

National Vocation Awareness Week, November 2-8, Calls Catholics to Greater Prayer, Awareness in How They Support Vocations

*‘Culture of vocations’ driven by communities that encourage young people
Data shows people asked about their vocation more likely to pursue religious life
Special focus needed on underrepresented communities*

September 18, 2014

WASHINGTON—The Catholic Church in the United States will celebrate National Vocation Awareness Week, November 2-8. This observance, sponsored by the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, is a special time for parishes in the U.S. to foster a culture of vocations for the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life.

Pope Francis, in his November 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, underlined the continued need to build a culture of vocations. “The fraternal life and fervor of the community can awaken in the young a desire to consecrate themselves completely to God and to preaching of the Gospel. This is particularly true if such a living community prays insistently for vocations and courageously proposes to its young people the path of special consecration,” Pope Francis wrote.

“A culture of vocations is one that provides the necessary support for others to hear and respond to God’s call in their lives,” said Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Raleigh, North Carolina, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. “With God’s grace, we help build that culture through fervent prayer, the witness of our lives and the encouragement we extend to those discerning a vocation to priesthood or consecrated life.”

A 2012 study, “Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics,” conducted by the Georgetown University-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), highlighted the role community encouragement plays in the discernment process. (Full study: www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/survey-of-youth-and-young-adults-on-vocations.cfm)

“The number three seems to be critical in making a difference in the life of someone contemplating a vocation,” said Father Shawn McKnight, USCCB’s executive director of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. “When three or more people encourage someone to consider a religious vocation, he or she is far more likely to take serious steps toward answering that call.”

Father John Guthrie, associate director of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, adds that National Vocation Awareness Week should also focus on communities that are underrepresented among religious vocations today, especially Hispanics.

“While numbers of U.S. Hispanics pursuing religious vocations are picking up, they still lag behind the overall demographic trends,” said Father Guthrie. “Fifty-four percent of U.S. Catholics under the age of 25 are Hispanic, yet only 15 percent of students in major seminaries are Hispanic, and many of these were born in other countries. To reach this untapped potential, the Church must do far more to engage and support young people in these communities.”

Observance of Vocation Awareness Week began in 1976 when the U.S. bishops designated the 28th Sunday of the year for the celebration. It was later moved to Feast of the Baptism of the Lord in January. Last year, after extensive consultation, the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations moved the observance of National Vocation Awareness Week to November to engage Catholic schools and colleges more effectively in this effort. This will be the first year it will be held in November.

More information and resources for National Vocations Awareness Week, including a prayer card, suggested prayers of the faithful and bulletin-ready quotes are available online at www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/national-vocation-awareness-week.cfm

Keywords: National Vocation Awareness Week, USCCB, U.S. bishops, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge, Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, Hispanics, Pope Francis, culture of vocations, priesthood

#####

MEDIA CONTACT

Norma Montenegro Flynn

O: 202-541-3202

M: 703-717-2941

14-155

Sec,DD,DioNewspapers,AP,RNS,Crux