

VOCATION SUNDAY

15th May 2011

Parish Resources





DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

Vocations Centre

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Dear Fathers, Pastoral Coordinators and Community Leaders,

The World Day of Prayer for Ordained and Consecrated Life is marked each year on the fourth Sunday of Easter, which is referred to as Good Shepherd Sunday. We are invited to pray specifically for vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. Pope Benedict XVI invites us to reflect on the theme "Proposing Vocations in the Local Church", a theme which is very meaningful at this time in our own local church.

Within the wide context of vocation, we need to be confident in pointing out to people that following Christ as consecrated people or priests is not only challenging but also richly rewarding.

In his letter, the Holy Father's letter highlights the centrality of the sacraments in enabling us to hear Christ's call. This is particularly relevant not just for those discerning a call to Religious life and Ordained life but to anyone who follows the Call of Christ in our baptism.

In the recent visit of Pope Benedict XVI to England and Wales he left a challenge to the young people who had gathered at Westminster when he said "that in discovering our true self we discover the particular vocation which God has given us for the building up of his church and the redemption of our world." This is a call relevant to us today in the Church of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle as we look to the future and the building up of the kingdom of God in this place. We need to call people to listen to the voice of the Lord and hear what God may be calling them to be. Maybe now is the time to invite people personally to hear where God may be calling them, because no matter what our vocation is, it is first and foremost an expression of our relationship with God. As a diocese this is what we are about developing our relationship with God, from this relationship everything else will follow.

To help with the celebration of Vocation Sunday this year I have included with this letter a number of resources that may be of some help in the liturgical celebration in your parishes.

1. Pope Benedict's message for the 48th World Day of Prayer for Vocations
2. Prayers of the Faithful
3. Possible Bulletin Notices
4. Prayers for Vocations
5. List of Possible hymns
6. Poster for Holy Hour for Vocations

Thank you for support in the nurturing of vocations in your parishes and schools and by remaining faithful to your own calling by being true witnesses to Christ's love.

Fr Brian Mascord
Vocation Director
Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle



"Proposing Vocations in the Local Church"

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

The 48th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, to be celebrated on 15 May 2011, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, invites us to reflect on the theme: *"Proposing Vocations in the Local Church"*. Seventy years ago, Venerable Pius XII established the Pontifical Work of Priestly Vocations. Similar bodies, led by priests and members of the lay faithful, were subsequently established by Bishops in many dioceses as a response to the call of the Good Shepherd who, "when he saw the crowds, had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd", and went on to say: "The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest!" (Mt 9:36-38).

The work of carefully encouraging and supporting vocations finds a radiant source of inspiration in those places in the Gospel where Jesus calls his disciples to follow him and trains them with love and care. We should pay close attention to the way that Jesus called his closest associates to proclaim the Kingdom of God (cf. Lk 10:9). In the first place, it is clear that the first thing he did was to pray for them: before calling them, Jesus spent the night alone in prayer, listening to the will of the Father (cf. Lk 6:12) in a spirit of interior detachment from mundane concerns. It is Jesus' intimate conversation with the Father which results in the calling of his disciples. Vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the

consecrated life are first and foremost the fruit of constant contact with the living God and insistent prayer lifted up to the “Lord of the harvest”, whether in parish communities, in Christian families or in groups specifically devoted to prayer for vocations.

At the beginning of his public life, the Lord called some fishermen on the shore of the Sea of Galilee: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (*Mt* 4:19). He revealed his messianic mission to them by the many “signs” which showed his love for humanity and the gift of the Father’s mercy. Through his words and his way of life he prepared them to carry on his saving work. Finally, knowing “that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father” (*Jn* 13:1), he entrusted to them the memorial of his death and resurrection, and before ascending into heaven he sent them out to the whole world with the command: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations” (*Mt* 28:19).

It is a challenging and uplifting invitation that Jesus addresses to those to whom he says: “Follow me!”. He invites them to become his friends, to listen attentively to his word and to live with him. He teaches them complete commitment to God and to the extension of his kingdom in accordance with the law of the Gospel: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit ” (*Jn* 12:24). He invites them to leave behind their own narrow agenda and their notions of self-fulfilment in order to immerse themselves in another will, the will of God, and to be guided by it. He gives them an experience of fraternity, one born of that total openness to God (cf. *Mt* 12:49-50) which becomes the hallmark of the community of Jesus: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*Jn* 13:35).

It is no less challenging to follow Christ today. It means learning to keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, growing close to him, listening to his word and encountering him in the sacraments; it means learning to conform our will to his. This requires a genuine school of formation for all those who would prepare themselves for the ministerial priesthood or the consecrated life under the guidance of the competent ecclesial authorities. The Lord does not fail to call people at every stage of life to share in his mission and to serve the Church in the ordained ministry and in the consecrated life. The Church is “called to safeguard this gift, to esteem it and love it. She is responsible for the birth and development of priestly vocations” (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 41). Particularly in these times, when the voice of the Lord seems to be drowned out by “other voices” and his invitation to follow him by the gift of one’s own life may seem too difficult, every Christian community, every member of the Church, needs consciously to feel responsibility for promoting vocations. It is important to encourage and support those who show clear signs of a call to priestly life and religious consecration, and to enable them to feel the warmth of the whole community as they respond “yes” to God and the Church. I encourage them, in the same words which I addressed to those who have already chosen to enter the seminary: “You have done a good thing. Because people will always have need of God, even in an age marked by technical mastery of the world and globalization: they will always need the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, the God who gathers us together in the universal Church in order to learn with him and through him life’s true meaning and in order to uphold and apply the standards of true humanity” (*Letter to Seminarians*, 18 October 2010).

It is essential that every local Church become more sensitive and attentive to the pastoral care of vocations, helping children and young people in particular at every level of family, parish and associations – as Jesus did with his disciples - to grow into a genuine and affectionate friendship with the Lord, cultivated through personal and liturgical prayer; to grow in familiarity with the sacred Scriptures and

thus to listen attentively and fruitfully to the word of God; to understand that entering into God's will does not crush or destroy a person, but instead leads to the discovery of the deepest truth about ourselves; and finally to be generous and fraternal in relationships with others, since it is only in being open to the love of God that we discover true joy and the fulfilment of our aspirations. "Proposing Vocations in the Local Church" means having the courage, through an attentive and suitable concern for vocations, to point out this challenging way of following Christ which, because it is so rich in meaning, is capable of engaging the whole of one's life.

I address a particular word to you, my dear brother Bishops. To ensure the continuity and growth of your saving mission in Christ, you should "foster priestly and religious vocations as much as possible, and should take a special interest in missionary vocations" (*Christus Dominus*, 15). The Lord needs you to cooperate with him in ensuring that his call reaches the hearts of those whom he has chosen. Choose carefully those who work in the Diocesan Vocations Office, that valuable means for the promotion and organization of the pastoral care of vocations and the prayer which sustains it and guarantees its effectiveness. I would also remind you, dear brother Bishops, of the concern of the universal Church for an equitable distribution of priests in the world. Your openness to the needs of dioceses experiencing a dearth of vocations will become a blessing from God for your communities and a sign to the faithful of a priestly service that generously considers the needs of the entire Church.

The Second Vatican Council explicitly reminded us that "the duty of fostering vocations pertains to the whole Christian community, which should exercise it above all by a fully Christian life" (*Optatam Totius*, 2). I wish, then, to say a special word of acknowledgment and encouragement to those who work closely in various ways with the priests in their parishes. In particular, I turn to those who can offer a specific contribution to the pastoral care of vocations: to priests, families,

catechists and leaders of parish groups. I ask priests to testify to their communion with their bishop and their fellow priests, and thus to provide a rich soil for the seeds of a priestly vocation. May families be “animated by the spirit of faith and love and by the sense of duty” (*Optatam Totius*, 2) which is capable of helping children to welcome generously the call to priesthood and to religious life. May catechists and leaders of Catholic groups and ecclesial movements, convinced of their educational mission, seek to “guide the young people entrusted to them so that these will recognize and freely accept a divine vocation” (*ibid.*).

Dear brothers and sisters, your commitment to the promotion and care of vocations becomes most significant and pastorally effective when carried out in the unity of the Church and in the service of communion. For this reason, every moment in the life of the Church community – catechesis, formation meetings, liturgical prayer, pilgrimages – can be a precious opportunity for awakening in the People of God, and in particular in children and young people, a sense of belonging to the Church and of responsibility for answering the call to priesthood and to religious life by a free and informed decision.

The ability to foster vocations is a hallmark of the vitality of a local Church. With trust and perseverance let us invoke the aid of the Virgin Mary, that by the example of her own acceptance of God’s saving plan and her powerful intercession, every community will be more and more open to saying “yes” to the Lord who is constantly calling new labourers to his harvest. With this hope, I cordially impart to all my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 15 November 2010

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Prayers of the Faithful

CELEBRANT We now turn to the Father in prayer, confident that He will hear us and will respond in love.

READER For the Shepherds of the Church. We pray that Pope Benedict, our bishop elect William and the priests of our diocese will be strengthened in their ministry and be ever more faithful witnesses to Christ Jesus. Lord hear us ...

We pray for our Church community, that we may understand the richness of our baptism and be a people ready to respond with generosity to the call of God in our lives. Lord hear us ...

We ask the Lord to guide young people as they make important choices in their lives. We also especially pray for parents, teachers and all those who work with young people. Lord hear us ...

We pray for young men and women who feel called to give their lives in dedicated service to God and the Church. We ask that the Holy Spirit will guide them in their discernment and that they may be willing to take the risk of "putting out into the deep". Lord hear us ...

For those in formation to be priests and deacons for our diocese. We pray that they may have the courage to accept the call to ministry in the Church and be willing to serve Him in trust and faith. Lord hear us ...

For an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life, especially for our diocese, that God will raise up good shepherds in our midst, Lord hear us

We pray for all those who have died recently and for those who mourn them:
We remember all those in the priests and religious who served this community over the years and who have died. May they rest in peace of the Risen Christ.
Lord hear us...

CELEBRANT Father, teach us to follow Christ your Son more faithfully. By listening to His voice may we become a community more attuned to your call in our lives. We ask you to hear the prayers we make to you today, those made out loud, and those made in the silence of our hearts. We ask you to hear them through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Possible Bulletin Notice:-

Vocation Sunday

Today, the fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday is the day chosen as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations to the Ordained and Consecrated Life. Pope Benedict has written to us this year on the theme "Proposing Vocations in the Local Church" reminding families and parishes that they have a responsibility to help people "grow into a genuine and affectionate friendship with the Lord". During his visit to England, the Holy Father addressed young people at Westminster, asking them to look into their hearts, each day, to find Jesus, the source of all true love. Please pray for those who may be considering a vocation to the ordained or religious life, that they may look into their hearts, hear the Lord's call and follow it courageously. If you are interested in talking about the possibility of where God may be calling you contact the **Vocation Centre 02 49283521 or 0417294221** or email: vocations@mn.catholic.org.au

OR

4th Sunday of Easter World Day of Prayer for Vocations

"The sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name...he walks ahead of them and the sheep follow him." (John 10: 3-4) Whether parents, spouses, lay single, ordained or religious, Jesus calls each of us by name to follow him, so that none will be lost. And, each of us hears that call in a unique way. Are you listening for his voice? How is Jesus calling you to share in the work of caring for his flock? If you'd like to talk to someone, please call the **Vocation Centre 02 49283521 or 0417294221** or email: vocations@mn.catholic.org.au

OR

Fourth Sunday of Easter -- May 15, 2011 - World Day of Prayer for Vocations

On this Good Shepherd Sunday we celebrate the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life, especially for our diocese, that God will raise up good shepherds in our midst. If you think God is calling you to serve the Church as a priest or in the consecrated life, call Father Brian Mascord **Vocation Centre 02 49283521 or 0417294221** or email: vocations@mn.catholic.org.au

Prayer for Vocations

Loving God, You speak to us and nourish us through the life of Your Church community. In the name of Jesus, we ask you to send your Spirit to us that men and women among us, young and old, will respond to your call to service in the Church. We pray especially in our day, for those who hear your invitation to be a priest, sister or brother. May those who are opening their hearts and minds to your call be encouraged and strengthened through our enthusiasm in your service. Amen.

Diocesan of Maitland-Newcastle Prayer for Vocations

Lord God,
You call each of us by name
and ask us to follow you.
Give us the courage to respond to your call.

We pray for those who now minister
to your people in all areas of life.
Dedicate them to yourself.

Open our minds and hearts that
we may accept the challenge of
continuing the work of the Good Shepherd.
Call from among us
sisters, brothers, deacons and priests
to serve our communities.
Through Christ our Lord
Amen

(Copies of this prayer
are available from the
Vocation centre)

List of Possible Hymns

Be Not Afraid (Gather Australia 449)

Gift of Finest Wheat (You Satisfy the Hungry Heart) (Gather Australia 191)

Like a Shepherd (Gather Australia 467)

Praise To You, O Christ, Our Savior (Gather Australia 407)

Psalm 23: Shepherd me, O God (Gather Australia 24)

The Lord is My Shepherd (Boniwell) (Gather Australia 506)

Glory in the Cross

The Lord is My Shepherd

We Will Rise Again

We are Called

Here I am Lord

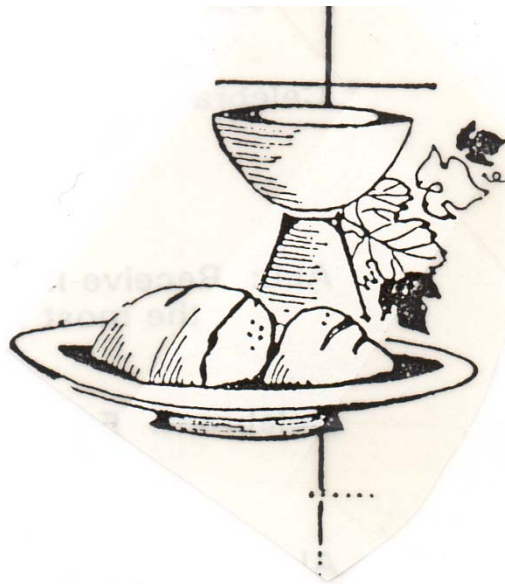


*Holy Hour
for
Vocations to
Consecrated and
Ordained Life
Sunday 15th May*

2011

2.00pm

***Exposition
of the
Blessed
Sacrament
and
Benediction***



*Christ the King Church
Mayfield West*