



“Year for Priests”

To the Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Diocese of Sioux Falls,

His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, has declared a “Year for Priests” which will be celebrated from June 19, 2009, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, to June 19, 2010. The Holy Father hopes this special time will “encourage priests in . . . striving for spiritual perfection on which, above all, the effectiveness of their ministry depends,” (*Address of His Holiness*, March 16, 2009). He has invited all Christ’s faithful, particularly priests, to look to the saintly example of St. John Mary Vianney, whose 150th anniversary of death will be remembered, and to seek his intercession for all priests, that they “may be increasingly strengthened in fidelity to Christ with devout meditation, spiritual exercises and other appropriate actions” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Decree*, April 25, 2009).

In the Diocese of Sioux Falls, we will participate in the “Year for Priests” in the midst of the Pastoral Planning Process. The goals of our planning process are to assure regular access to the Sacraments throughout the Diocese, especially the Most Holy Eucharist, solid Catholic Faith formation for all ages throughout the Diocese, and the opportunity to gather as people of faith in vibrant and viable parishes.

In my Pastoral Letter on the planning process I noted that we are a Church of the Sacraments, instituted by Christ Himself. Therefore priests are essential. By this planning process and encouraged by this “Year for Priests”, we can seek to support our priests and to help them live healthy spiritual and physical lives and to serve well as instruments of Christ (cf. *To Hold and Teach the Catholic Faith*, 2). The “Year for Priests” also is a graced opportunity to encourage additional vocations to the priesthood.

Thus, the “Year for Priests” can guide us in prayer during this planning process which, I pray, will enable our priests to “commit themselves, with prayer and good works, to obtaining from Christ the Eternal High Priest, the grace to shine with Faith, Hope, Charity and the other virtues, and show by their way of life, but also with their external conduct, that they are dedicated without reserve to the spiritual good of the people something that the Church has always had at heart” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Decree*, April 25, 2009). This high standard of priestly life and ministry also applies to all the faithful of our Diocese who share in the Royal Priesthood of Christ by their Baptism. Thus, by our celebration of the “Year for Priests”, we will, in our day, hold and keep the Catholic Faith that has come to us from the Apostles.

I reaffirm my sincere gratitude, admiration and appreciation for all my brother priests who so tirelessly, courageously, and often sacrificially serve in their parishes and ministries throughout the Diocese. I invite all the faithful of the Diocese to join me during this “Year for Priests” in praying for our priests by name. Please also express in concrete ways your gratitude and appreciation, and encourage our priests, diocesan and religious, in living out fully and well the promises and/or vows to which they committed themselves at their ordinations.

Below are suggested prayers prepared for the “Year for Priests” by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to be prayed by priests for their brothers and by the Faithful for all priests. I encourage praying these prayers every day along with our vocations prayer. Other prayers that might be offered include: Prayers of Thanksgiving After Mass, found in Addendum 1 of the *Roman Missal (Sacramentary)*, The Rosary, The Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or any other prayer found in the *Manual of Indulgences*.

As an important aid to achieving these goals and directing our devotion during the “Year for Priests”, the Holy Father has graciously granted Sacred Indulgences to priests and to all the Faithful. The requirements for receiving Sacred Indulgences are detailed below in Addendum 3.

Conclusion

At the recent Ordination of Fathers Shaun Haggerty and Jeffrey Norfolk, I recalled the words which Bishop Cletus F. O’Donnell spoke on the day of my Ordination to the Priesthood, “The priesthood, dating back to the earliest days of the New Covenant, has always been a ministry for the mature, a ministry demanding the best - a service of God’s people. You will exercise this priestly ministry in many ways - liturgically, socially, educationally, and I might add - even prophetically. Thus, it is no task for children, for people who are not fully mature. The Priesthood is not a stage for game playing; it is not child’s play. It is serious business and carries with it grave consequences” (*Homily*, May 29, 2009).

This “Year for Priests” is a wonderful opportunity for all of us, the priestly people of God, to rededicate ourselves to this “serious business.” It is my prayer that, as we do so, with the particular focus on ordained priests, we will become better prepared for that glorious face to face vision of Christ, the Eternal High Priest and Bridegroom of the Church, who gave His life for us and our salvation. May St. John Mary Vianney intercede and may Mary, the Mother and Queen of Priests, protect and guide us.

Give praise to the Lord.

Given at the Catholic Pastoral Center, Sioux Falls on June 15, 2009 by

<signed>

The Most Rev. Paul J. Swain
Bishop of Sioux Falls

Witnessed by

<signed>

Mr. Jerome Klein
Chancellor

Addendum

1. Suggested Prayer by Priests

Loving Father,
I praise you, I love you, I adore you.
Send your Holy Spirit to enlighten my mind
to the truth of your Son, Jesus,
Priest and Victim.
Through the same Spirit guide my heart to His Sacred Heart,
to renew in me a priestly passion
that I, too, might lay down my life upon the altar.
May your Spirit wash away my impurities
and free me from all my transgressions
in the Cup of Salvation,
Let only your will be done in me.
May the Blessed Mother of your dearly beloved Son
wrap her mantle around me and protect me from all evil.
May she guide me to do whatever He tells me.
May she teach me to have the heart of St. Joseph, her spouse,
to protect and care for my bride.
And may her pierced heart inspire me
to embrace as my own your children
who suffer at the foot of the cross.
I humbly cry to her:
please be my consoling mother,
and help me to be a better son.
Lord, make me a holy priest,
inflamed with the fire of your love, seeking nothing
but your greater glory and the salvation of souls.
I humbly bless and thank you, my Father,
through the Spirit, in Christ Jesus,
your Son and my brother.
Amen.

O Mary, Queen of priests, pray for us.

Saint John Vianney, pray for us.

2. Prayer for Priests by the Faithful

Dear Lord,

We pray that the Blessed Mother
wrap her mantle around your priests
and through her intercession
strengthen them for their ministry.

We pray that Mary will guide your priests
to follow her own words,

“Do whatever He tells you” (Jn 2:5).

May your priests have the heart of St. Joseph,
Mary’s most chaste spouse.

May the Blessed Mother’s own pierced heart
inspire them to embrace
all who suffer at the foot of the cross.

May your priests be holy,
filled with the fire of your love
seeking nothing but your greater glory
and the salvation of souls.

Amen.

Saint John Vianney, pray for us.

3. Indulgences for Priests during the Year of Priests

- “Truly repentant priests who, on any day, devoutly recite at least morning Lauds or Vespers before the Blessed Sacrament, exposed for public adoration or replaced in the tabernacle, and who, after the example of St John Mary Vianney, offer themselves with a ready and generous heart for the celebration of the Sacraments, especially Confession, are mercifully granted in God the *Plenary Indulgence* which they may also apply to their deceased brethren in suffrage, if, in conformity with the current norms, they receive sacramental confession and the Eucharistic banquet and pray for the Supreme Pontiff’s intentions” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Decree*, April 25, 2009).
- “Furthermore the *Partial Indulgence* is granted to priests who may apply it to their deceased confreres every time that they devoutly recite the prayers duly approved to lead a holy life and to carry out in a holy manner the offices entrusted to them” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Decree*, April 25, 2009).

4. Indulgences for All the Faithful during the Year of Priests

- “The *Plenary Indulgence* is granted to all the faithful who are truly repentant who, in church or in chapel, devoutly attend the divine Sacrifice of Mass and offer prayers to Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest, for the priests of the Church, and any other good work which they have done on that day, so that He may sanctify them and form them in accordance with His Heart, as long as they have made expiation for their sins through sacramental confession and prayed in accordance with the Supreme Pontiff’s intentions” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Decree*, April 25, 2009). The days for obtaining this *Plenary Indulgence* are the following:
 - o June 19, 2009;
 - o August 4, 2009, the day of the 150th anniversary of the pious passing of St John Mary Vianney;
 - o On the first Thursday of each month during the “Year for Priests”; and
 - o June 19, 2010.

- “The *Plenary Indulgence* will likewise be granted to the elderly, the sick and all those who for any legitimate reason are confined to their homes who, with a mind detached from any sin and with the intention of fulfilling as soon as possible the three usual conditions (Sacramental Confession, Holy Communion, and Prayer for the Holy Father’s intentions), at home or wherever their impediment detains them, provided that on the above-mentioned days they recite prayers for the sanctification of priests and confidently offer the illnesses and hardships of their lives to God through Mary Queen of Apostles” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Decree*, April 25, 2009).

- “Lastly, the *Partial Indulgence* is granted to all the faithful every time they devoutly recite five *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys* and *Glorias*, or another expressly approved prayer, in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to obtain that priests be preserved in purity and holiness of life” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Decree*, April 25, 2009).