

Dear Spiritual Mothers (SM), our next wonderful story from our document is my absolute favorite! So many of our commitments are present in this story. Read and enjoy!. (SM, my notes to you are in bold print.)

## My Priesthood and a Stranger (aka The Sister in the Barn)

William Emmanuel Ketteler (1811-1877)

During a conversation in 1869 of this Bishop and another German Bishop, Bishop Ketteler explained his vocation this way. *“I owe thanks for everything that I have accomplished with God’s help, to the prayer and sacrifice of someone I do not even know. I can only say that I know somebody has offered her whole life to our loving God for me, and I have this sacrifice to thank that I even became a priest.”* He continued, *“Originally, I wasn’t planning on becoming a priest. I had already finished my law degree and thought only about finding an important place in the world to begin acquiring honor, prestige and wealth. An extraordinary experience held me back and directed my life down a different path. One evening I was alone in my room, considering my future plans of fame and fortune, when something happened which I cannot explain. Was I awake or asleep? I saw Jesus very clearly and distinctly standing over me in a radiant cloud, showing me his Sacred Heart. A nun was kneeling before him, her hands raised up in prayer. From his mouth, I heard the words, ‘She prays unremittingly for you!’”* **(Spiritual Mothers, this could be us praying before the Blessed Sacrament praying for our Priest-son.)**

*“I distinctly saw the appearance of the sister, and she has remained in my memory to this day. She was quite an ordinary sister, clothing was very poor and rough, hands were red and calloused from hard work. Whatever it was, a dream or not, it shook me to the depths of my being so that from that moment on, I decided to consecrate myself to God in the service of the priesthood.”* **(Spiritual Mothers, while we don’t pray for vocations, we do pray for our priest-sons to be faithful to God, especially if they are going through a crisis of some kind. And our prayers can help turn them around to God again.)**

*“I entered a monastery for a retreat, and I talked about everything with my confessor. Then, at the age of 30, I began studying theology. You know the rest of the story. So, if you think I’ve done something admirable, you know who really deserves the credit—a religious sister who prayed for me, maybe without even knowing who I was. I am convinced, I was prayed for and I will continue to be prayed for in secret and that without these prayers, I could never have reached the goal that God has destined for me.”* **(SMs, our priest-sons know about our prayers for each one individually.)**

*“Do you have any idea of the whereabouts or the identity of who has prayed for you?”* asked the diocesan bishop.

*“No, I ask God each day that He bless and repay her a thousand-fold for what she has done for me.”* **(Spiritual Mothers, this could be what our priest-son could be praying to God for us!).** The next day, Bishop Ketteler visited a convent in a nearby city and celebrated Holy Mass in the sisters’ chapel. As he was distributing Holy Communion one of them suddenly caught his eye. His face grew pale, and he stood there, motionless. Finally regaining his composure, he gave Holy Communion to the sister who was kneeling in recollection unaware of his hesitation. He then concluded the liturgy. After breakfast at the convent, the Bishop asked Mother Superior to bring all of the sisters in. She gathered all the sisters together. Bishop Ketteler greeted them, but he did not find the one he was looking for. He quietly asked Mother Superior, *“Are all the sisters here?”* She looked over the group of sisters and then said, *“Your Excellency, I called them all but one of them is not here. She works in the barn and in such a commendable way she sometimes forgets other things.”* *“I would like to see that sister,”* requested the Bishop. A little while later, that sister came into the room. Bishop Ketteler had dismissed the sisters but asked to talk to this sister from the barn.

*“Do you know me?”* he asked her. She answered, *“I have never seen Your Excellency before.”* He asked, *“Have you ever prayed for me or offered up a good deed for me?”* She replied, *“I do not recall that I have ever heard of Your Excellency.”* The Bishop then asked, *“Do you have a particular devotion that you like?”* *“The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus,”* she replied. He continued, *“You have, it seems, the most difficult task in the convent.”* *“Oh no, Your Excellency”* the sister countered, *“but I cannot lie, it is unpleasant for me.”*



The Bishop continued to question her, *“And what do you do when you have such temptations against your work?”* The Sister answered, *“I grew accustomed to facing the unpleasant things with joy and enthusiasm out of love for God, and then I offer them up for one soul on earth to whom God chooses. I have left it completely up to Him and I do not want to know. I also offer up my time of Eucharistic adoration every evening from 8 to 9 for this intention.”* **(SM, this is our promise of Eucharistic Adoration and of being anonymous!)**

The Bishop asked, *“Where did you get the idea to offer up all your merits for someone totally unknown to you?”* The humble Sister replied, *“I learned it while I was in school, the parish priest, taught us how we can pray and offer our merits for our relatives. And he said that we should pray much for those who are in danger of being lost. Since only God knows who really needs prayer, it is best to put your merits at the disposition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus trusting in His wisdom and omnipotence. That is what I have done,”* she concluded, *“and I always believed that God would find the right soul.”*

Then the Bishop asked when her birthday was. The Bishop gasped; her birthday was the day of his conversion! But back then he saw her exactly as she was before him now. *“And do you have any idea whether your prayers and sacrifices have been successful?”* he asked. *“No, Your Excellency.”* she answered. *“Don’t you want to know?”* the Bishop pressed. *“Our dear God knows and that is enough,”* was her simple answer. The Bishop was shaken. *“So continue this work in the name of the Lord,”* he said. The sister knelt down immediately at his feet and asked for his blessing. The Bishop solemnly raised his hands and said with great emotion, *“With the power entrusted to me as a bishop, I bless your soul, I bless your hands and their work, I bless your prayers and sacrifices, your self-renunciation and your obedience. I bless especially your final hour and ask God to assist you with all his consolation.”* *“Amen,”* the sister answered calmly, then stood up and left. **(SM, we can have this blessing too! Just ask God for this blessing right now!**

The Bishop, profoundly moved, stepped over to the window to compose himself. He confided to his Bishop, *“Now I found the one I have to thank for my vocation. It is the lowest and poorest sister of that convent. I cannot thank God enough for His mercy because this sister has prayed for me for almost 20 years. On the day she first saw the light of the world, God worked my conversion accepting in advance her future prayers and works. What a lesson and reminder for me! When I am tempted to vanity by a success or by my good works, I can affirm in truth that I have the prayer and sacrifice of a poor maid in a convent barn to thank. And when a small, lowly task appears of little value to me, then I will also remember what this sister does in humble obedience to God. Making a sacrifice by overcoming herself is so valuable before the Lord Our God that her merits have given rise to a bishop for the Church.”*

God bless you.

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**P.S.I do hope you were able to pray at least once or are still working on the Sorrowful Mother Rosary for your Priest-son. Some Spiritual Mothers are praying one Mystery of this Rosary every day. Thanks to all who are participating.**