



Archdiocese of Louisville

PRIESTHOOD AND VOCATIONS: A CALL FOR RENEWAL - 2006

INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the current parish planning process, the Archdiocese has issued two reports dealing with demographics and parish planning. The *Pastoral Leadership and Staffing* report (issued in 2005) presented various staffing models in use locally and nationally. The *Demographic Factors Impacting the Archdiocese of Louisville* report (issued in 2004) analyzed the make-up of the Catholic population, general population trends, parish and school structures and the major opportunities and challenges facing the Archdiocese.

One of the major challenges facing our Church is the declining numbers of ordained priests. Though this is only one of the issues driving pastoral planning, it is one that Catholics most poignantly articulate as they strive to plan for the future. Given its importance to our mission, we felt that it would be helpful to present some background on the issue of priesthood, current strategies that are in place to address this issue, and some possibilities for the future.

Because ordained priesthood is central to the sacramental ministry of the church, we present this document to the people of the Archdiocese of Louisville for the following reasons:

- ◆ To present background on the issues facing the priests and people of the Archdiocese in the area of vocations.
- ◆ To articulate current strategies in place to address the need for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

- ◆ To assist parishes and other Catholic organizations in cultivating vocations for the future.

THEOLOGY OF PRIESTHOOD AND LAY MINISTRY

Lay and ordained ministers are called to serve God's people. Both lay ministers and priests are called by baptism, but the "pastoral ministry of the ordained is empowered in a unique and essential way by the Sacrament of Holy Orders..." (*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* 20). This distinctive ministry is not characterized by merit or rank but by its sacramental character as one who represents Jesus in his unique role as head of the church and pastor of the People of God. The mission of ordained priests necessarily flows from the mission and ministry of the Church. Like the Church itself, priests are called to be servants, pilgrims, and symbols of the transcendent.

The leadership role of the priest is distinctive. It represents a permanent and public lifetime commitment of service to our local Church and a promise of obedience that binds the individual priest to the ministry of his bishop. The priest is both servant and leader to his lay brothers and sisters. Priests are called specifically to interpret for the community the ongoing revelation of God through word and sacrament and to call forth leadership within the community.

Because the understanding of lay ministry developed after Vatican II at the same time as the most recent shortage of ordained priests, there is a tendency to talk about the need for lay ministry in the context of declining numbers of

priests. However the church needs all of its members working together to realize the kingdom of God. Each of us received the baptismal call to share in Christ's mission of priest, prophet, and king, and each of us has a role to play in building and sustaining the Body of Christ. This is the basis for lay ministry that was clearly elaborated during Vatican II and in several Church documents since that time.

Ministry is a natural consequence of baptism and the development of lay ministry is important whether we have few or many ordained priests. St. Paul was very vigorous in supporting all the members of the Body of Christ in taking up their proper role in the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. That proclamation must always be the goal of every believer.

In addition to the traditional call of the laity to transform the world in the secular realm, many lay people also serve the Church. As stated in the Catechism: "The laity can... cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community for the sake of its growth and life. This can be done through the exercise of different kinds of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord has been pleased to bestow on them." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #910) Some lay persons fulfill this call by serving in volunteer ministries of the parish such as lectors, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, parish council, catechists, etc. Others serve in a professional capacity and are authorized, prepared, and trained to serve in leadership roles within the Church. We know these professional ministers, also known as lay ecclesial ministers, as directors of religious education, youth ministers, pastoral administrators, pastoral associates, and so on.

One image that has been used to describe this distinctive but complimentary role of priests and lay people is the orchestra and the various roles and responsibilities of the conductor and the musicians. In a professional orchestra each member is talented and highly trained. Each

member has a job to do that is essential to the overall success of the orchestra. No conductor can function without the orchestra members, and no musicians can hope to succeed without the direction of someone whose primary role is to bring them together to carry out their mission, while bringing out the best in each of them. Together the conductor and orchestra members achieve something that none of them could do alone.

PARISH PLANNING

Catholic parishes have opened and closed regularly throughout the history of the Catholic Church in the United States. During the last 15 – 20 years, the Archdiocese of Louisville has engaged in an intentional process of strategic planning, pastoral (parish) planning, and school planning. The current parish planning process is motivated by the same factors that drove the parish reorganization process 10 years ago. These factors include:

1. Mission

Mission is the reason an organization exists, and mission is found in an external need or reality for which the organization exists to meet or promote. We exist to proclaim God's love to the world and to transform our world according to Gospel values.

As a community of faith bound together by our faith in Jesus Christ, the most important consideration is our mission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Because most of us find our roots and live out our faith in our parishes, the vitality of our parishes is essential to realizing this mission.

To ensure that we are faithful to our mission, the following questions need to be addressed: What combination of parishes will best allow our local church to achieve this mission of evangelization? How do we best maintain Catholic presence and provide pastoral care? How can we

help parishes achieve the goal of becoming vital centers of worship and Christian community?

2. Stewardship

The questions of stewardship and mission are intimately bound together. Stewardship calls us to gratitude, responsibility, and accountability for all of our human and financial resources. It calls us to make the best possible use of what we have been given, through prudent planning and careful allocation of resources, so that we can serve the community of faith in the most effective and just way possible. Good stewardship allows us to make decisions about resources that are mission-driven rather than crisis-driven. It also calls us to work beyond our parish boundaries to share resources and to cooperate with one another.

Resources — human and financial — support the activities of the parish and greatly influence a parish's ability to meet the needs of its community. The increasing complexity and demands of parish life challenge the ability of some parishes to meet the needs of their parishioners and to reach out to the community. In addition, because of demographic and economic changes, some parishes are in the midst of growth while others are located in areas where population is declining or where the local economy is suffering. Stewardship calls us to respond to these varying needs in ways that will strengthen the vitality of our parishes and avoid crisis-driven, short-term solutions.

In the context of stewardship, the questions before us are these: How can we make the best possible use of the human and material resources so that we are good stewards of the mission of the Church? How do we deal with major facility challenges in areas of declining population?

3. Demographics

The last 25 years have seen significant shifts in population trends throughout the United States.

The Catholic population of this Archdiocese is certainly no exception.

We once lived in localized ethnic “Catholic” neighborhoods in which the parish served as the hub of the community. Today, Catholics live in ever-expanding geographic areas, and many Catholics participate in parishes by choice rather than by observing the geographic boundaries of the past. We are more diverse socially, economically, and culturally than ever before.

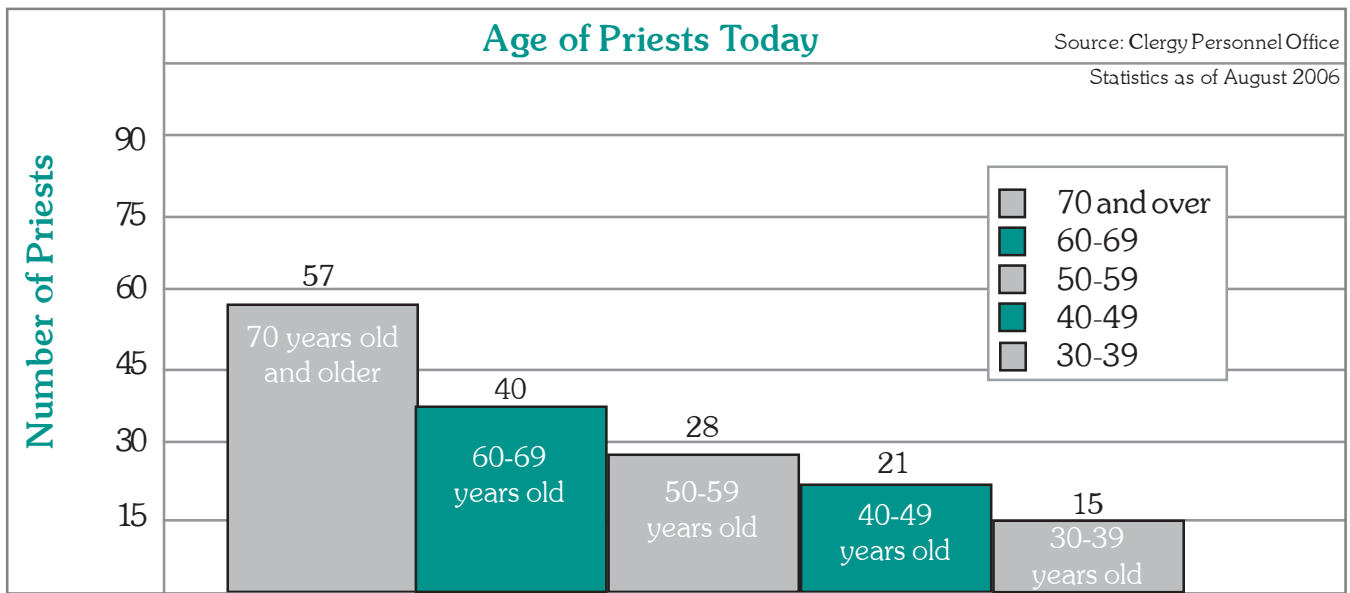
Modern demographic research has given us the ability to predict probable shifts in population trends more accurately and plan accordingly. The following questions need to be addressed as we respond to demographic shifts: How can we best serve diverse and dispersed populations, especially since parish boundaries are often not observed? How do we maintain a Catholic presence throughout all areas of the diocese?

4. Ordained Priesthood Shortage

During the past several decades, the Catholic Church has been grappling with decreasing numbers of ordained priests who are available to serve the local church.

The Archdiocese of Louisville has been experiencing a decline in the number of ordained priests and seminarians since the mid-1970s. The total number of diocesan priests, active and retired, decreased from a high of 278 in 1970 to 255 in 1980, 218 in 1990, 180 in 2000, and 161 in 2006. Our clergy, following national trends, has aged during the past twenty-five years, and if current trends and attitudes continue, the movement toward a smaller number of clergy and a higher average age will continue. In addition, the post-Vatican II parish is complex in structure and more is expected of priests than in the past. The proliferation of parish programs and services and the growth of parish staff call for a new (and more demanding) style of leadership.

The priesthood shortage is a complex issue, encompassing many aspects of our life as a local



church. This issue has implications for the size and structure of parishes, for the ways in which priests are assigned, and for new leadership models for the future. Continuing challenges include maintaining our tradition of ministerial diversity, preserving our identity as a eucharistic people, developing new styles of leadership that are more appropriate for the parish of the future, maintaining the relationship between the ordained priest and the parishes he serves, and reducing parochialism in the Catholic community.

The question that needs to be addressed is: How can we best use the gifts and abilities of ordained priests in their service to the local church? What are the best practices for attracting men to the priesthood and what new approaches should we look at in this area?

Though the fourth factor—declining numbers of ordained priests—captures our attention urgently at this time in history, all of these factors have and will continue to be essential components of planning.

PRESENT REALITIES

As noted above, our diocese has experienced a decline in the number of ordained priests since about 1970.

1. Priesthood by the Numbers

At this time 75 diocesan priests serve as pastors or administrators of 106 parishes and missions in the Archdiocese of Louisville. There are 122 parishes and missions in the Archdiocese, served by diocesan, religious order priests, and lay pastoral administrators.

Of the 75 diocesan priests currently serving as pastors or administrators, 31 will be eligible for retirement in the next ten years under the current policy of retirement at age 70. Of the 161 diocesan priests we presently have in October, 2006:

- ◆ 28 will be between the ages of 60-69 in 2016.
- ◆ 21 will be between the ages of 50-59 in 2016.
- ◆ 15 will be between the ages of 40-49 in 2016.
- ◆ 97 priests will be 70 and over in 2016.

Without changes (ordinations, deaths, leaves of absence) we will have 64 diocesan priests under the age of 70 in 2016. Of course both positive and negative factors will develop to affect these numbers.

One factor that affects the number of diocesan priests available to serve is the retirement age. Our custom in the Archdiocese is for priests to retire from pastorates and other leadership positions at the age of 70. In canon law, the age of 75 is the age at which retirement becomes mandatory. (Canon 538.3) Retired priests may serve in various ministries of their choosing during their retirement years, and many perform valuable services as senior associates or by offering weekend help to parishes.

Religious order priests are experiencing similar or more severe depletions of numbers of vocations. Presently there are 9 parishes staffed by 24 religious order priests; about half of whom are retired. In recent years, several parishes that were formerly staffed by religious order priests are now being staffed by diocesan priests.

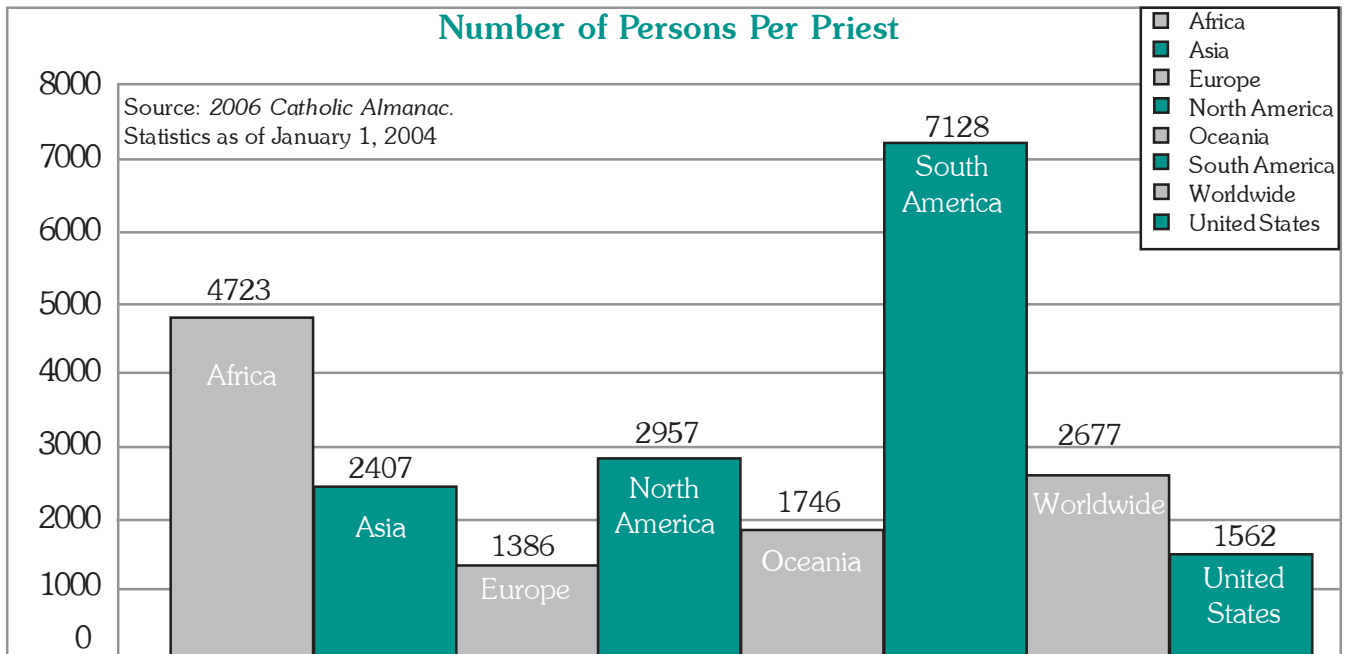
Declining numbers of ordained clergy is an international problem. With 1 priest for every 1,562 Catholics, the United States has a higher priest per person ratio than in many other areas of the world such as South America (1 priest per 7,128 Catholics) and Africa (1 priest per 4,723 Catholics). The Archdiocese of Louisville has about 1 priest for every 1,250 Catholics.

When talking about numbers it is helpful to add some historical perspective. In raw numbers we still have more ordained priests than the first half of the twentieth century, but our growth in priests has not kept pace with the growth of the Catholic population. In addition, the post Vatican II parish is more complex in structure and more is expected of priests than in the past. The proliferation of parish programs and services and the increase in parish staff calls for a new and more demanding style of leadership.

2. Priesthood Formation and Recruitment

Diocesan priests study and prepare for many years. If a candidate is a college graduate with a degree that is not related to a seminary degree, he must pursue two years of pre-theology and four years of theology prior to ordination to the priesthood for a total of six years of formation. In addition, many students decide to take an internship year in a parish, which increases the years of formation to seven.

If he is a high school graduate, a candidate for priesthood must complete four years of seminary college education and four years of theology prior to ordination, for a total of eight years of formation. If a candidate takes an internship



year in the parish this makes a total of nine years of formation.

Seminary candidates for priesthood enter the seminary as a further discernment of and preparation for the ministerial priesthood. Thus, no ordination is a certainty until the candidate nears completion of his formation. Beyond 2006, all ordinations are based on the possible completion of priesthood formation of candidates we presently have.

Recently the Archdiocese has experienced many demographic changes in candidates for the priesthood. Reflecting our multicultural reality as an Archdiocese, we have ordained our first Hispanic, Vietnamese, and African candidates during the last ten years. Men being ordained now are generally older and for many, the priesthood is a second or third career. In 2006 we ordained our first married man and our first grandfather.

Some have proposed recruiting foreign-born priests as a solution to the challenge of fewer ordained priests, and this Archdiocese has welcomed several foreign born priests in recent years. However, the shortage of priests is a world-wide phenomenon and the assumption that priests are more plentiful elsewhere is not accurate. Foreign priests must overcome considerable cultural and language barriers to serve effectively. In 1998 and again more recently, the Vatican has asked the wealthier nations of the world not to recruit priests from poorer areas.

Finally, in any discussion of the shortage of priests, the inevitable question of who is ordained will be raised. While there are many points of view about Church practice in this area, the issue cannot be resolved by our parishes, diocese, or bishop. Therefore vocation, parish, and diocesan planning must proceed within the current parameters of who is called to priestly ordination.

VOCATION EFFORTS

The archdiocesan Vocation Office has many efforts in place. These include:

Newly Ordained Mentoring: This is the supervision of the formation of priests in their first five years after ordination. The goal is continued formation and support of these priests to avoid having them burn out and drop out, which is an alarming trend in those ordained 5 years and under across the United States. A priest on the vocation team is specifically designated to give oversight to this program.

Men's Discernment Groups: These groups meet monthly for prayer, discussion, and a meal. The focus is to provide fellowship and support for men who are considering a religious vocation. Entry into the group is through invitation by the Vocation Director or a coordinator of one of the chapters of our discernment groups.

Men in Black: is a discernment group for late teen and young adult (ages 18-29) Catholic men, who are single and in good standing with the Church. Some members are interested in diocesan priesthood and some in religious orders.

Men of Discernment: is a discernment group for adult Catholic men ages 30 to 49. Those eligible to participate in this group include active Catholic adult men of good standing with the Church who have been single their entire lives, who are widowed, or who are divorced (having had their marriage annulled). If they have children then they must have successfully raised their children so that they are free of the primary care of their children.

High School Discernment Clubs: is a pilot discernment program for high school teens that is being implemented in the fall of 2006. In addition, a team of priests has been established to visit Catholic high schools to give presentations about the diocesan priesthood.

House of Discernment: is in the planning stages. This is an opportunity for men discerning priesthood to live in a parish rectory for up to one year. During this time the resident may still go to school or work full time, but he also is invited to participate more intensively in parish ministry or in apostolic service.

Women's Discernment Group: This group was established in the spring of 2006 as a collaborative effort with local women's religious communities. It meets the last Sunday of each month for prayer, discussion, and Mass at Our Lady of the Woods Chapel at Bellarmine University. Any single, active Catholic woman, age 18 or older, who is interested in discerning a religious vocation in the Church, is eligible to participate.

Dinner with the Archbishop: Invited guests interested in vocations have dinner with the Archbishop and other priests and religious. This is a popular annual event.

Vocation Books: The Vocations Office has published two books for teachers, parents, and young persons interested in learning more about vocations. These books are available on the archdiocesan vocation website (<http://www.archlou.org/archlou/vocationoffice>); in the library of each Catholic elementary and high school; and through the Media Center in the Flaget Center. Each book contains more than 100 pages filled with Scriptures, quotes, and photos of ordained ministers serving in the Archdiocese of Louisville.

Catechist Certification Program: Using the books described above, credit hours can be earned and in-service program offered to faculty, youth ministers, catechists, and parents. This curriculum is designed to help teachers present the concept of vocation or call to students of all ages. It also encourages integration of the vocation concept, i.e. field trips, essay contests, research projects, and school liturgy planning. The resources include information on dioc-

esan priesthood, religious life, and full-time lay ministry in the Archdiocese of Louisville.

Classroom Visits: Members of the Planting Seeds Committee make classroom visits to Catholic schools and religious education programs to talk about religious vocations. They provide resources to the students and teachers. Each year, thousands of students receive these presentations.

Campus Ministry: The Vocation Office works in conjunction with high school and college campus ministers, offering vocation speakers throughout the academic year, including the "Busy Persons' Retreat" on college campuses. Campus ministers serve on the Planting Seeds Committee with the Vocation Office.

Confirmation Retreats: Members of the Planting Seeds Committee conduct confirmation retreats for parishes. Named, "Got Ears," this retreat engages the students in listening to God, seeking where they find God, and working with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Young people are challenged to identify their gifts and listen to God's call in their lives, while hearing witness stories from those who have followed God's call in their parish environment.

World Day of Prayer for Vocations: Parishes receive liturgical resources, prayer services, prayer cards, and other items they may utilize within the parish/school environment for this annual observation.

World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life: Each February a Mass is celebrated by the Archbishop and a reception given in honor of the religious community members serving or residing in the Archdiocese of Louisville. Parishes are encouraged to acknowledge and remember in the weekly petitions religious community members who serve or reside in their parishes and schools.

Vocation Office Website: Information can easily be located on the archdiocesan vocations

page: programs, resources, prayers and daily readings, newly ordained information, seminarian information, discernment groups, and numerous links of interest.

Serra Club: This is an active organization in the Archdiocese of Louisville that provides prayer and support for fostering vocations and for the priests of the Archdiocese. Specific activities include an annual lunch with the seminarians, a traveling cutout of a priest and nun for photos with children, the parish Chalice Program described on page 9, and monthly meetings about vocations in the Archdiocese.

NEW DIRECTIONS

Though there are many efforts in place to promote vocations, much remains to be done to address the challenges we face. This document is presented as the beginning of a strategic plan to promote church vocations within the parishes of the Archdiocese of Louisville. It is the energy, creativity, prayer, and faithfulness at the parish level that will help to bring about change in the vocation situation in the Archdiocese.

During the planning process many people have been asking questions such as: “What can we do to ensure that we can celebrate the sacraments in our parish? What can we do to ensure that we have vibrant Catholic ministry in our area? What are we doing to call more men to the priesthood? How can we support our priests in their ministry and service?” There are many factors involved in sustaining the preaching, teaching, sacramental, and pastoral ministry of priests in each parish and in promoting ministries of service and leadership. In addition to what is already being done, there are other opportunities.

One key strategy is to establish parish-based vocation efforts. Every parish should have as one of its goals the establishment of a proud tradition of providing religious leadership for the

Archdiocese of Louisville. This means that sons and daughters of each parish must be invited to come forth to serve the church as priest, sisters, brothers, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers. How long has it been since a son or daughter of your parish stepped forward to serve the church? How long before it will happen again, or for the first time, will depend on the prayer, work, and enthusiasm of those willing to promote vocations in the parish and especially on the unique call to ministry by the Holy Spirit.

As part of these parish-based efforts, special attention should be focused on elementary-aged children. Efforts should be made to foster vocations in religious education and Catholic elementary schools. In particular, the concentration of children in our elementary schools means that collaboration with principals and teachers is crucial to issuing the call to serve the Church through religious vocations. The imagination and creativity that school principals, teachers, DREs, and catechists can bring to the vocation ministry will contribute greatly to our success.

“Jesus said to his disciples, *“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”* Jesus invites us to ask the Holy Spirit to call forth people for ministry in our church. While the following suggestions are by no means comprehensive, they are offered as beginning steps in a comprehensive parish vocation effort. As parishes engage in this task, the Spirit undoubtedly will stimulate the creativity of the people of our parishes in this important work.

NEW DIRECTIONS - PARISH VOCATION EFFORTS

PRAYER

Every parish and every person can pray for vocations. Parishes and individuals can pray by:

- ◆ Including petitions for vocations every weekend in the prayer of the faithful.
- ◆ Encouraging parish devotional prayer for all ages, including liturgy of the hours, Taize prayer, Eucharistic adoration, centering prayer, and lectio divina.
- ◆ Keeping the vocation prayer card in pews and have the congregation say the prayer together after the prayer of the faithful, especially during special vocation events such as National Vocation Awareness Week in January.
- ◆ Joining members of the Serra Club who pray for vocations on the first Saturday of the month at a specific location.
- ◆ Encouraging families to participate in the Chalice Program and other events hosted by the Serra Club. The Chalice Program invites families to pray for vocations in their homes. Each week at Mass, a chalice and a prayer book are presented to a household of the parish to be taken home. The prayer book has a prayer and scripture reading for each day and works well for personal or communal prayer.

PARISH VOCATION COORDINATOR

Establish a parish vocation ministry coordinator or committee whose responsibility is to create awareness in the parish community by:

- ◆ Dedicating him/herself to pray for and promote vocations.
- ◆ Being the liaison between the Vocation Office and the parish or school.
- ◆ Keeping the pastor, the principal, and all appropriate people informed and appraised of all the vocation efforts and activities in their parish or school.
- ◆ Disseminating the information and material from the Office for Vocations to the appropriate people in the parish or school, utilizing approved channels of communication.
- ◆ Directing interested people to the Office of Vocations.
- ◆ Communicating the need for and importance of vocations through bulletin and newsletter inserts and articles, vocation posters, and support of events such as Dinner with the Archbishop, etc.

NEW DIRECTIONS - PARISH VOCATION EFFORTS

OUTREACH TO YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

It has been shown that good youth and young adult ministry is good vocation ministry. Encourage ministry and service among the youth and young adults of your parish by:

- ◆ Providing financial support and personnel support for vibrant youth ministry in each parish.
- ◆ Encouraging the youth and young adults of your parish to form prayer groups, bible study groups, and faith sharing groups.
- ◆ Supporting the involvement of youth and young adults in parish ministries and in catechesis and regularly affirming their efforts.
- ◆ Encouraging service hours to be spent working with or for diocesan priests in the parish or religious community members either in the parish, local community, or motherhouse.
- ◆ Promoting youth and young adult retreats and pilgrimages; encouraging field trips to monasteries, motherhouses, convents and seminaries, particularly with confirmation and RCIA groups.
- ◆ Advancing apostolic service both locally, nationally, and internationally in the parish. Sponsor a mission trip to a third world country.

MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

Encourage active development of ministry to and with the traditional and emerging diverse populations of our Archdiocese by:

- ◆ Continuing to develop ministry to African Americans in the Archdiocese of Louisville.
- ◆ Continuing to develop ministry to and with the Spanish-speaking and Vietnamese immigrants residing in the Archdiocese of Louisville. Immigrants are often a fruitful source of religious vocations.
- ◆ Developing ministry to other language and cultural groups that we encounter in the Archdiocese of Louisville.

INVITATION

Invite and affirm those in whom you see potential to consider a vocation or career in Church ministry. Affirm those already in ministry by:

- ◆ Recognizing youth involved in ministry, e.g., altar servers, youth ministry, and youth choir.
- ◆ Supporting priests, religious, deacons, and lay ministers through appreciation events, blessings, and so on.
- ◆ Communicating with seminarians through cards and letters.
- ◆ Providing special blessings for confirmands and RCIA groups and support them as they seek to follow Jesus.
- ◆ Nominating youth and young adults to attend the annual Dinner with the Archbishop.

NEW DIRECTIONS - VOCATION EFFORTS

FAMILY LIFE

Pope John Paul II said, “The family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do.” The role and mission of the family is to be the “first and vital cell of society” and a “community of life and love,” that in its actions and by its example will transform the world. Families can nurture vocations by:

- ◆ Making daily prayer a regular habit in the home. Some examples of prayers the family can use at home are the rosary, the liturgy of the hours, and lectio divina.

- ◆ Parents blessing their children on a daily basis. An easy blessing is to trace the sign of the cross on the forehead of your child and to say these words: “May God bless you and keep you and hold you in His love.”

- ◆ Parents bringing their children to Sunday Mass and even to daily Mass on a regular basis in order to foster in the family a love for Scripture and for the Eucharist.

- ◆ Parents bringing their children to full participation in religious education and youth ministry in their respective parishes.

- ◆ Parents involving the whole family in works of Christian charity and service.

- ◆ Families praying on a regular, even daily basis, that God will bless their family with religious vocations. Participation in the parish-based Chalice Program brings an added focus to the prayer of the family for religious vocations. An easy petition to add at family mealtime prayer is “...and may it be Your will to bless our family with religious vocations.”

For more information or materials, please contact the Vocation Office at 502/636-0296 or vocations@archlou.org. For help with youth, school, or multicultural ministry, please see the staff resources at the end of this document.

On the archdiocesan level, many new efforts are underway:

Staffing: The Archbishop has expanded the staff of the Vocation Office, and the office has established several committees to expand recruitment and extend support to those who have been ordained. A new staff position of associate director has been established. This position is being filled by a priest who will focus on attracting men to the priesthood, promoting the priesthood as a viable and credible choice, issuing the call to priesthood to individual men, and helping those who are responding to a call to continue their discernment. In addition other diocesan priests assist the director of the Vocation Office in the formation of present candidates and with ongoing formation for newly ordained priests.

Awareness and Affirmation: The Archdiocese has launched a billboard campaign designed to continue the conversation about priesthood and service. These “answer the call” billboards put priests in the context of other everyday heroes such as police, firefighters, and doctors and direct viewers to the archdiocesan web page.

Education and Awareness: The Office of Lifelong Formation and Education is making information available to all schools about a new video/DVD that promotes vocations. Called “You Could Make A Difference,” it is a 17-minute program featuring two priests and three sisters as they work around the country. The Vocation Office also has copies available of the video “Fishers of Men,” an exciting and well-produced video about the vocation to the priesthood, as well as many other materials.

Among the Presbyterate: The Vocation Office is working with priests on a new effort developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Through this program, priests are encouraged to actively invite men to consider a vocation to the priesthood. Entitled *Priestly Life and Vocations Summit: Fishers of Men*, this is a presbyteral workshop that utilizes a discussion and input method of asking priests about their most positive experiences in the priesthood. The purpose of this project is to bring about a renewal of the priests in the United States, leading to the regeneration of priesthood itself. The actual workshop with the priests includes their testimonies of positive priestly experiences, as well as sessions designed to establish strategies for promoting priestly vocations and creating a structure within the presbyterate for inviting men to consider the priesthood.

CONCLUSION

As you can see there is much being done in our Archdiocese to call forth vocations to the diocesan priesthood and religious life, but there is much more that we can do. All of us have a responsibility to do our part in encouraging vocations in our families, our parishes, and in the broader community.

There are four essential components to successful vocation ministry: **prayer, awareness, affirmation, and invitation.** The following questions are provided to stimulate thought and action among the people and parishes of the Archdiocese and to challenge us to bring forth vocations to the priesthood from the men of our parishes.

1. What have priests contributed to our lives as Catholics? Why are priests important to the Church?

2. What can our parish/organization do to actively and regularly pray for vocations to the priesthood?

3. What can our parish/organization do to raise awareness among our members about vocations to the priesthood?

4. What barriers do we see to a reinvigoration of our parish/organization vocation ministry? How can we overcome those barriers?

5. What can our parish/organization do to affirm those already serving in the ordained priesthood, those who are in active discernment of a vocation to the priesthood, as well as those who may have potential for a vocation to the priesthood?

6. What can our parish/organization do to actively invite men with the qualities and talents necessary to serve the church as ordained priests?

7. What responsibilities and opportunities do we, as individual Catholics, have to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Vocations:

Reverend Bill Bowling, Director
Reverend Jeff Shooner, Associate Director
Linda Banker, Director of Programs
Vocation Office
502/636-0296
vocation@archlou.org

Multicultural Ministry:

M. Annette Turner, Executive Director
Office of Multicultural Ministry
502/636-0296
omm@archlou.org

Youth and Young Adult Ministry:

Carole Goodwin, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry
Office of Lifelong Formation & Education
502/448-8581
olfeyouth@archlou.org