

Priesthood examined at ordination

Twenty-one young men gathered at Notre Dame Retreat Center on Friday afternoon to think and pray about the possibility of life as a diocesan priest. Two of the participants were between 35 and 40 years of age. Nine were in their teens, and the remainder were in their 20s. The session concluded with a lunch at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Saturday following Mark Brewer's ordination to the ministerial priesthood.

I joined the group for dinner on Friday evening and then conversed with them for an hour and a half. The organizers of the program had proposed a series of questions they wanted me to address:

- What is the relationship between a bishop and his priests?
- What do you expect of priests and seminarians?
- Could you reflect on the idea of a vocation as it unfolds from its beginnings through ordination and beyond?

Following my brief comments on



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

those questions and a few others, we opened the floor to any comments, responses and questions the participants chose to raise.

Their questions were wide-ranging and quite interesting:

- What do you enjoy most about priestly life?
- What are its biggest challenges and problems?
- How does one become a bishop?
- When did you start thinking about the possibility of priesthood?

• Who influenced you most in your choice of vocation?

They also had many other questions. I was impressed by what I experienced with the participants. They were bright, interested and thoughtful people who seemed quite able to relax and be themselves among a group of people they had not met before. I am also aware from conversations with the program's organizers that they, too, were very pleased with the whole experience.

Mark Brewer's ordination at Sacred Heart Cathedral was quite beautiful. Several hundred people attended the celebration — and celebrate they did with what I would term a deeply reverent joy. They sang with great spirit, offered the gift of prayerful silence and were actively attentive to the rite in which they shared.

I thought often during the ceremony that their disposition was not only a sign of affection and support for Mark, but also for the priesthood. For that reason I was doubly happy that such a good number of our priests were able to attend.

The men who had participated in the retreat sat in a group behind the

body of priests. I did not have a chance to speak with any of them following the celebration, but I have thought of them often since then and have hoped that they enjoyed those hours of prayer and conversation about the possibility of priesthood in their lives.

It is my fond hope that some among them will one day come forward to prepare for priesthood. That hope is especially lively for two reasons: 1) we have great need for more priests to serve our people; and, 2) those who do will find priesthood to be a deeply rewarding and challenging way of life.

Please pray daily that we will be blessed by a greater number of candidates for the priesthood in our diocese. We are well blessed by the men we now have in training; we'd just like to have a few more of them.

I'll be off to St. Louis on Wednesday for a meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which runs from Thursday morning until Saturday noon. I always take you with me in prayer on such trips and hope that your prayers accompany me as well.

Peace to all.



The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor...



Each morning, the poor children of ESPWA homeless shelter in southern Haiti gather together to lift their voices in prayer to the Lord. Your donations will help Theo's Work, Inc. provide nutritious meals, medical care and education for these needy children. Let them add you or your loved ones to their Daily Prayer List. Give these children the gift of hope when you give this thoughtful gift of prayer to your family or friends!



A great gift idea for any age, any size, any special occasion - birthdays, anniversaries, religious celebrations, holidays! Place your request today!

Suggested offering per name to be added to our Daily Prayer List: \$30 for one month, \$50 for two months, \$100 for six months



Name to be added to Daily Prayer List: _____
 Special Occasion: _____
 To whom should announcement card be sent?
 Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Name of Sender: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____

Offering enclosed: \$30 for 1 month \$50 for 2 months \$100 for 6 months

Please make check payable to: **Theo's Work, Inc.**

Mail check with this completed form to:

Daily Prayer List, C/O 105 Southampton Drive, Kissimmee, FL 34744

Name to be added to Daily Prayer List: _____
 Special Occasion: _____
 To whom should announcement card be sent?
 Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Name of Sender: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____

Offering enclosed: \$30 for 1 month \$50 for 2 months \$100 for 6 months

Please make check payable to: **Theo's Work, Inc.**

Mail check with this completed form to:

Daily Prayer List, C/O 105 Southampton Drive, Kissimmee, FL 34744

Theo's Work, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 charity (www.theoswork.org and www.espwa.org).