

E-BULLETIN #94

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 175

Religious life is dying out in Europe - but it's surging in England and Wales. Here's why.

Vocations to religious life in England and Wales have tripled in just eight years. Here are four reasons why



The number of people entering religious life has tripled over the last eight years, according to **revised figures from the National Office for Vocation**. Last year 64 people joined religious orders, compared to just 19 in 2004. It seems like the long decline in vocations has been reversed.

In much of Europe, the decline continues. In France, for instance, the total number of novices fell by a third from 2004 to 2011 (from 311 to 204). So what's the secret – what is Britain doing differently?

1. Pope Benedict XVI's visit

Vocations officials say they owe a lot to Benedict XVI's visit to Britain in 2010. Sister Cathy Jones, religious life promoter of the National Office for Vocation, says it strengthened people's faith and pride at being Catholic. "People who had been discerning a good number of years thought, 'I'll give this a go,'" she says.

2. A culture of vocation

Fr Christopher Jamison, director of the National Office for Vocation, says that, in the early 2000s, “lots of different people woke up to the same idea” – that is, that everyone had a vocation, whether that’s to be a priest, a religious, a single or married person. “Vocation” simply means to live out the baptismal call to holiness. A “culture of vocation” is what Catholic culture ideally should be.

This is the idea that vocations ministry is built on. And it leads directly to numbers three and four...

3. Discernment groups

Discernment groups have sprung up all over the country. These help people decide what their particular path to holiness will be. They come in various forms, from the national **Invocation** festival to the **Compass** programme, run by religious orders, to local **Samuel** groups. Many religious orders also run their own “come and see” weekends, where interested people can get a taste of religious life.

Fr Stephen Langridge, vocations director at Southwark, says: “It’s not about trying to recruit people – it’s about making people better disciples.”

The Church used to act like a recruitment agency, with adverts on posters and beer mats. That seems to be a thing of the past.

4. Vocations directors

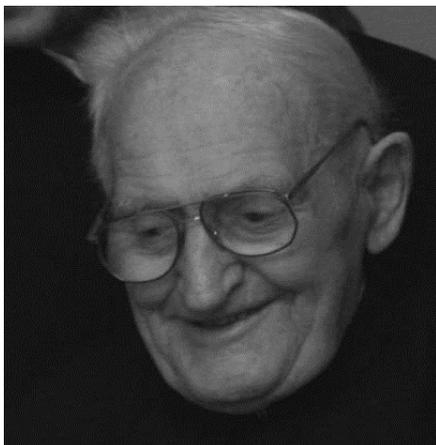
Vocations ministry has expanded enormously in recent years. Fr Langridge says that when he was thinking about becoming a priest years ago he saw his vocations director just once. Now, he says, “I wouldn’t let someone apply if I haven’t spent 100 hours with them”.

Fr Jamison says religious orders used to have the idea that they should only pray for vocations. “If you did more than that it showed a lack of faith in God,” he says. Now, he explains, a “significant number” of religious orders have full-time vocations directors. That means they can engage much more with people who are interested in religious life.

MARK GREAVES
The Catholic Herald
11.10.13



...not seeking, but waiting



Br Marian Nowotnik sac, 97 years old, died on 16th October 2013. He entered the Pious Society of Missions in 1938, made his first consecration in 1940 in Olatzew, Poland, and after 3 years his perpetual consecration.

He worked primarily as a horticulturist and most of his consecrated life lived in Olatzew in our Major Seminary – 40 years – caring for the garden, and the graves of our confreres in the nearby cemetery. Because of this all the students had an opportunity to get to know him. To briefly summarise the life of Br Marian, the most appropriate way would be to employ a phrase from the Rule of St Benedict - *ora et labora* [to pray and to work]. These two realities shaped his entire life. And speaking of his prayer life, every day he prayed three rosaries : the first

for the seminarians and for the Society; the second for our family members; the third for the intentions which people entrusted to him. He never missed prayers and Holy Mass.

Each student had the opportunity to work under the guidance of our brother. We could all sense his admiration for the beauty of God's creation. In this way Br Marian was also our teacher. He worked almost until the end of his life. Often he spoke a word of encouragement to someone when he was doing his task without zeal and care.

Many asked him what was important in the consecrated life? And I also asked him the same question. I recall that he told me these words of St Francis de Sales: "Bloom where you are planted by God". That is be patient and have confidence that God will take care of you. Do not search but wait - today we lack this spirit of Advent. We try without end, we seek our own self-development as if everything depends on ourselves.

Br Marian is a model for us of a Pallottine who was waiting, one who did not seek but waited – doing everything possible for the growth of the Kingdom of God, as St Vincent Pallotti also desired because, for Br Marian, divine intervention happened from within people, with simplicity and in silence.



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20.10.13
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you commented...

on #93

Many thanks Frank for a great lecture and encouraging us to take up the challenge of New Evangelisation, recognising our role as apostles to “go out”, move out from our comfortable confines and spread the joy of Christ’s love – even by words if necessary. Certainly as members of UAC the church is calling us now very specifically.

Thinking of Frank’s lecture I was reminded of the following quote in an earlier bulletin:

“We currently talk a lot about *New Evangelisation* which our founder envisaged centuries ago. He walked into military barracks to preach to soldiers about Jesus, and did the same for sailors. As Pallottines why don’t we take the altar to the place where people live? Maybe we have waited too long for the people to come to the altar. Why not stop waiting for the people to come to us but venture into taking the altar to them? **Christu Amal Raj sac [BA] – Mysore – INDIA – Bulletin No 82.**

It is a challenge and I think we are being called to respond.

CS 12.11.13