



ATTACHMENT H

THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

PRAYERS FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

In a letter of September 13, 2006 Bishop Braxton urged every parish to pray with renewed intensity for vocations to the priesthood. The letter contained a Diocesan Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood to be prayed once a month and a petition for vocations to the priesthood to be prayed at the weekend Masses.

Many parishes embraced this request and they have been praying these prayers faithfully. Many have conveniently placed the prayer on the inside of their monthly worship aid. Other parishes prayed the prayers initially but have not continued to do so month after month. Still other parishes composed their own prayers that also included vocations as religious sisters, brothers, deacons, the married state and the single life. Some parishes, however, have not prayed any prayers for vocations to the priesthood at all.

With the commencement of the PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING, The Bishop is once again asking ALL PARISHES to pray the prayers that were sent out in 2006. The Bishop is not in any way discouraging prayers for vocations as religious sisters, brothers, deacons, the married state and the single life. He has always encouraged these prayers. He is asking, however, that these prayers be distinct for prayers for vocations to the priesthood. The reason for this is both the urgency for additional priests in our diocese and the uniqueness of the priesthood. "There can be no Church without the Eucharist. And there can be no Eucharist without priests. It is a positive value for all of us when we pray the SAME prayer in one voice."

Below is an excerpt from the September 2006 letter, which includes the two prayers:

"Preaching is an intense form of prayer. It is borne of a prayerful reflection on the Word of God. The Bishop asks that a homily specifically on the priesthood and on vocations to the priesthood should be preached in every parish twice a year, making use of appropriate scripture texts, e.g., The Feast of Christ the King at the end of the Liturgical Year and *Good Shepherd* Sunday (4th Sunday of Easter, designated by the Holy Father as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations)."

Prayers of the Faithful: The Bishop asks that at every weekend liturgy the following petition specifically for vocations to the priesthood should be included:

"We pray that the Holy Spirit will call some of the young men from our parish community of faith to consider serving the Church in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ and that they will respond with generous hearts. We pray to the Lord."

“The enclosed *Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood* should be copied and distributed to everyone in the community. The Bishop asks that this prayer be prayed frequently. Specifically, he would like it to be prayed on the first weekend of every month at the end of all weekend Masses (after the closing prayer, and before the blessing).”

A PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Diocese of Belleville, Illinois

Leader: God is good.

Response: All the time!

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Response: God is good!

Let us Pray:

Lord, Our God

**we know that You are Goodness itself,
for you have given us your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ
to be our Savior.**

**Through Christ you have given us the Church,
and in the Catholic Church you have given us the Life of Grace
through Baptism.**

**Throughout history you have called forth ministers of Word and Sacrament
to lead, guide, and serve your people as priests.**

**We join with our Bishop in praying
for an increase in vocations to the priesthood in our Diocese.**

**We ask you, by the power of the Holy Spirit,
to stir up in the hearts of teenagers, college students, and adult men in our parishes
a desire to serve your Church in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.**

**Help them to hear and respond generously
to your quiet call deep within their hearts
to join with those who through the centuries
have built up your Church, the Body of Christ,
through the celebration of the Sacraments.**

**O God of Love and Mercy,
we pray that you will inspire our dedicated priests to continue
to share the joy and the happiness of their ministry at Your Altar
and in the Christian community.**

**Prompt parents, grandparents, and teachers to realize that
sometimes you call future priests to your service by a word of encouragement
from those who see in them the faith and talents of a good priest.**

We pray especially for our seminarians.

**We ask you to help them to be
the best human beings,
the best Christians,
and the best priests they can be.**

**Graciously hear our prayer through the intercession of Mary,
the Mother of priests, and in the Name of Jesus who is Christ the Lord. AMEN.**