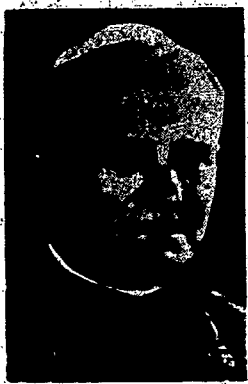


Pray for Laborers in the Harvest

Following is the text of Pope John Paul II's message for the 17th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, last Sunday.

In establishing the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, my unforgettable predecessor, Paul VI, wanted it to be celebrated between two great liturgical solemnities: Easter and Pentecost.



This is a particularly happy choice, for those glorious mysteries of the Christian faith throw a strong light on the priestly vocation and on all other vocations consecrated in a special way to the service of God and the Church.

The Second Vatican Council says: "Rising from the dead, (Christ) sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples and through this Spirit has established his

Body, the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation."

This is how it happened at the beginning: a mysterious and profound transformation took place in the first disciples, who believed in the Risen Christ and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were the same humble men whom Jesus had chosen, one by one, from among the members of his people. We know about their doubts and fears; but they believed in the Risen One, and, at the same time, were fully aware of their vocation and mission, in which the Holy Spirit would confirm them, as the Lord himself had promised: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and the end of the earth."

With the power of the Holy Spirit they were the Apostles, the Priests and Witnesses of the Risen Christ. They modelled their lives and activities on the unforgettable image of Jesus the Good Shepherd of men. They proclaimed his message to the world and worked for the salvation of men with his own sacred powers. They knew that the mission of Jesus the Priest, Teacher and Shepherd was continuing through their own persons: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." They knew, in fact, that they had been constituted, in the midst of the world, as the sign and visible instrument of the living and active presence of the Risen Lord; and they also knew that they had been constituted to form, by means of an ineffable gift of the Spirit, a new body of men endowed with an original and unmistakable character: that of Priests, Teachers and Shepherds of the New Testament.

Just as it happened at the beginning, so it has happened always. Centuries and millenia have passed, but the holy Church continues to be the Church of the Risen Christ and of Pentecost. The bishops, successors of the Apostles, and the priests, coworkers with the bishops, are the bishops and priests of the Risen Christ and of Pentecost. Thus it will go on happening in the future as well, for the Risen Lord has guaranteed to his Church his constant assistance: "And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Side by side with the bishops and diocesan priests, in brotherly and filial communion with them, there are and there will be other people called by the Lord to a life of special consecration. There have flourished and there are flourishing again the deacons, the servants of the People of God. There have flourished the multitudes of missionaries, sent out to found and guide new Christian communities. There have flourished the

'Open your hearts to the joyous encounter with the Risen Christ. Let the power of the Holy Spirit work in you and inspire you with the right choices for your lives.'

numberless forms of consecrated life in the religious orders and congregations and in the secular institutes, which show "to all men... wonderfully at work within the Church the surpassing greatness of the force of Christ the King and the boundless power of the Holy Spirit."

All these men and women continue to find the pure source of their vocation in faith in the Risen Christ and in the inexhaustible gifts of the Spirit.

Dear brothers in the episcopate, and all of you, priests, deacons, men and women religious, consecrated persons: my purpose in putting these thoughts before you is in order to extend to you a warm invitation — evangelize in an ever more intense and effective way the People of God, especially the families and the young people, concerning these holy truths about the priesthood, the missions, the consecrated life. The People of God, when it prays for vocations, must know well why it is praying and for whom. The mysteries of the Resurrection and of Pentecost enable you to speak, in the proper and most convincing way about sacred vocations. The faithful, the families, the young people, must realize ever more clearly that the Church and her priests, missionaries and other consecrated persons do not take their origin solely from human causes or motives or interests but from the merciful design of God, who desires the salvation of everyone through the strength of the dead and Risen Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. And so, the testimony of your personal lives, completely dedicated to the service of humanity, will confirm your words and confer upon them, with God's help, renewed and persuasive effectiveness.

Dear young people, on this occasion I would like to address to you a very special invitation: reflect. Understand that I am talking to you about very great things. It is about consecrating the whole of one's life to the service of God and the Church. It is about consecrating one's life with certain faith, mature conviction and a free decision, with generosity ready for any trials and without regrets. The words of Jesus: "I am with you always, to the close of the age," ensure the continuing of that "you." The Lord will always call, and there will always be responses on the part of people who are ready and willing. You too must listen. With your minds enlightened by faith you must penetrate into the other-worldly dimension of the divine plan of universal salvation. I know that you are disturbed by many things of this world, many events of the present time. It is for this very reason that I invite you to reflect! Open your hearts to the joyous encounter with the Risen Christ. Let the power of the Holy Spirit work in you and inspire you with the right choices of your lives. Ask advice. The Church of Jesus must continue in her mission in the world: she needs you, for there is so much work to be done. In speaking to you about vocation and in inviting you to follow this path, I am the humble and earnest servant of that love by which Christ was moved when he called the disciples to follow him.

Finally, dear sons and daughters of the whole world, an invitation to each one of you and to your communities: pray. It is a fundamental point, and Jesus insisted upon it: "Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest!" Let us all pray with the Blessed Virgin, trusting in her intercession: Let us pray that the most holy mysteries of the Risen Christ and of the Spirit, the Paraclete, may enlighten many generous people, ready to serve the Church with greater readiness. Let us pray for the pastors and collaborators, that they may find the right words in putting before the faithful the message of the priestly and consecrated life. Let us pray that in all parts of the Church the faithful may believe with renewed fervor in the Gospel ideal of the priest completely dedicated to the building up of the Kingdom of God; and let us pray that they support such vocations with great generosity. Let us pray for the young people to whom the Lord extends his invitation to follow him more closely, that they may not be drawn away by the things of this world, but may open their hearts to the loving voice that is calling them; let us pray that they may feel capable of dedicating themselves, for their whole lives, "with

undivided heart," to Christ, the Church and souls; let us pray that they may believe that grace gives them strength to make this gift, and that they may see the beauty and greatness of the priestly, religious, and missionary life. Let us pray for families, that they may succeed in creating a Christian environment favorable to the important religious choices of their children. And at the same time with all our hearts let us thank the Lord that in these recent years, in many parts of the world, many young and not so young people are responding in growing numbers to the divine call. Let us pray that all priests and religious may be an example and an encouragement to those who have been called by their availability and humble readiness — as I said in my letter to priests on Holy Thursday, 1979 — "to accept the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to transmit to others the fruits of love and peace; to give them that certainty of faith from which derive the profound understanding of the meaning of human existence and the capacity to introduce the moral order into the lives of individuals and of the human setting."

In the hope that the young people will receive with understanding and with an enduring commitment the demands of this call to the priesthood and the other forms of consecrated life, I bless them with all my heart, and I likewise bless all those, throughout the ecclesial community, who assist them and sustain them during the time of their necessary preparation.

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Bishop to Celebrate Mass for Scouts

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will celebrate a Saturday evening Mass during the annual Catholic Scout Retreat at St. Michael's Mission, Conesus, Sept. 26 to 28. The event is open to all Catholic scouts of the Rochester Diocese.

The retreat will be conducted under the direction of the Oretiana Council Catholic Committee on Scouting. The site of the retreat was moved from St. Bernard's Seminary where it had been conducted

for 13 years, to accommodate a larger number of scouts.

Richard Severson, a seminarian from the Albany Diocese, will be the retreat director. Mark Schilling, a seminarian from the Rochester Diocese, will be assistant director.

Those interested may obtain further information and registration forms from Committee Chairman Thomas Scahill, 146 Cypress St., Rochester, NY 14620.