

Pope John Paul II Society of Evangelists

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Pamphlet 005

advice from the saints –
12 Tips on Vocations

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1. St. Ignatius of Loyola - "And if these people [the saints] did so many good things for the salvation of others, why can't I do those things also? If St. Francis, St. Dominic and others totally dedicated their lives to procure that God be more known and more loved and that people would be better, why would not I be able to do the same?"

- These were the thoughts of St. Ignatius of Loyola during his conversion. He lay wounded in bed after falling in battle and the only reading that was available to him was the lives of the saints.

2. St. Robert Belarmine - It is said that St. Robert Belarmine gave four advises to St. Louis of Gonzaga to help him pursue his vocation:

1. Go to confession and communion frequently.
2. Cultivate a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin.
3. Think of the death and eternity that awaits you.
4. Read the lives of the saints.

3. St. Columban - "If you don't get away from this environment, even if you are as strong as Samson, as brave as David, and as wise as Solomon, you will fall victim to these daring women."

- This advice was given by a holy man to St. Columban, who, in his youth, was besieged by shameless women. By following this advice he found his vocation and saved thousand of souls.

4. St. Teresa of Jesus - "The reading of novels and worldly books used to fill me with vanities. But the reading of the lives of the saints and spiritual books produced in me a great desire to dedicate myself to the service of God."

5. St. Teresa of Jesus explains the importance of community life for those wishing to persevere in following the call of Christ: "It is a great evil for a soul beset by so many dangers to be alone...For this reason I would advise those who practice prayer, especially at first, to cultivate friendship and dialogue with others of similar interests."

6. St. Anthony of the Desert - "It appeared to the saint in a vision that the angels were carrying him up to heaven, and the devils came forth to get in his way, accusing him of some sins that he had committed in the world. The angels answered: 'If you have anything to accuse him of since he has been a religious, accuse him of that; but as for the sins that he committed in the world, they are already pardoned and atoned for; that account was wiped out on the day that he became a religious.'"

- From the *Life of St. Anthony* about the vocation to the consecrated life with the vows

of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a second baptism.

7. St. Gregory the Great on the determination that is required to follow Christ in word and deed by going against our feelings when they keep us from making the right decision: "As a man swimming in a rushing river, if he stops and does not labor to swim upstream, will run great risk of being taken downstream by the current, so it is with us in the spiritual life. The spiritual life is so difficult to our nature wounded by sin, that if we do not force ourselves to go on, we will be carried away downstream by the current of our passions. 'The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away' (Mt. 11:12)."

8. Thomas A Kempis from *The Imitation of Christ* - "When God confides a special office to someone, He commits Himself to provide the helps and graces that person needs in order to accomplish well the task entrusted to him."

- This passage from the *Imitation of Christ* was read by Pope John XXIII in 1958 when he was elected pope and was frightened by the weight of his calling.

9. St. Bernard on the positive signs of a vocation — that of a desire for spiritual things: "There is no greater sign, no more certain evidence of the presence of God in a soul, than having a great desire of more virtue and more grace and perfection."

10. St. Bernard on the immense grace it is to have a desire to follow Christ and the importance of responding to such a grace by taking practical steps to find one's vocation: "This is what the prophet Isaiah meant to say in those words so concise and brief: 'If you seek, seek' (Is. 21:12). He meant: Be not slack, since true desires and purposes ought to bear real fruit and be persevered in."

11. St. Gregory the Great on the reward of those who work for the salvation of souls by following their vocation: "If to deliver a man from bodily death deserves a great reward, what reward must he deserve who has delivered a soul from everlasting death and is the cause of that souls living in glory forever! . 'He who converts a sinner from his evil ways and errors will save his own soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins' (Jms 5:20)."

12. St. Ambrose on Jesus Christ as our treasure and riches: "We have all things in Christ, and Christ is all things to us. If you desire to be cured of your wounds, he is a physician; if you are in a burning fever, he is fountain; if you are wearied under the burden of sin, he is righteousness; if you are need of assistance, he is strength; if you fear death, he is life; if you desire heaven, he is the way there; if you wish to avoid darkness, he is light; if you are in need of food, he is sustenance. All that you can desire and have need of, you will find in him."