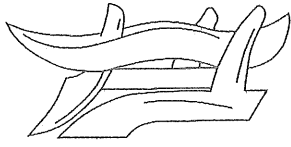




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In declaring a 'Year for Priests,' our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has called for a year of study and renewal for the priesthood. Hoping that this is more than just an opportunity to 'bake an apple pie for the pastor,' his hope is that this year of study will highlight the important work and ministry that our priests perform, not only in the Church, but also in the midst of the world.

As we are now partway through this year focused on priestly life and ministry, we have focused this year's 'Vocation Awareness Week' materials precisely on this unique aspect of Catholic life. There continues to be great discussion in regards to priestly celibacy, the all male hierarchical priesthood, the need for a life-long commitment to the priesthood and to the Church. It is felt in some circles that to ease and relax these disciplines will lead to an increase in vocations to the priesthood.

In my discussions with other Vocation Directors around the country, the opposite approach is what brings an increase in priestly vocations. Instead of questioning the need for these disciplines, which ultimately leads to doubt, stressing the importance of the priest as a living icon of Christ who willingly embraces these disciplines brings forth the joy and fulfillment of priestly life; a fulfillment found not in this life, but the next.

It is our hope with this year's materials for Vocation Awareness Week, which runs from January 10-16, 2010, we highlight these nearly hidden joys found in the life of the priest, and that these hidden joys might lead our young people to consider giving their lives to Christ unreservedly as a priest and/or consecrated, as models for all Christians of embracing a life of sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom.

These materials are not just for young men either. Young women who learn and appreciate the life of sacrifice that is in the priesthood will support their friends and brothers who might be called to the priesthood. They might then also realize a call to give their life to Christ in a particular way as a consecrated religious.

The world cries out for the transcendence. It is the life of the priest, joyfully living out his commitments before God and the world, who can call the world to this deeper awareness of life, a life centered in Christ.

In Christ,

Fr. Kyle Schnippel  
Vocation Director  
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