've even heard "sports"! But they write five, and then they have to narrow it down to four, and write on the back why they can live without that one, or why they value the other four more. And then then narrow it down to three, and say why, to two, to one last thing. Then they share their responses with each other and me. And then I ask, "why do you think I had you do this exercise?"

And they give multiple reasons, some more valid than others: "To see if we're compatible", "to be vulnerable with each other", "to show and communicate what really matters to us", "to be able to work towards and protect what each other deem valuable", and so on. And I say, "Yes, that's all very true, but that's not why we did this exercise. In this exercise we went from five essential things for your marriage, to four, to three, to two, to one last thing. But in marriage, when you say 'I do', you say that even if this all these things, even if

this last thing is taken away from me, I choose you and I love you, no matter what. I love you holding nothing back, with no reservations, I love you unconditionally, I love you more than all this, even though I don't know what will happen or who we'll even be, I love you".

And that's absolutely beautiful, it's a completely selfless, unconditional love, the love that God has for us and calls us to share in; but it's also scary, because we're afraid of what might happen, and it feels like death because we'll have nothing left, no way out. But death, dying to ourselves, is what saves us and frees us to love.

When Adam and Eve sinned against God, it was because they let their trust in God die, and felt that they had to protect themselves and so try to make themselves equal to God. God's punishments, are actually blessings, because they remind us that we are not God. The woman, who shares in God's ability to bring forth and nurture life, is given the suffering and pains of child-labor. The man, who shares in God's strength in work and creation, is given toil and sweat and growing weary. To men and women alike, we must suffer and die, lest we live forever and think we have no need of God. We must die in order the die to ourselves and live for God. Our salvation comes through death, through the self-emptying of Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross, but also our self-gift in our vocation, where we pour out ourselves in love, and die to ourselves, to give ourselves entirely in love, holding nothing back.

A priest's love, sacrifice, and self-death and therefore his love, is no less than in marriage. Like the good shepherd, he lays down his life for his sheep. So ask God, "how am I called to be stretched, to die to myself?", and so to love, and be saved for eternal life.

## Reflection Questions

1. If you were to die today, would you be at peace? Why or why not?
2. Would you be willing to sacrifice your life for one great act of love? For a lifetime of such acts?
3. Do you think God is calling you to the priesthood or religious life? Why or why not?
4. Are you at peace with that? Why or why not?
5. What obstacles exist in following that calling? Are they serious?

## Pray with Scripture

Read Jeremiah 31:3-6. Thank God for his unconditional love.

Read Matthew 16:24-27; John 15:9-17. Ask Jesus for the grace to lay down your life for others.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Read 1 John 4:7-21. Ask God to cast out any fear of death.

Read Galatians 2:20-21. Ask the Holy Spirit to let Christ love within you.

## Resources

'I love You, O my God,  
and my only desire is to love You  
until the last breath of my life.  
I love You, O my infinitely lovable God,  
and I would rather die loving You,  
than live without loving You.  
I love You, Lord  
and the only grace I ask  
is to love You eternally...  
My God,  
if my tongue cannot say  
in every moment that I love You,  
I want my heart to repeat it to You  
as often as I draw breath.'  
- St. John Vianney, Patron Saint of Priests

## Notes

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# CONCLUSION

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## END OF THE SCIVIAS SERIES

We hope the videos and the discernment guidebooks of Scivias have been helpful in exploring the desires of your heart, how God is calling you to make a complete gift of yourself, and how the priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus. If you've gone through all this prayer and reflection and still don't have certainty in your vocation but, then there's something still in your heart and it's time to start taking more concrete steps. Sometimes you can't know unless you go. So reach out to your local vocation director and see what's the best next step for you. God bless you on the next step of your journey in following, loving, and serving Jesus.

Who is my local vocation director?

<https://diocesanpriest.com/who-do-i-talk-to-splash/>

