



VOCATIONS
ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI
Liturgy Suggestions
Theme: *Come, Follow Me!*

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
Sunday, January 13, 2008

Dear Friend:

Every year during the week of celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, the Church celebrates *National Vocation Awareness Week*, as a reminder that all Christians are called to live out their baptismal commitment on a daily basis. It is also a time set aside to pray specifically for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life as a particular way that this baptismal call is lived out. The following suggestions are given as guides for your celebration of *Vocation Awareness Week*, which can help to bring about a new flourishing of vocations within our Archdiocese.

God's Blessings upon you all!
Fr. Kyle Schnippel
Vocation Director

Greeting:

We gather today to celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, where Jesus presents himself to John 'to fulfill all righteousness.' As we begin these Sacred Mysteries, we call to mind the times we have failed to embrace our baptismal call to follow after Jesus. We pause and ask for His forgiveness and mercy.

You strengthen those who struggle; Lord, have mercy.
You challenge us to embrace our call; Christ, have mercy.
You lead us to everlasting life; Lord, have mercy.

Readings for the Feast:

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalm 29: The Lord will bless his people with peace.
Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38
Matthew 3:13-17

The following homily is given as a suggestion of possible ideas to cover around the theme of National Vocation Awareness Week and living out the call received at Baptism.

Homily Suggestions:

We come to another point of transition in the Church's calendar this week. Over the last few weeks, we have basked in the joy of Christmas, Jesus coming to us once again this year as a child, small, innocent, and under the protection and guidance of his mother Mary and foster father, Joseph.

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, that little child whom we came to adore last week at Epiphany is now a grown man, likely thirty years old, and he is taking up his call from his Father in Heaven. His hidden years are over and he now takes that commission to preach the new Kingdom of Heaven, which he himself inaugurates.

In a strange twist, once he takes these first steps of public ministry, his life is bound to the Cross. It becomes his destiny and the event to which he looks forward; it will mark all that he does from here on out. Yet, he is strengthened to fulfill this mission by the words of the Father echoing out of heaven: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

He does not make this journey alone, His Father journeys with him, and he will soon call his Twelve Disciples to be his right hand men, to carry on the message after he has Ascended from this earth.

And this is where we come in, we who are the descendents of his Twelve. This event, which Jesus undergoes in our Gospel today, becomes a model for what we ourselves also undergo in our lives. For our lives as Christians are begun at Baptism, and it is at our baptism that we too accept our call to follow after Jesus, to take up the message which He began and which has echoed through the ages down to our very own day, here and now.

And the question that the Church asks of us, that really Christ asks of us is simple: will we accept our call from Him to take up our own unique cross and follow after Him? That, in a nutshell, is what vocation is all about and what we focus on during this upcoming Vocation Awareness Week: how does Christ call me, His disciple, to enter into my own baptism, my own dying to self, to take His message anew in my world today?

Because the reality is that we all have a vocation, we all have a mission that has been given by Christ to spread the Gospel message. But, it is given in unique ways depending on the state that we are in. In the Church's understanding, the call that is given to a few select men to be priests is not for their own sake, really not even for their own holiness, the call given by God to those men called to be priests is for the faithful. Priests live their own cross, their own entrance into Christ salvific death by giving their lives as he did: for their people, for Christ's people. Priests are living icons of Christ for the world today.

That does not mean that the laity do not have a mandate. Far from it. Their mandate, in many ways, is much more difficult than the mandate given to priests; for you, the people of God and the Body of Christ, are to live in the world and proclaim Christ to this world by the way that you live. You are called to share Him with all that you meet, to take Jesus with you into the marketplace of work, into the Church you share at home, and even into those times of rest and relaxation at the gym, even to the golf course!

But in order to do this, and to do it well, you need the support and encouragement, the teaching and blessing that is given to us all through the life and ministry of priests and religious. The call of the lay person and the call of the priest are different, unique, but complimentary: they build and nourish one another so that all can fulfill their mandate in Christ.

So, during this *National Vocation Awareness Week*, we do bring to mind that we have all been called by Christ to take up our cross and follow after him. However, we also recognize that unique and special character that is given to priests and religious, for their presence allows us all to live out our faith, for without priests, we have no Eucharist; and without the Eucharist, we have no strength, no nourishment to live as Christ wants; to carry Him with us no matter where we find ourselves in this world.