



LETTER FROM THE BCV

As He passed by the Sea of Galilee He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they left their nets and followed Him. (Mark 1:16-18)

These words from Scripture are the very foundation for this Priestly Life and Vocations Summit: Fishers of Men program. The data gathered annually by the Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops repeatedly shows the important impact that priests and their personal invitations to consider priesthood have on young men. Statistics from the surveys of various years of ordination classes identified that a high number of men ordained to the priesthood identified a priest as being a primary inviter to consider the vocation to priesthood. Those same surveys also revealed, unfortunately, that the percentage of diocesan and religious priests who actually invite is low. While we recognize that the responsibility of supporting all vocations lies with everyone within the Church, this Priestly Life and Vocations Summit: Fishers of Men program is an opportunity for priests within a religious community or presbyterate to create an atmosphere, climate, or culture whereby young men are effectively invited and can courageously respond to God's call to the priesthood. Using the words, "I will make you fishers of men," the Word made flesh instilled into the apostles the power and authority to go forth and use the same words by which they were called: "Come, follow me, I will make you fishers of men." In our tradition and understanding of apostolic succession, whereby the very gifts, power and authority of Christ are extended through ordination, priests and bishops become men of Word and Sacrament. So too, priests and bishops are given the grace to become effective 'inviters', placing before young men the same call Jesus first made on the shores of Galilee, "Come follow me."

I am grateful to the John Paul II Cultural Center for the funding for this project. Also, I offer my appreciation to the members of the Bishops Committee on Vocations which offered oversight into this project, as well as to the Steering Committee for the Priestly Life and Vocation Summit that assisted in the development of this program. They include Father Matthew Lee, US Navy Chaplain; Father Kevin Nadolski, OSFS, NRVC representative; Father Mark D. O'Donnell, NCVD representative; Mr. Rafael Venegas, seminarian representative; Father David Hulshof, consultant; Mrs. Dorothy Foss, Program Manager; Mr. Benjamin Blosser, Administrative Assistant; and Father Edward J. Burns, Executive Director.

It is our hope that this program will be blessed by the Lord of the Harvest and that through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of priests, we may continue to invite young men to consider the vocation of priesthood.

Most Reverend Blase J. Cupich
Chair, Bishops' Committee on Vocations
September 8, 2005

Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary