Vocations, vocations, vocations!

In his commentary on the Scriptures for the fifth Sunday of Easter, Father Daniel Harrington, S.J., offers the following: "Philip's request to Jesus ('Show us the Father and that will be enough for us') is the occasion for Jesus to express the central and most profound insight in all of John's Gospel: 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.' John's central message is that Jesus is both the revealer and the revelation of God. If we wish to know who God is, what God thinks and what God wants of us, we must attend to Jesus, the Word of God."

Closing his column in that issue of America magazine, Father Harrington writes: "Keeping alive the memory of Jesus is the task of every Christian and of the church as a whole. If we really believe that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life, then we will find fresh and creative ways to keep alive his memory. If we really believe that whoever has seen and heard Jesus has seen and heard the Father, then keeping alive Jesus' memory is the noblest and most important task that any of us can take up and carry out."

Wow! What power in a few words, and what clarity about the importance of vocations. Keeping alive the memory of Jesus is the most important thing any of us can do with our lives.

Not long after reading that commentary, I read Father Ed Miller's "Pastor's Page" in St. Bernardine's weekly bulletin. Here is part of what Father Miller said: "This weekend's shepherding theme also reminds us of the need we have in our Catholic Church for shepherds, priests. Encourage our young men, share with them how proud you would be of them if they were to hear and answer the Lord's call to priestly service. Pray for them, talk with them, encourage them and support them. I know that you feel that my life has been of value as a priest. Can't your sons and grandsons know the same peace and joy that I have known, in loving service of God's people, as God's priest? I have been doing this for 37 years this May 15 (33 of them right here!), and I am still having a lot of fun. I would not trade one day of priesthood for anything – even the rough days, although I sure might wish they had not occurred! But who doesn't have some rough days? Let's promote and encourage vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, sisterhood and brotherhood."

Father Harrington shows the central importance of a life lived for Jesus. Father Miller shows such a life so well lived. Finally, I want to share the words of another witness, Cardinal Avery Dulles, writing in the April 21 issue of America.

Cardinal Dulles writes: "Already as a college undergraduate 70 years ago, I felt the oppressive nature of a culture that had no place for objective moral norms and meaning. I was desperate for enlightenment about whether there was anything worth living for and worth dying for.

"As I mentioned earlier, I entered college in a quagmire of confusion about whether life and the universe could make sense at all. I was conscious of the emptiness of a selfish life based on the pursuit of happiness. Happiness, I gradually came to see, is the reward given for holding fast to what is truly good and important. To some extent, the philosophers of antiquity identified these goals. But Christian revelation brought a tremendous increase of light. God alone, I learned from the New Testament, was good and true in an unqualified sense. And the same God in all his beauty and majesty became one of our human family in Jesus Christ, the truth, the way and the life. The most important thing about my career, and many of yours, I feel sure, is the discovery of the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in the field, the Lord Jesus himself."

Later in the column, echoing Father Miller's sentiments, Cardinal Dulles writes: "I often feel that there is no one on earth with whom I would want to exchange places. It has been a special privilege to serve in the Society of Jesus, a religious community specially dedicated to the savior of the world."

Talk to the young people in your life about a life of service to God. Share this column if you think it will help.