

# Pontiff's Message for World Vocations Day



Vatican City (NC) — Here is the Vatican translation of the message of Pope John Paul II for the 21st World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Vocations day is celebrated worldwide May 13 this year.

Revered brothers in the episcopate, dearest sons and daughters throughout the world,

In a spirit full of hope I turn to all of you to invite you to celebrate with renewed faith and unanimous participation the XXI World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

As pastor of the universal Church, I open my heart and express to you once again the concern I feel for the effective increase of vocations to the sacred ministry, to the consecrated life in the variety of its forms, and to the missionary life. This is a problem of vital and fundamental importance for the community of believers and for all humanity. The next celebration offers to everyone, pastors and faithful, the opportunity to become more aware of the common responsibilities to carry out generously that which the Lord himself has commanded to be done.

On the fourth Sunday of Easter, between the solemnities of the Resurrection and of Pentecost, the world day of prayer always receives new light and new hope from these two great mysteries. On that Sunday the passage from the Gospel according to John proposes to us the evocative image of the Good Shepherd. "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and they follow him, for they know his voice" (Jn. 10:3-4). The Good Shepherd, the risen Christ, guarantees in visible manner his perennial presence in renewed humanity by means of those whom throughout history he continually sends to carry out the work of salvation. Today also he is alive and present in the midst of us, and he makes each of us feel his voice and his love.

The Good Shepherd manifests his concern for the constant growth of his flock. There are in fact other sheep who are outside the fold (cf. Jn. 10:16). The dramatic experience of the multitudes of all times is ever before his gaze, "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd," which makes him say "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." (Mt. 9:36-37). The grief-stricken lament of the heart of Christ is repeated in time and profoundly touches our persons. Who in fact can remain insensitive in front of the dizzy increase of needs for evangelization? The Divine Redeemer calls to everyone for collaboration so that the laborers of the Gospel will not be lacking, so that there will always be men and women to consecrate themselves completely to the service of the people of God.

#### Prayer

The celebration of the world day wants above all to be a pressing recall to understand the value of the command of Jesus: "Pray therefore the lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Mt. 9:38). It is not a simple invitation. It is rather an imperative which challenges our faith and touches our conscience as baptized. It escapes no one that prayer in its multiple forms must be considered as the first and irreplaceable service which we can offer to the great cause of vocations. A great response of prayer must be applied to the immense need of priests, deacons, Religious men and women, members of secular institutes and missionaries. Therefore I invite all of you, spread throughout every part of the world, to pray, to pray a lot, to pray continually to this end that touches in such a vital manner the interest of the kingdom of God.

May the world day revive in the Church the spiritual climate of the first disciples in the Cenacle waiting for the Holy Spirit: "All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers" (Acts 1:14). May every Christian community be a new cenacle of prayer for vocations: thus the diocesan community, the parish, Religious communities, Christian families, ecclesial groups and every other reality of the people of God.

In constant and universal prayer, centered particularly on the Eucharist, fount of the ministerial priesthood and of all vocations, are laid the hopes of the Church and of humanity.

Christ has pledged his word and will not deny us that which he himself has commanded us to request.

#### Action

Without doubt the insistence on prayer willed by Jesus cannot mean inertia and evasion of our other responsibilities. Rather the contrary. It is the will of the Lord that to prayer, well understood and lived, be joined our work and our collaboration. Jesus himself not only prays and commands to pray, but at the same time calls apostles and disciples, takes care of their formation and invites them to announce the Gospel.

Vatican Council II recalled that effective collaboration for the increase of vocations is the duty of the whole Christian community (cf. *Optatam Totius*, 2). One treats of a converging and diversified pastoral action. Therefore all the baptized, each according to his or her condition, must be committed to render efficacious, with the help of God, the action of the Church in a sector of such importance for its life and its future. Responsible for it in a particular way are bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated persons, those involved in education, above all Christian families.

**'The World Day of Prayer for Vocations is an opportunity for each of us to reflect on and pray for an increase of vocations to religious life and the priesthood. The vocation office is eager to help anyone who may be considering such a call. Information and vocational counseling is available, as well as a number of programs to assist those trying to discern their vocation.'**

**— Father Thomas Valenti.**

**(Father Valenti is diocesan director of Vocations. He invited any interested persons to contact him: (716) 328-3210; 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.)**

● To you, revered brothers in the episcopate, who, in imitation of the Good Shepherd, guide with love and trepidation the flock that has been entrusted to you, is joined my gratitude and that of the Church for the exemplary efforts which you undertake in your communities to foster all consecrated vocations. Tangible evidence of them are the programs or plans of diocesan action which you have published or which you are preparing or bringing up to date.

The Lord is giving to the Church a new fruitfulness in the field of vocations. Especially in some countries a prominent increase is being manifested, for which one will never be thankful enough for the goodness of God. These signs of hope will stimulate you to persevere with courage and fervor in such a precious work. Following the lines of action proposed by the conclusive document of the Second International Congress on the Pastoral Care of Vocations in Particular Churches, held in May 1981, mobilize all the efforts of apostolate and involve all spheres with a service ever more methodical, incisive and extending.

● My word is addressed now to all of you who collaborate with the bishops in this delicate mission: priests, deacons, Religious men and women, members of secular institutes, animators and those responsible for vocations. I know how great a contribution you make and which you are able to make with your joyful witness and your apostolic action, made valuable by constant prayer. In this circumstance I desire to make a recommendation to you which I hold particularly at heart: announce with courage Christ who calls; he in fact continues to call today as yesterday and he makes use of us to bring his appeals to their destinations. Announce him therefore in Christian communities, announce him with strength above all to the young. In numerous regions a new youth is growing, open to prayer and to the quest for God, desirous of participating in the life of the Church and of society. Do not disappoint their expectations. Be then messengers of the will of God and call with courage.

**'At last I turn above all to you, boys and girls, young and not so young, who find yourselves in the decisive moment of your choices. I would like to meet you one by one, call you by your name, talk to you heart-to-heart of things extremely important not only for your persons, but for the whole of humanity.'**

● And you, young people who are preparing for the priestly ministry and the profession of the evangelical counsels, you can be for other young people a clear proposal of vocation. Whoever has perceived the call of Jesus as the greatest richness in one's life must feel the necessity of communicating its discovery to others. The apostle Andrew did as much in bringing his brother Simon Peter to Jesus (cf. Jn. 1:41). Dear seminarians and so many others who are preparing for the consecrated life, radiate the ideals that excite your existence and be amongst your contemporaries the first animators of vocations.

To Christian families, next, I would like to recall the irreplaceable value of their work and of their commitment. Dear spouses and Christian parents, you who have collaborated with God in giving life to new creatures, know how to cooperate with him also in helping your children to discover and realize the mission which Christ entrusts to each one of them. In this lies the greatest sign of love before them. A vocation is great gift not only for the one who receives it, but also for the parents.

In order to carry out such a sublime and demanding task, I exhort you to be faithful to the vocation which you yourselves have received in the sacrament of marriage. In your family greatly foster prayer: you yourselves have need of the light of God to discern his will and to respond to it generously.

At last, I turn above all to you, boys and girls, young and not so young, who find yourselves in the decisive moment of your choices. I would like to meet you one by one, call you by your name, talk to you heart-to-heart of things extremely important not only for your persons, but for the whole of humanity.

I would like to ask each one of you: what will you do with your life? What are your plans? Have you ever thought of committing your existence totally for Christ? Do you think that there can be anything greater than to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus?

The world day is a favorable occasion to pray and reflect on such essential arguments. It is obvious that praying for vocations does not mean being occupied only with the vocations of others. For all, but particularly for you, it means involving directly your own persons, offering your own availability to Christ. You already know that he has need of you to continue the work of salvation. Will you remain then indifferent and inert?

Today, dear young people, the voices that try to penetrate your consciences are many. How is the voice which gives the true sense to your life to be distinguished? Jesus makes himself felt in silence and in prayer. In this climate of intimacy with him, each one of you will be able to perceive the invitation, sweet but also firm, of the Good Shepherd, who says to you: "Follow me." (cf. Mk. 2:14; Lk. 5:27).

Many of you are called to carry out the priesthood of Jesus; many others to giving themselves totally to him living a chaste, poor obedient life; many to go as missionaries in all continents. Many young people are called to offer their exclusive love to Christ, sole spouse of their life. Every call of Christ is a history of unique and unrepeatable love.

What is your answer? Do you lack the courage to reply 'yes'? Do you feel alone? Do you ask yourself if it be possible to be committed in the following of Jesus in a total way for the whole of life?

If he calls you and draws you to him, be certain that he will not abandon you. We read many times in the Gospel: "Have no fear." (cf. Mt. 14:27; Mk. 6:50); "I will not leave you desolate." (cf. Jn. 14:18). I mean that he knows your difficulties, and he gives to those whom he has called the strength and courage to overcome them. Jesus is everything in our life. Therefore trust yourselves to him.

In conclusion of these reflections and exhortations of mine, I invite you, dearest brothers and sisters, to raise in profound communion of intent the following prayer: "O Jesus, Good Shepherd, accept our praise and our humble thanks for all the vocations which, through your Spirit, you give liberally and continually to your Church. Assist the bishops, priests, missionaries and all consecrated persons: enable them to give example of truly evangelical life. Make strong and persevering in their intention those who are preparing for the sacred ministry and the consecrated life. Multiply the laborers of the Gospel to announce your name to all peoples. Take care of all the young in our families and our communities: grant them readiness and generosity to follow you. Today too, turn your gaze upon them and call them. Grant to all the called the strength to abandon everything in order to choose only you who are love. Forgive the non-responses and infidelities of those whom you have chosen.

Listen, O Christ, to our invocations through the intercession of most holy Mary, your mother and queen of the apostles. She, who, having believed and replied generously, has been the cause of our joy, accompany with her presence and her example those whom you call to total service in your kingdom. Amen."

While I am confident that the Lord will want to hear the supplications of his Church, I invoke the abundance of divine graces on all of you, revered brothers in the episcopate, on priests, on Religious men, on Religious women and on all the Christian people, in a particular way on those who are preparing for holy orders and the consecrated life and on those who promote with generous commitment the increase of ecclesiastical vocations, and with great heart I impart the propitious apostolic blessing.

From the Vatican, Feb. 11, liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, in the year 1984, the sixth of the pontificate.

(Signed) John Paul II.