

you praying for vocations yourself? Now is the time. And how often do we enquire of men if they might have considered a vocation to the Holy Priesthood or Diaconate? Sometimes only the question itself is enough to spark discernment. There are many more men called to the ordained ministry than those who respond and accept in faith. Only a fraction of those men called to be priests and deacons by God actually heed the call.

Why did the Lord Jesus, when He spoke of vocations, single out precisely the word *pray*? Because prayer is the expression of the yearning of the Church. The Church always gets the kind and number of priests she deserves. Why do some places have so many vocations? Because the people, deep in their faith, *want* priests, and they pray to be given the priests they want. Why do some places have so few? Because few people, even few parents, pray for priests. Can we hope to receive if we do not ask? There are hundreds of vocations dangling from heaven on cords; prayer is the sword that cuts them down for us. The laborers are available in the heart of Christ; it is our petitions that actualise them. Do we pray for the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest? What we want most ardently, the Lord of the harvest will grant. That is why Our Lord told us to pray. The search for vocations is basic - it begins on our knees. If we pray with our hearts and souls, God will answer our prayer. God gives us what we truly want.

To our priests

In our day and age, a critical reminder is needed for those who possess the very Priesthood of Christ in sacramental ordination. There is an identity crisis in the Church because there is an identity crisis in the priesthood. The one crisis is related to the other. The priesthood is neither business management nor entrepreneurialism. It is an ontological reality. There is no magic formula to ministry and Church health and growth, other than to be a faithful pastor of souls, to be conformed to Christ in His care for His people. Fidelity is the key – we are successful if we are faithful. If we love our people and sacrifice for our people, we will be united to the Cross and will achieve what Our Lord wants from our priesthood. Dear lay faithful, please bear with me for a moment – this impacts us all.

The priest is a Sacramental Man – he is the living Sacrament of Christ. He is the mediator and advocate in the one mediator and advocate. He is the representative of God to man, and man to God. The priest possesses a unique gift – it is not his own priesthood that he exercises, but he shares in Christ's one Priesthood by the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The priest is another Christ, *alter Christus*; he is *in persona Christi capitis*, in the Person of Christ the Head of the Church; he is the living icon of Christ; he is the image of the Bridegroom of the Bride, the image of Christ for and to His Church. The priest is the living instrument of Christ. He enters into the mystery of Christ's sacrifice of obedience to the heavenly Father. His job is not a 'job;' he does not function in a role: he is to BE the image of Christ. A priest is not what he does, but who he is. The ministry of the priest is ontological – a change occurs in his very being. He is given an indelible character, an invisible mark on his soul that makes him different from anyone or anything else. Please never forget that. Thither the priest should daily resort to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and recite the Divine Office. These are the marks of a faithful priest as well. We are priests in order to intercede, to shepherd, to sanctify, and to save souls – full stop.



Final thoughts

To all of us I say... Are we striving more fully to enter into the rich heritage we have received from our spiritual forefathers? Every instructed Churchman becomes a power in one's community. We may all differ in unessential matters amongst ourselves, but we should stand shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart in all Church work. We have received an anointing from on high and in Baptism and Confirmation are kings and priests unto God. It will be by the example of our own lives, consecrated and sealed as they are in Confirmation, that we will draw others to the Church. The characteristics of a Churchman should be maturity, a high sense of honour, integrity in our dealings, sobriety in our speech, beauty in our family life, intelligent commitment, humility before God, and love of His worship.

'Dig a pit for the Cross,' That is our vocation, to make the Cross present in the world, to make a place in our hearts of love for the Cross to shine forth in its splendour and power.

Make your work holy within, and God will take care of the outside!
The King's business demands haste - Press on the Kingdom!

It would be impossible adequately to thank everyone in this room who has offered so much to Our Blessed Lord to extend His Kingdom and His work in this holy Church and Diocese. If I start to thank everyone personally, we will be here another hour! So a litany of thanks this time round will not be attempted, probably to your great relief. I will make an exception here and profusely thank Lisa Ulrich, our Provincial and Diocesan Executive Administrator, without whom I would be totally lost. Thank you so very much, Lisa. To all of you - please know how very much I love and appreciate each one of you, and how much I gratefully recognise your service and labour in the Lord. Please remember I am here solely to support you, to guide you, and to serve you – so please never hesitate to contact me at any time with any joy or request or concern. Please pray for me as I always pray for you.

As I conclude, marking the one-hundredth anniversary of the restoration of the greatest shrine of Our Lady in Anglicanism, we commend our Diocese, our Province, the Anglican Joint Synods, the true Anglican expression, and all of our Christian lives and vocations to the prayers of the Ever-Virgin Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Walsingham, our spiritual Mother and Mother of the Church, who says to us... 'Whatsoever Jesus saith unto you, do it.'

God bless you all! Onward and upward.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.