

All faithful must cooperate to promote the

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II has called for new initiatives to stem the decline in vocations to religious life.

The following is the complete text of the pope's 1992 World Vocations Day message, released at the Vatican Dec. 17, 1991. World Vocations Day was celebrated May 10, 1992.

Dearest Brothers and Sisters of the entire world!

1. "The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13,52). This is what we hear in the Liturgy of the Fourth Sunday of the Easter Season; and, in fact, each community, when it sees a growth in the number of those who discover the hidden treasure of the heavenly reign and leave everything to dedicate themselves entirely to the things of the Lord (cf. Mt 13,44), feels itself overflowing with the joy which comes from the word of God and from the mysterious action of His Spirit.

Comforted, therefore, by these words from the holy book and from this experience, the Church celebrates each year a special Day of Prayer for Vocations, confident in the promise that whatever she asks the Father in the name of the Lord He will give her (cf. Jn 16,23).

Considering this upcoming anniversary, this year I wish to invite you to pray that the Holy Spirit lead a growing number of faithful, especially young people, to commit themselves in the love of God with all their heart, all their soul and all their strength (cf. Dt 6,5; Mt 22,37; Mk 12,30), to serve Him in those particular

forms of Christian life which are carried out in religious consecration. This is expressed in various ways, be it in the priestly state, in the profession of vows, in the choice of monasteries or apostolic communities, or in the secular state.

2. The Second Vatican Council recognized that this "special gift" is a sign of election, since it permits those who welcome it to conform themselves more deeply to "that kind of poor and virginal life which Christ the Lord chose for himself and which his Virgin Mother embraced also" (cf. Lumen Gentium, 46).

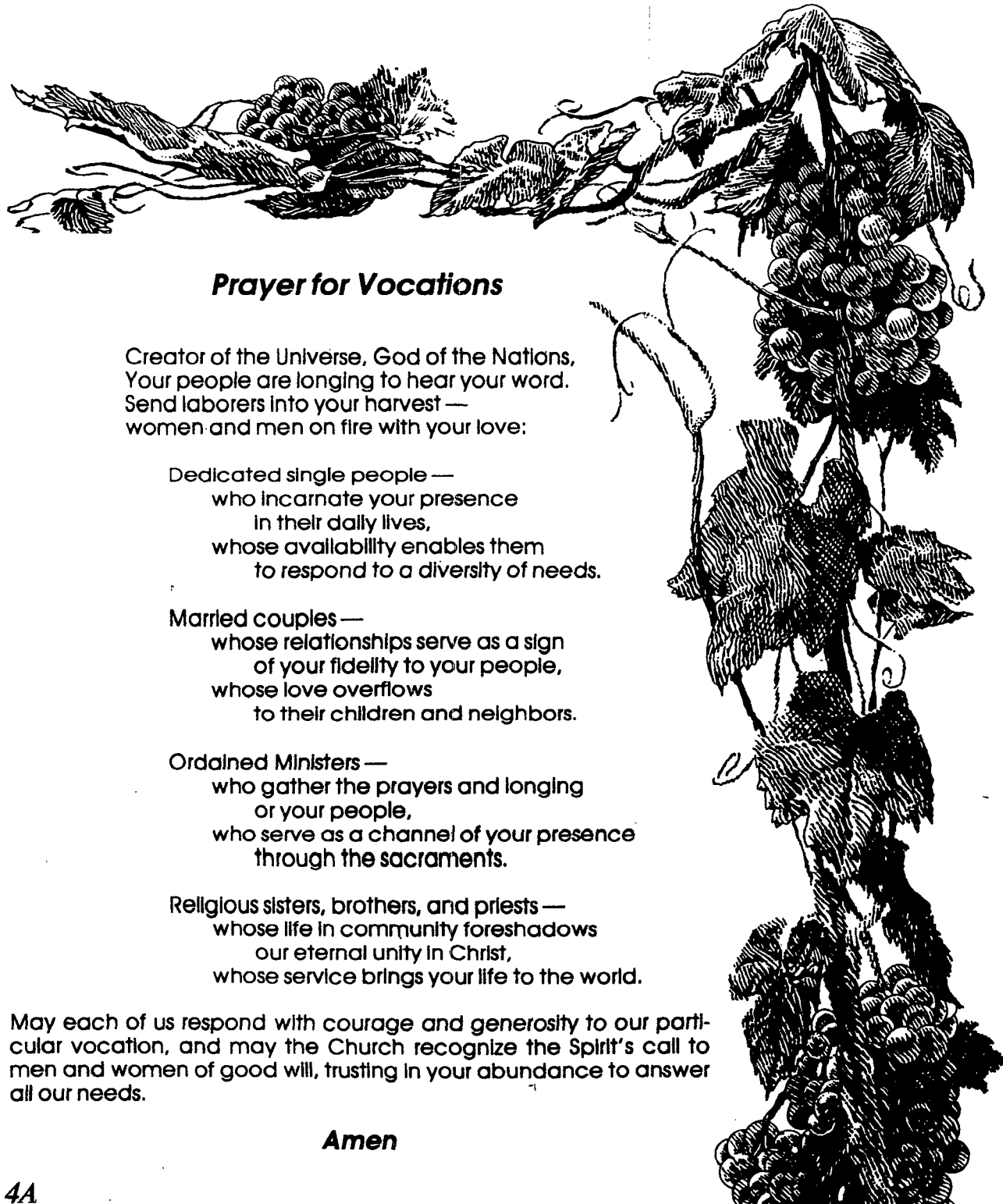
My revered predecessor Paul VI was able to affirm that the consecrated life is a "privileged testimony of a constant search of God, of a unique and undivided love for Christ, of an absolute devotion to the growth of His reign. Without this concrete sign, the love which animates the entire church is at risk to grow cold, the paradox of the Gospel to become blunted, and the 'salt' of faith to water itself down in a world in a phase of secularization" (Apos. Exhort. *Evangelica testificatio*, 3).

The vocation of those consecrated, in fact, requires the active proclamation of the Gospel in apostolic works and in services of charity which correspond to an authentically ecclesial way of action.

The church, in the course of its history, has always been enlivened and supported by many men and women religious, witnesses of unlimited love for the Lord Jesus, while in times closer to us has found valid assistance in many consecrated person that, living in the world,



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Prayer for Vocations

Creator of the Universe, God of the Nations,
Your people are longing to hear your word.
Send laborers into your harvest —
women and men on fire with your love:

Dedicated single people —
who incarnate your presence
in their daily lives,
whose availability enables them
to respond to a diversity of needs.

Married couples —
whose relationships serve as a sign
of your fidelity to your people,
whose love overflows
to their children and neighbors.

Ordained Ministers —
who gather the prayers and longing
of your people,
who serve as a channel of your presence
through the sacraments.

Religious sisters, brothers, and priests —
whose life in community foreshadows
our eternal unity in Christ,
whose service brings your life to the world.

May each of us respond with courage and generosity to our particular vocation, and may the Church recognize the Spirit's call to men and women of good will, trusting in your abundance to answer all our needs.

Amen

have desire to be for the world the leaven of sanctification and the yeast for initiatives inspired by the Gospel.

3. We must strongly affirm that even today there is a need for the testimony of consecrated life, so that mankind will never forget that his true dimension is the eternal. Mankind is destined to inhabit "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pt 3,13), and proclaim that true happiness is found only in the infinite Love of God.

How much poorer would our world be if the presence of those consecrated to this Love would be weakened; and how much poorer would society be if it was not lead to raise its gaze to the heavens where true joy is to be found!

The church, also, would be much poorer is there were fewer who would manifest concretely and firmly the perennial validity of the gift of one's own life for the Reign of Heaven.

The Christian people need men and women, that in offering themselves to the Lord, find the full justification of their very existence and in this way assume the duty to be the "light of the peoples" and "salt of the earth," builders of hope to those whom they meet of the enduring novelty of the Christian ideal.

4. We cannot do the number of the consecrated to create themselves in the world. From this we see the need to make a pledge of prayer to impede this crisis sequences for the world.

Therefore I invite you to cooperate to promote the vocation of the clergy and laity, to give high esteem for vocations, above all, to the courses and instruments of religious consecration.

Secondly, I exhort you to propose to you the ideal. We all know the work of a spiritus sanctus in the vocation plant and mature.

To catechists I recommend, with coherence, of this divine gift which has given to His Church.

To parents I say that they can give their children the Christian sensitivity, that they can give them the gift which is the fruit of His service.