



VOCATION OFFICE FOR THE
DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
HEED THE CALL

Novena for Vocations in Preparation for the 55th World Day of Prayer for Vocations (April 22, 2018)

Easter Greetings!

The word Novena comes from the Latin *novem* meaning ‘nine’. A novena is a devotion consisting of prayer said on nine successive days, asking to obtain special grace. The practice of saying novenas is derived from Scripture. After Jesus' Ascension into heaven, he told his disciples to pray together in the upper room and devote themselves to constant prayer (Acts 1:14). The Apostles, Blessed Virgin Mary, and other followers of Jesus prayed together for nine consecutive days, concluding in the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

This year, Our Holy Father, Pope Francis', papal message for the 55th World Day of Prayer is: Listening, Discerning, and Living the Lord's call. Using this theme of *listening, discerning, and living* the Lord's call, we invite you to pray with us for increased grace to respond to God's call to the priesthood and religious life throughout the world, but especially in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. As the world prepares for the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October, with the theme “Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment”, Pope Francis reminds us that we are not ‘victims of chance.... (but that) our life and our presence in this world are the fruit of a divine vocation!’

We invite you to join the Philadelphia seminarians in praying a Novena for Vocations between April 14 and April 22. These videos will be placed on our website at www.heedthecall.org/novena, as well as on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/phillypriest.

We thank you for partnering with us to build a culture of vocations in our parishes, schools, communities, and homes. To echo Pope Francis, “May Mary Most Holy, who as a young woman living in obscurity heard, accepted and experienced the Word of God made flesh, protect us and accompany us always on our journey.”

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Stephen P. DeLacy
Vocation Director
Vocation Office for the Diocesan Priesthood
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Day 1: Saturday, April 14, 2018

“...The mystery of the Incarnation reminds us that God continually comes to encounter us. He is God-with-us, who walks along the often dusty paths of our lives. He knows our anxious longing for love and he calls us to joy. In the diversity and the uniqueness of each and every vocation, personal and ecclesial, there is a need to *listen, discern* and *live* this word that calls to us from on high and, while enabling us to develop our talents, makes us instruments of salvation in the world and guides us to full happiness.

These three aspects – *listening, discerning and living* – were also present at the beginning of Jesus’ own mission, when, after his time of prayer and struggle in the desert, he visited his synagogue of Nazareth. There, he listened to the word, discerned the content of the mission entrusted to him by the Father, and proclaimed that he came to accomplish it “today” (*Lk 4:16-21*).

Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2018

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, we ask your help in opening our hearts and souls to listen, discern, and live the vocational call of God. Amen.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .

Day Two: Sunday, April 15th

“I invite you to listen to and follow Jesus, and to allow yourselves to be transformed interiorly by his words, which “are spirit and life” (*Jn 6:62*). Mary, the Mother of Jesus and ours, also says to us: “Do whatever he tells you” (*Jn 2:5*). It will help you to participate in a communal journey that is able to release the best energies in you and around you. A vocation is a fruit that ripens in a well cultivated field of mutual love that becomes mutual service, in the context of an authentic ecclesial life. No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love. Did not Jesus say: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*Jn 13:35*)?”

Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2014

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, inspire men and women to respond to your invitation to ‘Do Whatever He Tells You’ and repeat with you the *yes* of a joyful and irrevocable gift of self. Amen

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Father . . .

Hail Mary . . .

Glory Be . . .

Day Three, Monday, April 16th

“Every priest, every consecrated person, faithful to his or her vocation, radiates the joy of serving Christ and draws all Christians to respond to the universal call to holiness. Consequently, in order to foster vocations to the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life, and to be more effective in promoting the discernment of vocations, we cannot do without the example of those who have already said “yes” to God and to his plan for the life of each individual. Personal witness, in the form of concrete existential choices, will encourage young people for their part to make demanding decisions affecting their future. Those who would assist them need to have the skills for encounter and dialogue which are capable of enlightening and accompanying them, above all through the example of life lived as a vocation. This was what the holy Curé of Ars did: always in close contact with his parishioners, he taught them “primarily by the witness of his life. It was from his example that the faithful learned to pray” (*Letter Proclaiming the Year for Priests, 16 June 2009*).”

Message of Pope Benedict XVI for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2009

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, instill radiant joy in the hearts of our priests and religious as they witness to their vocational call. Amen.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Father . . .

Hail Mary . . .

Glory Be . . .

Thank you for praying with us today. We invite you to join us each day to listen to a reflection and prayers, given by one of the seminarians studying at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary. Prayers can also be found on the Vocation Office website at www.heedthecall.org.

Day Four: Tuesday, April 17th

“From the moment a vocation begins to become evident, it is necessary to have an adequate “sense” of the Church. No one is called exclusively for a particular region, or for a group or for an ecclesial movement, but rather for the Church and for the world. “A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God’s holy and faithful people for the good of all” (cf. *Apost. Ex. Evangelii Gaudium*, 130). In responding to God’s call, young people see their own ecclesial horizon expand; they are able to consider various charisms and to undertake a more objective discernment. In this way, the community becomes the home and the family where vocations are born. Candidates gratefully contemplate this mediation of the community as an essential element for their future. They learn to know and to love their brothers and sisters who pursue paths different from their own; and these bonds strengthen in everyone the communion which they share.”

Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2016

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations and guide of Jesus, intercede for each Christian community, so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit, it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the holy People of God. Amen.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Father . . .

Hail Mary . . .

Glory Be . . .

Day Five, Wednesday, April 18th

“Nowadays listening is becoming more and more difficult, immersed as we are in a society full of noise, overstimulated and bombarded by information. The outer noise that sometimes prevails in our cities and our neighborhoods is often accompanied by our interior dispersion and confusion. This prevents us from pausing and enjoying the taste of contemplation, reflecting serenely on the events of our lives, going about our work with confidence in God’s loving plan, and making a fruitful discernment.

Yet, as we know, the kingdom of God comes quietly and unobtrusively (cf. *Lk* 17:21), and we can only gather its seeds when, like the prophet Elijah, we enter into the depths of our soul and are open to the imperceptible whisper of the divine breeze (cf. *1 Kg* 19:11-13).”

Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2018.

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, help us enter into the silence, thereby allowing God to speak to our hearts in mysterious ways. Amen

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Father . . .

Hail Mary . . .

Glory Be . . .

Day Six: Thursday, April 19th

“Pray the Lord of the harvest” also means that we cannot simply “produce” vocations; they must come from God. Unlike other professions, we cannot simply recruit people by using the right kind of publicity or the correct type of strategy. The call which comes from the heart of God must always find its way into the heart of man. And yet, precisely so that it may reach into hearts, our cooperation is needed.

As people of prayer, filled with his light, we reach out to others and bring them into our prayer and into the presence of God, who will not fail to do his part. In this sense we must continue to pray the Lord of the harvest, to stir his heart, and together with God touch the hearts of others through our prayer. And he, according to his purpose, will bring to maturity their “yes,” their readiness to respond.”

Message of Pope Benedict XVI Meeting with the priests and deacons, Freising, Germany, 14 Sept 2006

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, guide us as we remain a people of prayer, inviting others to join into that prayer and readily respond to God’s call. Amen.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Father . . .

Hail Mary . . .

Glory Be . . .

Day Seven, Friday, April 20th

“When Jesus, in the synagogue of Nazareth, reads the passage of the prophet Isaiah, he discerns the content of the mission for which he was sent, and presents it to those who awaited the Messiah (*Lk 4:18-19*). In the same way, each of us can discover his or her own vocation only through spiritual discernment. This is “a process by which a person makes fundamental choices, in dialogue with the Lord and listening to the voice of the Spirit, starting with the choice of one’s state in life” (*Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly, Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment, II, 2*). Thus we come to discover that Christian vocation always has a prophetic dimension.

Today too, we have great need of discernment and of prophecy. We have to resist the temptations of ideology and negativity, and to discover, in our relationship with the Lord, the places, the means and situations through which he calls us. Every Christian ought to grow in the ability to “read within” his or her life, and to understand where and to what he or she is being called by the Lord, in order to carry on his mission.”

Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2018

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, we ask you to pray for all baptized Christians, that they call upon the Holy Spirit to share in the mission of the Church. Amen.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Father . . .

Hail Mary . . .

Glory Be . . .

Day Eight, Saturday, April 21st

“At the root of every Christian vocation we find a basic movement, which is part of the experience of faith. Belief means transcending ourselves, leaving behind our comfort and the inflexibility of our ego in order to center our life in Jesus Christ. It means leaving, like Abraham, our native place and going forward with trust, knowing that God will show us the way to a new land. This “going forward” is not to be viewed as a sign of contempt for one’s life, one’s feelings, one’s own humanity. On the contrary, those who set out to follow Christ find life in abundance by putting themselves completely at the service of God and his kingdom. Jesus says: “Everyone who has left home or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (*Mt 19:29*). All of this is profoundly rooted in love. The Christian vocation is first and foremost a call to love, a love which attracts us and draws us out of ourselves (*Deus Caritas Est*, 6).”

Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2015

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, help all those who follow Christ find life in abundance as they put themselves at the service of God and His kingdom. Amen

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Our Father . . .

Hail Mary . . .

Glory Be . . .

Day Nine: Sunday, April 22nd

“The joy of the Gospel, which makes us open to encountering God and our brothers and sisters, does not abide our slowness and our sloth. Vocation is today! The Christian mission is now! Each one of us is called – whether to the lay life in marriage, to the priestly life in the ordained ministry, or to a life of special consecration – in order to become a witness of the Lord, here and now.

This “today” that Jesus proclaimed assures us that God continues to “come down” to save our human family and to make us sharers in his mission. If he lets us realize that he is calling us to consecrate ourselves totally to his kingdom, then we should have no fear! It is beautiful – and a great grace – to be completely and forever consecrated to God and the service of our brothers and sisters.

Today the Lord continues to call others to follow him. We should not wait to be perfect in order to respond with our generous “yes”, nor be fearful of our limitations and sins, but instead open our 3 hearts to the voice of the Lord. To listen to that voice, to discern our personal mission in the Church and the world, and at last to live it in the today that God gives us.

Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2018

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, help youth respond to the faith given to them through the waters of Baptism, so they may answer the call of your Son to live out their vocation. Amen.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother;
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
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Our Father . . .

Hail Mary . . .

Glory Be . . .