

# **PRIESTLY LIFE AND VOCATION SUMMIT**

Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_ (Name)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

## **Schedule**

**10:00 AM Prayer & Introduction**  
*Flow of the day*

### **Background**

#### **Information about the Project**

*See the description in the Priestly Life and Vocation Summit binder. The climate is right to discuss the blessings and benefits of being a priest.*

### **Fishers of Men**

*We recognize that with ordination comes the power to serve in the person of Christ, to be transfigured to him as we celebrate our ministry of Word and Sacrament. We also recognize that the Lord's call to the first apostles -- "Come follow me, I will make you fishers of men" -- bestowed upon them the power and authority to invite others to consider the vocation of priesthood. Jesus, the Word made Flesh, uses words of a creative nature addressed to Simon and Andrew -- "I will **make** you fishers of men." The Word of the Father utters those words and with it comes an authority that even the early Church Fathers recognized.*

### **National perspective on Vocation Efforts**

*It is a commitment crisis, not a vocation crisis -- men considering the priesthood are out there. Marriage is at an all time low and it has even been noted that some who are coming for marriage come with prenuptial agreements. Also, the professions of service have been effected. There are not as many teachers or nurses as we need. So the lives of commitment and service are not the top priority for young people in our culture.*

### **Words of our Holy Father**

*One seminarian wrote:*

*. . . [M]ost parishes have been gravely negligent in their responsibility to foster vocations. Proof? Assume (for the sake of argument), that an average priest has a service life of 25 years (an admittedly conservative estimate). If we are facing a decline in priestly vocations and a shortage in priests themselves, then that means that there are parishes that have not replaced their own priest. In other words, they have not encouraged one man in at least 25 years (remember, this is a low number) to become a*

*priest. Something has gone dreadfully wrong in a priest's life if he can say that in over 25 years, he has not inspired even one man to live a life like his.*

**11:00 AM Break**

**11:10 AM 1<sup>st</sup> Follow-up sheet (Priestly Identity)**

*When it comes time to present the Follow-up sheets throughout the day, it is best to have the priests gather in groups. This will allow for easy conversation and the solicitation of ideas.*

**Discussion of Questions (#1-6) – open responses**

**12:00 Noon Lunch**

**12:45 PM Midday Prayer**

**The Priests of the Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_ (name)  
Review of Questions (#7 -13) and Vocation Stories  
Our resolutions...**

*TO ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRIESTHOOD*

*The Holy Father's words, related earlier in the day, identify some of the responsibilities of the priesthood, and stir up in the hearts of young men the possibility of their being called to the priesthood.*

*TO BE MINISTERS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD*

*Ecclesia de Eucharistia states: "Often it is the example of a priest's fervent pastoral charity which the Lord uses to sow and to bring to fruition in a young man's heart the seed of a priestly calling."<sup>i</sup>*

*Good examples and heartfelt invitations by priests are paramount in facilitating priestly vocations in North America. The personal contact and close proximity he has to men who serve at the altar, and the ways he collaborates with the bishop in promoting priestly vocations, all contribute to creating a vocation culture within the presbyterate. Many good pastors who are astute in promoting vocations to the priesthood will actively mentor a young man they feel may have a priestly vocation, by first inviting him to share in a greater role within the parish. Many wise pastors will ask suitable young men to volunteer for ministries in the parish (i.e., altar server, lector, Eucharistic minister, charitable outreach, youth ministry). Service in the sanctuary and in the local community beyond the parish will allow a man to be formed by the graces flowing from*

*the celebration of the Eucharist and, at the same time afford the priest an opportunity to foster a possible vocation to the priesthood.*

*Surveys conducted by the Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation at the USCCB regarding past ordination classes in the United States show that a high percentage of ordinands have served in various capacities at Mass. More will be mentioned about this in the Eucharist section below*

*Describe the mystery of the vocation to priesthood and how Jesus calls his disciples in different ways.*

#### **TO IMITATE JESUS CHRIST**

*In many things we do as ministers of the mysteries of God, we do in persona Christi – when celebrating Mass, the Sacrament of Penance, etc. – now, too, do we imitate Christ and say, come follow me... to be “Fishers of men” (Mt. 4:19)*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Follow-up sheet (Practical Ideas)**

#### **A Vocation Culture within this Presbyterate**

*The Church in North America has seen wonderful expressions of faith by our young people as a direct result of Pope John Paul II’s initiatives. North America has been blessed with World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado (1993); the Third Continental Congress on Vocation to Ordained Ministry and Consecrated Life in North America in Montréal, Québec (2002), and World Youth Day in Toronto, Ontario (2002). These events were monumental in promoting vocations. In fact, the young people who gathered at the Third Continental Congress on Vocations offered an unsolicited statement regarding their life in the Church and their eagerness to discern their vocation. In it they said:*

*Everything we ask of the Church we will offer in return. We ask for prayer and will pray in return for the Church. We seek wisdom and knowledge and will use those gifts in return to enrich our Church. We will remain faithful to Christ and the Church by living out our vocations, promoting a culture of life and joy, while living in hope and love. We strive to be saints of today and come to cultivate saints of the next generation. Please give us the resources we need to be what God has called us to be! The resources we ask for we will also give.*

*As young people we seek answers to the many deep questions that dwell in the depths of our hearts. We seek to grow in understanding and knowledge of prayer, to discern our vocations in Christ, and to learn all aspects of our faith. Please openly witness to your faith, by being available. Specifically, to you who live the consecrated life and serve as*

*ordained ministers, offer us authentic joyful witnesses to your way of life, that we may experience the passion of your service. Invite us to share your excitement and deep love of Christ and the Church.*<sup>ii</sup>

*While this current world culture may balk at the Church's teachings, our society has also benefited greatly from the years of dedicated service provided by the Church. Our young people realize the impact that the Church has had on previous generations and seek to be a part of that same movement which will bring God's "... warmth and light to a world that is sometimes cold and dark."*<sup>iii</sup>

*The single most important factor in fostering vocations to the priesthood is personal contact with a "happy, healthy, and holy" priest as a role model. Every analysis of the culture of the Church in North America and in veritably all of the responses of the seminarians undergirding this study reinforce the centrality and efficacy of the priest. A priest's good example and his invitation to a young man to consider priesthood are crucial to increasing the number of priesthood candidates in North America.*

*It starts with the priests – everyone does it.*

### **The invitation process**

*Pastors, parish priests, and chaplains have important roles in vocation ministry today. Because many prospective priesthood candidates are known only to you, unless you connect with them to invite them, they will remain uninvited. It is impossible for the vocation director to know all the men who would make good priests in the diocese. Further, some men who are considering priesthood will not come forward to talk with a vocation director, because they think they have to be certain of priesthood to call the vocation office, or they are afraid of the concept of attending seminary. Many simply need a 'middle-man' to support them in the journey of discernment.*

*As followers of Christ ... and as people who contemplate priesthood or live as priests ... we too will face voices in the crowd ... both those who will want to curse us as well as those who offer blessing ... And both voices will provide a challenge. Sometimes the family is not supportive.*

*Some priests fear rejection or creating awkwardness between themselves and a young man who may have a vocation.*

*But there are some great ways to invite:, the Operation Andrew program, Come and See experiences, etc.*

#### *Multi-Cultural...*

*We live and minister with a diverse body of priests .. diverse ages, ethnicities and races, and theological perspectives. We welcome into our priestly fraternities men with backgrounds and experiences far different from our own. A priest today needs to develop more than just a tolerance of cultures and generations that are diverse but a real appreciation of them. What can we do to invite those of different cultures?*

#### *Celibacy...*

*Part of the difficulty is that for a great many people, certainly including mainstream media, there is a great misunderstanding of celibacy ... it is understood in exclusively negative terms - merely not being married, not having sex, and not having family. It is not seen as a way of love but as an escape from relationship. Of course this is grossly inaccurate, but how do we speak about celibacy in a way that makes sense to people, especially to the group of men who are considering a call to priesthood but many of whom also want to be married?*

*The qualities needed to be a good husband and father are also needed in priesthood. In order to be a good husband, a man has to be dedicated, committed for life, filled with sacrificial love for the other, intimate in an appropriate way, etc. To be a good father, a man is called to be a provider, an educator, a protector, to want the best for those in his care and to watch every increment of their growth, to give others life. All of these same characteristics are essential in being a good, effective priest.*

*Addressing the critical issue of celibacy, and encouraging priests and seminarians to talk positively about and more powerfully live celibacy, are critical to successful vocation efforts today.*

### **The Eucharist**

*In Ecclesia de Eucharistia, Pope John Paul II renews within priests their great ability to model priesthood when celebrating the Eucharist.*

*The centrality of the Eucharist in the life and ministry of priests is the basis of its centrality in the pastoral promotion of priestly vocations. It is in the Eucharist that prayer for vocations is most closely united to prayer of Christ the eternal high priest. At the same time, the diligence of priests in carrying out their Eucharistic ministry together with the conscious, active and fruitful participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, provides young men with a powerful example and incentive for responding generously to God's call. Often, it is the example of a priest's fervent pastoral charity, which the Lord uses to sow and to bring to fruition in a man's heart the seed of the priestly calling. (Ecclesia de Eucharistia 31)*

*Prior to entering the seminary, a high percentage of 2005's newly ordained were actively involved in the celebration of the Eucharist. 60% of the priests ordained this year were Eucharistic ministers. 76% were Altar servers. 68% were Lectors in their parishes. Many of our future priests are right in front of us and their service has demonstrated their desire to serve the Church. Such proximity to the Eucharist and to priestly ministry affords the Church a prime opportunity to extend the invitation for these men to consider the priesthood.*

*The wise and prudent pastor will invite a man, especially one who he thinks has a vocation to the priesthood, to a higher level of participation in the celebration of the Mass. This could be as minimal as inviting him to bring up the gifts, or asking him to serve Mass on a regular basis. Once he has proven himself to be diligent, serious and responsible, invite him to be a lector at Mass or even a Eucharistic minister. This way, it*

*is the Lord of the Harvest who is working in his heart. Once a man rotates around the various roles of celebrating the Eucharist, he will start looking at the role of the priest, and asking whether he is called to such a vocation.*

### **The Qualities of a perspective priesthood candidate**

*What qualities would you look for?*

#### *Some Qualities to Look for in Prospective Priesthood Candidates*

- *A personal relationship with God as an important and vital part of life*
- *Has the ability and willingness to talk about his faith*
- *Has some involvement in his local parish*
- *Has a desire to serve others and make a difference in people's lives*
- *Motivated by the mission of Jesus and ability to articulate it*
- *Willing to sacrifice personally for the service of the Gospel and the Church*
- *One who is approachable*
- *Possesses a psycho-sexual-socio maturity*
- *Has the ability to collaborate with others*
- *Takes initiative and assumes responsibility for his actions*
- *Recognizes the importance of the Church and the role of the Church as teacher.*
- *Possesses the skills of self-mastery and discipline*
- *Has the capacity for living a chaste celibate life*
- *Has healthy relationships with men, women and children*
- *Has average intelligence, common sense, good physical & emotional health*
- *Recognizes the need to both give and accept support from others*
- *Possesses a keen sense of empathy*
- *Has leadership skills*
- *The celebration of the Sacraments are important to him*
- *Has the ability to nurture another person's growth*
- *He is open and respectful of all people*
- *A person of integrity*
- *An awareness of God's omnipotent presence*
- *Others have mentioned that he would make a good priest*

### **The involvement of the priests in the diocese**

*The shared responsibility of nurturing a vocation to the priesthood.*

*What special qualities are needed to be a priest in this Diocese?*

*The establishing of committees that will work with the follow-up plans and suggestions*

**2:00 PM      Break**

**2:10 PM      New resolutions**

*This section in the PowerPoint looks at the questions posed to priests during the Chrism Mass. They are most poignant in showing how the priest is resolved to serve in the Person of Christ. As mentioned in the PLVS:FOM binder:*

*It needs to be acknowledged that not every priest is comfortable inviting men to consider the priesthood. Today's social climate, the thoughts of rejection, asking someone to sacrifice (pick up his cross), adding another thing to his list of tasks, or whatever the concern might be, some priests simply find it hard to invite. The emphasis in this workshop is that it should be natural to the priest to invite. As natural as it is for the priest to say "This is My Body", "This is My Blood", "I absolve you", so too should it be natural for the priest to say: "Come follow me." It's not about us, it's all about Christ. It is Christ's words we speak, not our own. Now, think of the reasons why it may be difficult to invite a man – social climate, rejection, picking up the cross, add another task. It will never be easy. It was not easy for Christ, why would we think it would be easy for us to invite?*

*The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. (CCC 1551)*

**Establishing a vocation culture in this presbyterate  
3<sup>rd</sup> Follow-up sheet (Creating a Vocation Culture)**

**Evaluation**

**3:00 PM      Conclusion**

---

<sup>i</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, #31.

<sup>ii</sup> "Young Adult Statement" in *Conversion, Discernment, Mission; Third Continental Congress on Vocations to Ordained Ministry and Consecrated Life in North America*, (2003), p.127. The young people worked through the night in bringing forth this statement, part of a seven-point declaration on vocations.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*