

The Call.

“People die on this trail every year,” our Jesuit volunteer youth minister said in a moment of frustration. Did I hear that right? People die on this trail every year. Did he just say that during our parent orientation for our mission trip to Alaska? I heard the laughter on the other side of the phone when I told the story to our diocesan director of youth ministry. In case you were wondering, we ended up doing a different backpacking route.

This journey as a coordinator of youth ministry would become one of many that would forever change my life. In the coming months, I will embark on a new journey with the Franciscan Friars. I was asked to serve as a local vocation director for the southwest region of the United States. I will serve as the local contact for inquirers in my area. I will help arrange for candidates to experience the friar’s life of prayer, community and service. I would like to begin our journey together by sharing my faith story.

I would receive the first of many callings during my junior year in high school. I was asked to play the piano during my Confirmation Mass. The song selected was *Be Not Afraid* by Robert Dufford, SJ. I spent a month practicing, only to crash and burn during a practice Mass. It started out all right until I heard a dink, another dink, and finally dink, dink, dink from my fingers playing the piano. I could no longer play frozen in fear.

The song title changed from *Be Not Afraid* to *Be Very Afraid*. Afterwards, I scanned the church for my Confirmation teacher to plead my cause. “Do not make me play for Confirmation,” I said. “You will do fine... have faith,” she insisted. Two weeks later, I was sitting on the piano bench and repeating to myself, “Be not afraid, be not afraid, and be not afraid.” The choir director gave the signal to begin and the notes started to flow from my fingers. Instead of paralyzing fear, I became strangely aware of God’s presence. God spoke to my heart through the refrain of the song. *Be not afraid. I go before you always. Come follow me and I will give you rest.* I felt God speak to a desire within my heart to follow Him. This calling would lead me into 15 years as a coordinator of youth ministry.

While directing a high school summer camp for the Diocese of Baker I heard God calling, again. During an evening prayer service, our music director began to strum *Be Not Afraid* on his guitar. I was transported back to the celebration of my Confirmation. Once again, I became aware of God’s presence. God spoke to my heart through the refrain of the song. This time I felt God speak to a desire within my heart to follow Him into religious life.

Over a decade later, I have the privilege to share the joys of my Franciscan life with you. I pray that you will be open to God’s calling within your life, too. May you hear the voice of God calling out to you, “*Be not afraid. I go before you always. Come follow me and I will give you rest.*”

May God bless you and keep you on this journey of faith called life.

Peace and all Good,
Br. Scott Slattum, OFM

Prayer before the San Damiano Crucifix - St. Francis of Assisi

Most High, glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart.
Give me true faith,
certain hope and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge, Lord,
that I may carry out
Your Holy and true command.
Amen.

Personal Reflection:

According to the National Religious Vocation Conference, new members to religious life are drawn to religious life primarily by a sense of "call." How is God calling you to follow Him more closely?

Peace Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.