



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

Novena for Vocations in Preparation for the 57th World Day of Prayer for Vocations (May 3, 2020)

Easter Greetings!

On Sunday, May 3, 2020, the universal Catholic Church celebrates the 57th World Day of Prayer. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis' papal message for this year focuses on words chosen to thank priests and support their ministry and are set on the backdrop of the Gospel passage that recounts the remarkable experience of Jesus and Peter during a stormy night on the Sea of Galilee (Mt. 14:22-33). This resonates with the Vocation Office theme of "Jesus I Trust in You". Especially during this time of uncertainty in our world amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we must place all of our trust in Our Lord.

As we anticipate the celebration of the 57th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 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.

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.

To celebrate this World Day of Prayer, we invite you to join the seminarians from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in praying a Novena for Vocations between April 25th and May 3rd. The seminarians have videotaped their daily reflection/prayers and each day of the Novena, the videos will be uploaded to our website at www.heedthecall.org/novena and 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. As Pope Francis reminds us in this year's Papal Message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, ***"Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us, perhaps even at a time when our boat was being battered by the storm. "Vocation, more than our own choice, is a response to the Lord's unmerited call" (Letter to Priests, 4 August 2019). We will succeed in discovering and embracing our vocation once we open our hearts in gratitude and perceive the passage of God in our lives."***

Sincerely in Christ,

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



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Day One: Saturday, April 25, 2020

“After the multiplication of the loaves, which had astonished the crowds, Jesus told his disciples to get into the boat and precede him to the other shore, while he took leave of the people. The image of the disciples crossing the lake can evoke our own life’s journey. Indeed, the boat of our lives slowly advances, restlessly looking for a safe haven and prepared to face the perils and promises of the sea, yet at the same time trusting that the helmsman will ultimately keep us on the right course. At times, though, the boat can drift off course, misled by mirages, not the lighthouse that leads it home, and be tossed by the tempests of difficulty, doubt and fear.

Something similar takes place in the hearts of those who, called to follow the Teacher of Nazareth, have to undertake a crossing and abandon their own security to become the Lord’s disciples. The risk involved is real: the night falls, the headwinds howl, the boat is tossed by the waves, and fear of failure, of not being up to the call, can threaten to overwhelm them.

The Gospel, however, tells us that in the midst of this challenging journey we are not alone. Like the first ray of dawn in the heart of the night, the Lord comes walking on the troubled waters to join the disciples; he invites Peter to come to him on the waves, saves him when he sees him sinking and, once in the boat, makes the winds die down.” *(Pope Francis’ Message for the 2020 World Day of Prayer for Vocations.)*

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, encourage all who abandon their own security to become the Lord’s disciples, recognize that in Jesus they have found their ‘safe haven’ from the challenges of their life’s journey. We also pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen



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Day Two: Sunday, April 26, 2020

In this year's message for The World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Pope Francis reflects on the 'words of vocation.'

"The first word of vocation, then, is *gratitude*. Taking the right course is not something we do on our own, nor does it depend solely on the road we choose to travel. How we find fulfilment in life is more than a decision we make as isolated individuals; above all else, it is a response to a call from on high. The Lord points out our destination on the opposite shore and he grants us the courage to board the boat. In calling us, he becomes our helmsman; he accompanies and guides us; he prevents us from running aground on the shoals of indecision and even enables us to walk on surging waters.

Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us, perhaps even at a time when our boat was being battered by the storm. 'Vocation, more than our own choice, is a response to the Lord's unmerited call' ([Letter to Priests](#), 4 August 2019). We will succeed in discovering and embracing our vocation once we open our hearts in gratitude and perceive the passage of God in our lives." (*Pope Francis' Message for the 2020 World Day of prayer of Vocation*).

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, allow men and women to be grateful and bold in fully responding to Our Lord's plan for their lives. We also pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Amen

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen

Hail Mary

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Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen

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Day Three: Monday, April 27, 2020

When the disciples see Jesus walking towards them on the sea, they first think that he is a ghost and are filled with fear. Jesus immediately reassures them with words that should constantly accompany our lives and our vocational journey: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” (*Mt 14:27*). This, then, is the second word I wish to offer you: *encouragement*.

What frequently hinders our journey, our growth, our choosing the road the Lord is marking out for us, are certain “ghosts” that trouble our hearts. When we are called to leave safe shores and embrace a state of life – like marriage, ministerial priesthood, consecrated life – our first reaction is often from the “ghost of disbelief”. Surely, this vocation is not for me! Can this really be the right path? Is the Lord really asking me to do this?

Those thoughts can keep growing – justifications and calculations that sap our determination and leave us hesitant and powerless on the shore where we started. We think we might be wrong, not up to the challenge, or simply glimpsing a ghost to be exorcized.

The Lord knows that a fundamental life choice – like marriage or special consecration to his service – calls for *courage*. He knows the questions, doubts and difficulties that toss the boat of our heart, and so he reassures us: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear!” We know in faith that he is present and comes to meet us, that he is ever at our side even amid stormy seas. This knowledge sets us free from that lethargy which I have called “sweet sorrow” (*Letter to Priests, 4 August 2019*), the interior discouragement that hold us back from experiencing the beauty of our vocation. (*Pope Francis’ Message for the 2020 World Day of prayer of Vocation*)

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, accompany young men and women as they follow Our Lord and encourage them to not be afraid as they walk the courageous paths of charity and generous commitment. We also pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Amen

Our Father

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Day Four: Tuesday, April 28, 2020

Every vocation brings with it a responsibility. The Lord calls us because he wants to enable us, like Peter, to “walk on water”, in other words, to take charge of our lives and place them at the service of the Gospel, in the concrete and everyday ways that he shows us, and specifically in the different forms of lay, priestly and consecrated vocation. Yet, like Saint Peter, our desire and enthusiasm coexist with our failings and fears.

If we let ourselves be daunted by the responsibilities that await us – whether in married life or priestly ministry – or by the hardships in store for us, then we will soon turn away from the gaze of Jesus and, like Peter, we will begin to sink. On the other hand, despite our frailty and poverty, faith enables us to walk towards the Risen Lord and to weather every storm. Whenever fatigue or fear make us start to sink, Jesus holds out his hand to us. He gives us the enthusiasm we need to live our vocation with joy and fervor.

When Jesus at last boards the boat, the winds die down and the waves are calmed. Here we have a beautiful image of what the Lord can do at times of turbulence and tempest in our lives. He stills those winds, so that the forces of evil, fear and resignation no longer have power over us. *(Pope Francis' Message for the 2020 World Day of prayer of Vocation)*

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, encourage men and women to reach out for the outstretched hand of your son, Jesus, so that they can live their vocation with enthusiasm, joy and fervor. We also we pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen

Glory Be

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Day Five: Wednesday, April 29, 2020

As we live out our specific vocation, those headwinds can wear us down. Here I think of all those who have important responsibilities in civil society, spouses whom I like to refer to – not without reason – as “courageous”, and in a particular way those who have embraced the consecrated life or the priesthood. I am conscious of your hard work, the sense of isolation that can at times weigh upon your hearts, the risk of falling into a rut that can gradually make the ardent flame of our vocation die down, the burden of the uncertainty and insecurity of the times, and worry about the future. Take heart, do not be afraid! Jesus is at our side, and if we acknowledge him as the one Lord of our lives, he will stretch out his hand, take hold of us and save us.

Even amid the storm-tossed waters, then, our lives become open to *praise*. This is the last of our vocation words, and it is an invitation to cultivate the interior disposition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Grateful that Lord gazed upon her, faithful amid fear and turmoil, she courageously embraced her vocation and made of her life an eternal song of praise to the Lord. (*Pope Francis’ Message for the 2020 World Day of Prayer for Vocations*)

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, inspire young people to courageously give their own ‘Fiat’ to God just as you did yours, and embrace their vocation, thus allowing their lives to be a song of praise to your Son, Our Lord. We also pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
Amen

Our Father

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Day Six: Thursday, April 30, 2020

Dear Brothers, A hundred and sixty years have passed since the death of the holy Curé of Ars, whom Pope **Pius XI** proposed as the patron of parish priests throughout the world.^[1] On this, his feast day, I write this letter not only to parish priests but to all of you, my brother priests, who have quietly “left all behind” in order to immerse yourselves in the daily life of your communities. Like the Curé of Ars, you serve “in the trenches”, bearing the burden of the day and the heat (cf. *Mt 20:12*), confronting an endless variety of situations in your effort to care for and accompany God’s people. I want to say a word to each of you who, often without fanfare and at personal cost, amid weariness, infirmity and sorrow, carry out your mission of service to God and to your people. Despite the hardships of the journey, you are writing the finest pages of the priestly life.

As an older brother and a father, I too would like in this letter *to thank you* in the name of the holy and faithful People of God for all that you do for them, and *to encourage you* never to forget the words that the Lord spoke with great love to us on the day of our ordination. Those words are the source of our joy: “I no longer call you servants... I call you friends” (*Jn 15:15*). (*Pope Francis’ Letter to Priests on the 160th Anniversary of the Death of the Holy Cure’ of Ars, St. John Vianney.*)

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 and care for and accompany God’s people. We also pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Amen

Our Father

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Day Seven: Friday, May 1, 2020

“It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus’ attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he stands in the stern, in the part of the boat that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps on soundly, trusting in the Father; this is the only time in the Gospels we see Jesus sleeping. When he wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” (v. 40).

Let us try to understand. In what does the lack of the disciples’ faith consist, as contrasted with Jesus’ trust? They had not stopped believing in him; in fact, they called on him. But we see how they call on him: “Teacher, do you not care if we perish?” (v. 38). *Do you not care*: they think that Jesus is not interested in them, does not care about them. One of the things that hurts us and our families most when we hear it said is: “Do you not care about me?” It is a phrase that wounds and unleashes storms in our hearts. It would have shaken Jesus too. Because he, more than anyone, cares about us. Indeed, once they have called on him, he saves his disciples from their discouragement.” (Pope Francis’ meditation at the occasion of the *Urbi et orbi* blessing, on March 27, 2020)

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, inspire men and women to be humble and passionate servants of Christ’s love, to live out that love in following Him, and calling others to do the same. We also pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Amen.

Our Father

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Day Eight: Saturday, May 2, 2020

“*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*” Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: “Be converted!”, “Return to me with all your heart” (*Joel 2:12*). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others. We can look to so many exemplary companions for the journey, who, even though fearful, have reacted by giving their lives. This is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-denial. It is the life in the Spirit that can redeem, value and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people – often forgotten people – who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves. In the face of so much suffering, where the authentic development of our peoples is assessed, we experience the priestly prayer of Jesus: “That they may all be one” (*Jn 17:21*). How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.” (*Pope Francis’ meditation at the occasion of the c on March 27, 2020*)

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 continually answer the call of your Son to live out their vocation. We also pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Amen.

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Day Nine: Sunday, May 3, 2020 **World Day of Prayer for Vocations**

“Dear friends, on this day in particular, but also in the ordinary pastoral life of our communities, I ask the Church to continue to promote vocations. May she touch the hearts of the faithful and enable each of them to discover with gratitude God’s call in their lives, to find courage to say “yes” to God, to overcome all weariness through faith in Christ, and to make of their lives a song of praise for God, for their brothers and sisters, and for the whole world. May the Virgin Mary accompany us and intercede for us” (Pope Francis’ Message for the 2020 World Day of Prayer of Vocation)

We Pray:

Mary, Mother of the Church, Model of Vocations, accompany and intercede for men and women as they courageously repeat with you the ‘Yes’ of a joyful and irrevocable gift of self. We also pray for an end to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Amen.

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