



April 20th, 2017

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Next Sunday bears the name Good Shepherd Sunday or Vocation Sunday because in each year of the liturgical cycle the Gospel on the 4th Sunday of Easter is taken from the 10th chapter of John where Jesus speaks of himself as the “good shepherd”.

The simple definition of a vocation is a “calling”. Catholics understand a vocation to be closely connected with a calling from God as rooted in our Baptism. The primary vocation of the baptized Christian is to fall in love with God and to lead others to God. As we know and love God more and more, we understand that there is a reason and meaning to our existence. The call to holiness we all share makes us aware of God’s loving Presence, inviting us to align our wills with God’s will.

There are four specific ways to live out the call to follow Christ: married life, the single state, consecrated life and ordained ministry (diaconate and priesthood). Men called to be priests proclaim the Gospel with their lives *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ). When priests teach with the authority of the Church, Christ teaches; when they absolve sins in confession, Christ forgives; when they offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, Christ Himself offers that Sacrifice, when they help a dying person prepare to meet God, Jesus Himself offers consolation and peace. When priests love, support and care for God’s people, Christ is truly present with his people.

Dear People of God, we live in challenging times. So, I ask you to pray for the priests that we already have, that they be faithful and strong examples of priestly ministry. I ask you to pray for our seminarians and those considering a calling to the priesthood, that the Church foster a generation of good and holy priests, filled with love, the fire of the Holy Spirit, and gentleness of heart towards God’s People.

The journey towards the priesthood begins within the context of the family (the “first school” of our faith), so I want to encourage you with my own prayers. I especially urge you to be bold in praying for priestly vocations, even planting the seed of a religious vocation in the lives of your own children.

As you can imagine, there is a substantial cost to forming our candidates for priesthood academically, spiritually, humanly and pastorally at the seminary. So, I welcome your generous financial support in the special collection that will be taken up next Sunday to help form zealous and capable priests for our generation and the next.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

✠Terrence Prendergast, S.J.