

A Letter to Young People

July 1986

Dear friends,

I am not sure how many young people will read this letter. In the middle of summer, I would expect that there are 1,001 distractions – a summer job, summer school, a host of activities and commitments. Yet, I would hope that some young people in Eastern Montana will take the time to reflect on what I would like to share, or that some parent or adult will clip this out and place it in an envelope and give it to a young person who might be wondering what he or she would like to do with his or her life.

Though this letter is generic and directed to countless young people in our diocese, I have to admit that I am going to look up some addresses and mail this letter to young people I have met over the last eight years in Eastern Montana.

I can appreciate full well and understand pretty clearly the message which culture and society offers to youth today. Success is measured in terms of prestige, salary, possessions, leisure activity, and status. For young people today, these are important realities because the world emphasizes these values.

Yet, conversations with young people convince me that within the heart and soul of many youth today is a yearning for "something more." There is the desire to relate to others in significant ways, the dream of believing in and sharing deeper values that are spiritually based, the hope that peace, justice, love and faith might become more than words spoken glibly, but that they might become a reality.

I believe that the Church offers the opportunity to young people to meet these needs, to help youth today achieve "something more" with their lives. That possibility becomes very concrete through ministry in the Church as a lay person, a deacon, a religious and/or priest. And so often when these options are shared with young people, there is a reluctance, and ambivalence, an uncertainty. Many youth think that the call to ministry belongs to someone else and they hesitate to consider the choice.

What I am saying is that if a young person today is a person of faith with a desire to share his or her gifts by a commitment to the Gospel and the values of Jesus, Church ministry is worth considering. Church ministry won't bring you success, status or salary in terms of what our world projects as important, but it could well bring you happiness and satisfaction unequalled anywhere else.

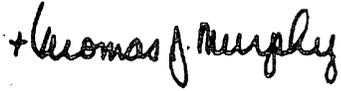
For all forms of Church ministry, there is a need for education and spiritual formation. For religious life and priesthood, there is the lifetime commitment to service and celibacy. This commitment could well be counter-cultural in today's world, but this same commitment offers you a unique form of loving others.

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In these hazy warm days of summer, a letter such as this might seem "heavy" to some. Yet, in many ways, this letter is an invitation. It has an RSVP attached. I pray that some of those young people reading this letter might do exactly that - respond to the call of Christ asking you to minister in the Church today.

Your Friend in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings, MT