

Prayer for Vocations

Lord Jesus Christ, Guide and Shepherd of your people, touch the hearts of our young people, that they may, for the love of you, give their lives in the service of the Church. Renew the hearts of priests, that they may model their lives on the mystery of the Cross, and imitate the Sacred Mysteries they celebrate at the Altar. Strengthen our families, that they may generously support those of their sons whom you call to serve you as priests.

Amen.



Prayer for Seminarians

Lord Jesus, we ask your special blessing on those preparing for the Sacred Priesthood. May their hearts overflow with love, understanding, and generosity. May their desire to serve inspire others to answer Your call. Lord Jesus, fill the hearts of seminarians with the fire of your love make them holy as You are

Holy.

Amen.

A Reflection on The Gift of Priesthood
By Bishop John Sherrington Auxillary Bishop of Westminster

Good Shepherd Sunday provides an opportunity to thank God for the gift of priesthood. Many priests will be celebrating their anniversaries of ordination in the coming weeks and so it is an opportunity to look back and thank God for the gifts which have been received. It is a day when it is good to thank God for the many priests that have been witnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ in our lives and handed on the Catholic faith. Some have done this in spite of, or maybe even because of, their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities. They are reminders that God's plan is beyond our human reasoning and his ways are not our ways.

On the World Day of Prayer for Vocations we pray for the priests of our diocese who are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4:1). Stewarding the mysteries of God means preaching the word of God, celebrating the sacraments and being Christ's sacramental presence in the world. Through his prayer, the priest offers the people and the intractable situations of life to God the loving Father, knowing that only His Spirit can bring true healing and peace. In this way the priest deepens his own relationship with Christ, his shepherd and friend, so that he may be more available to Him and to his flock. May the priest always pray, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:9).

St. Paul reminds all priests that they are very human and rely on his grace, "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (2 Cor 4:7). This fragility is a reminder that priests need to be enfolded by the mercy of God and so become ambassadors of Christ who know their need of God's mercy and so can be merciful stewards of the sacrament of reconciliation to others. How humbling it is to hear confessions and hear of the human struggle as people entrust themselves once again to the mercy of God and set out with an intention for conversion and greater love of others.

Through life in the parish, the priest is present to people at different moments in the journey of faith: the joy of baptism and marriage, the high points of first Holy Communion and Confirmation, the sadness of sickness and suffering, the shock of tragedy, the grief of death and in the daily routine of everyday life when prayers are led and many pastoral needs are to be completed. Pope Francis describes the parish as "a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach." [The Joy of the Gospel 28] The people of God as community of disciples gather to drink and be nourished by Christ so that they can be strengthened to be His presence in the world. The Good Shepherd invites the priest to carry the wounded lamb on his shoulder and to model his life on Christ's own life, especially by carrying the cross. The priest nurtures his flock to become 'missionary disciples' who live the creativity of love and who are like a leaven in the world helping the reign of God to break in.

Humble witness and generous service will ensure that the person of the priest shows an authenticity of life to others so that they may believe. We thank God for priests and their priestly ministry.