

THE DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES

4 August 2007
Feast of St. John Vianney
Saturday



Dearly Beloved of the Diocese of Lake Charles,

As I write to you my first pastoral letter, I am reminded of the words of St. Paul for the Thessalonians. "We keep thanking God for all of you and we remember you in our prayers, for we constantly are mindful before our God and Father of the way you are proving your faith, and laboring in love, and showing constancy of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3). These are words full of meaning. Not only do they express the deep joy that I have at being with you in Lake Charles but also the theme of this letter. St. Paul's very next words are ones of vocation, for the great Saint to the Gentiles writes, "We know, too, brothers and sisters, beloved of God, how you were chosen" (1 Thessalonians 1:4).

God has a plan. God calls each and every one of us. Usually we speak of this plan as the "universal call to holiness." As Our Lord so well teaches us, we are to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). We are not called to mediocrity. We are chosen for excellence, and while we may be deeply aware of our limitations and weaknesses, we are also aware of the call to perfection. So we respond to God's grace, we strive, we acknowledge our failings, we repent, we realize our gifts, and we move more deeply into the mystery of God's love.

When we know this call of God, this vocation in Christ, we live in what Pope John Paul II called the environment of vocation. In an environment of vocation the Christian knows that God has a plan for him or her. The Christian knows that life is not a series of accidents or the convergence of haphazard events. God's plan is all-knowing, ever intelligent, and rooted in love. The Christian knows that he or she is "chosen", to quote St. Paul once again.

Part of this environment of vocation is the way we live out this plan of God. Some are called to marriage, others to ordained ministry or the consecrated life. All of these vocations are complimentary. In relationship to one another they make an abundant harvest possible. A fertile field of faithful marriage is rich soil for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Likewise, conscientious and devoted priests will always encourage married couples and increase their desire for commitment.

On this the feast day of the patron of parish priests, St. John Vianney, I am requesting that you join me in a year of prayer specifically for vocations to the priesthood in our own Diocese of Lake Charles. We are blessed with such gifted priests, deacons and consecrated religious who serve so faithfully in the diocese. For me, as a bishop, it is a great blessing to be in pastoral ministry with so many servants of the Gospel. In a special way, I wish to affirm the priests in their devoted works and encourage dedicated prayer for priestly vocations. At present we have nine very talented seminarians preparing for ordination, two of whom Mr. Nathan Long of Iowa and Mr. Ruben Buller of Fenton, will be ordained to the transitional diaconate on August 25. Our year of prayer for priestly vocations will culminate in the celebration of ordination to the priesthood at Pentecost. I know that God is calling others who have not yet responded within this environment of vocation.

The context for this prayer for vocations to the priesthood must be the Eucharist. The

priesthood finds its origin in the desire of Jesus for His Church to "do this in memory of me." Love for the Eucharist opens the hearts of a priestly people to respond to the call and to embrace further the call to sacramental priesthood.

Beginning with the feast of St. John Vianney, I invite you to enter more fully into an environment of vocation through prayer centered on the Eucharist. With the assistance of the Very Reverend Deans, we will institute throughout the diocese a program of Forty Hours Devotion. In this devotion, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for a period of time, accompanied by readings from the Sacred Scriptures, the rosary, meditation, and concluding with Benediction. Each parish takes a turn in hosting this devotion. Through it we will express our desire as a diocese to live our Christian vocation with a particular emphasis on raising up priestly vocations in our midst. In this way we will answer Our Lord's request, "Ask the harvest-master to send workers to his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

To accompany this year-long Eucharistic devotion, I am asking the Catholic schools and religious education programs to promote Eucharistic Hours for the intention of priestly vocations. Holy Hour on the eve of First Friday is a praiseworthy way for a parish to foster prayer for vocations. When the liturgical calendar permits, a Votive Mass for Priestly Vocations can be celebrated. Joined with the many other efforts to promote vocations, sponsored by our Vocation Director, Director of Seminarians, Vocation Recruiters, and Serra Club, I am confident that this increased Eucharistic prayer will bring many graces.

St. John Vianney, known as the Curé of Ars, is the patron of parish priests because of his zeal. He heard confessions for lengthy hours each day. He was dedicated to the religious instruction of his parishioners. His devotion to the Eucharist was intimate and total. On his feast, I ask his prayers for us. May we all discover the loving plan of God for us. For us who have responded, may that plan be clearer. For those who wait, may they hear God's voice and say "yes."

The zeal for the faith in our Catholic people in Lake Charles, clergy, religious, and laity, is impressive. I am certain that men and women wish to answer God's call to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life. I am convinced that men and women preparing for marriage want Christ in the center of their relationship. I know that we truly want not the futility of the world but an environment of vocation where God's love is known and embraced. We must ask to receive, seek to find, and knock to open. Such is the teaching of our Lord Jesus and the desire of a loving Father. St. John Vianney, pray for us!

I remain with prayers for your intentions and best wishes for you and your families.

Devotedly yours in our Lord,

+Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

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Proud 2B
Catholic
Sept. 8

SULPHUR – The Second Annual Proud 2B Catholic Musical Festival of Louisiana, sponsored by the Diocese of Lake Charles, will be held Saturday, Sept. 8, from 12:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the Sulphur High School Freshman campus. Doors open at noon and Eucharistic Adoration will be held on the main stage from 8:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Featured musical entertainers will include Tony Melendez, who gained fame for his Sept. 15, 1987 performance for Pope John Paul II.

Other Catholic Christian music will be performed by Father Stan Fortuna, Josh Blakesley, Kelly Pease, Nichole Ackoury, Gabriel's Cry, Endless Days, Clay Vessel, Brad Broussard and more.

For more information about the Proud 2B Catholic Music Festival, contact Thibodeaux at 337-439-7426 Ext. 301 or on line at youth.ministry@lcdiocese.org

Catholic
schools open
August 16

LAKE CHARLES – Summer is nearly done, at least for the students who will be attending the eight Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Lake Charles. The first day of school for the 2007-2008 term will be Thursday, August 16, according to Mary Ann Moses, Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

The Office of Catholic Schools is located at 1112 Bilbo Street and the telephone number is 337-433-9640.

Catholic schools opened last August with 2,647 students, slightly higher than first day numbers from 2005-2006. Similar numbers are anticipated for this year.

Questions on Tridentine Mass, CDF Document answered

My dear People of God, there are two matters that I wish to address. Some of you have posed questions concerning two recent Vatican documents. The first is the Holy Father's Motu Proprio allowing for greater freedom in celebrating the Latin Mass and the other is the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's "Responses to some questions regarding certain aspects of the doctrine on the Church". Documents from the Vatican often involve fine points that the popular press, in the interests of simplicity and ease, find difficult to convey. I cannot presume to answer all of the questions that have surfaced, but I would pray that what I say offers some clarification. I would address them in order.

THE TRIDENTINE MASS

A Motu Proprio is a document of great importance issued by a pope on a matter that adjusts a practice in the Church. In this case, the Motu Proprio is entitled "Summorum Pontificum" and states clearly that the Mass promulgated by Pope Paul VI (as celebrated today in our parish churches) and the Mass of Pope St. Pius V, reissued by Blessed John XXIII (typically called the Tridentine Mass and celebrated at present only with special permission) are, and I quote, "two usages of the one Roman rite." In Pope Benedict XVI's letter to the bishops, he writes, "It is not appropriate to speak of these two versions of the Roman Missal as if they were 'two Rites.' Rather, it is a matter of a twofold use of one and the same rite." At a practical level, beginning September 14, 2007, any priest, competent in Latin and in the rite itself, can celebrate the Mass of Pope St. Pius V, in the form published by Blessed John XXIII. No further permission is needed. The role of the bishop is to insure "that all is done in peace and serenity" (the Papal Explanatory Letter to Bishops of July 7, 2007). This, of course, I intend to do.

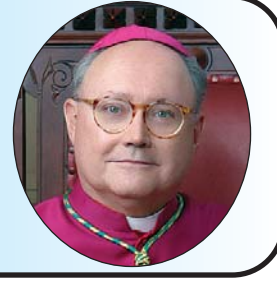
Is this a return to the past? Pope Benedict XVI does not think so. Nor do I. "What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too," the pope writes. If one studies the history of the Church carefully, one finds that the Church has always found room for multiple usages in the Roman Rite. I recall as a child encountering the "Dominican Rite" with its slight variations while serving Mass or learning about the ancient "Ambrosian Rite" celebrated in Milan, Italy. The history of the Church is rich, and the Church is universal. It is much broader than anyone can possibly imagine.

In effect, what Pope Benedict XVI has done is respond to a need. In providing for the normal celebration of an older form, the pope is answering the need many have expressed. There are those

for whom the older usage of the rite is expressive, uplifting, and prayerful. Why not provide for this need without prejudice to the newer rite? As the pope states, "Let us generously open our hearts and make room for everything that the faith itself allows" (the Papal Explanatory Letter to Bishops of July 7, 2007).

As bishop, my role is to act as moderator for the liturgy in the diocese. For that reason I must insure that the Mass of the Roman Rite is celebrated

**Bishop
Glen
John
Provost**



authentically and reverently, whether in the form promulgated by Pope Paul VI or the form of Pope St. Pius V promulgated by Pope Blessed John XXI-II.

THE CHURCH

The second matter that requires some comment involves a document issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This Vatican Congregation often issues clarifications concerning matters of faith. The document in question was addressed primarily to theologians and scholars. The document is directed towards the Church's self-understanding of its own nature. The topic dealt with the nature of the Church founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ. The key statement is as follows: "This Church, constituted and organized in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him" (Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, 8,2). Some ask the question: why use "subsists in" instead of "is"?

The Congregation answers that use of "subsists in" does not change the doctrine of the Church. "There are numerous elements of sanctification and of truth" which are found outside her structure, but which "as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, impel towards Catholic Unity" (Responses of the Congregation for the Faith, June 29, 2007). In other words, there are elements of salvation outside the Catholic Church. The truth and fullness of Catholicism overflows even into those who do not claim it. There are elements

that lead to salvation found outside the structure of the Catholic Church that lead to salvation precisely because they are Catholic.

The Congregation concludes by explaining the definition of an "ecclesial community" in distinction to a church. Simply, Christian Communities that have abolished the priesthood and thus apostolic succession have "not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery" and "cannot, according to the Catholic doctrine, be called 'Churches' in the proper sense" (Responses of the Congregation for the Faith, June 29, 2007). The term "Church" has a specific meaning.

Nothing of what I read in the Congregation's response negates in any way the spirit of understanding and reconciliation that we promote in ecumenical relations. When I think of the backwards, primitive and narrow-minded bigotry between religions that I encountered as a child growing up, we have come a long way. That narrow-mindedness still manifests itself in the popular characterization of the Catholic Church as "backwards", "bureaucratic" or "insensitive." I am encouraged when often those outside communion with the Catholic Church are most ready to understand the fine distinctions made by documents such as this one from the Congregation and see them as a sign of "welcome" instead of a "closed door."

Our first and foremost commitment must be to preach the Gospel message of Christ, his redeeming passion, death and resurrection. For the Catholic, the Church is indispensable in this proclamation. As St. Paul writes, "And how can they believe unless they have heard of him? And how can they hear unless there is someone to preach? And how can men preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14-15). For the Catholic, the Church insures the integrity, historical continuity, and communication of the message. It is the Church who believes, listens, preaches, and sends.

In any discussion, it helps if the parties know what it is they believe. The next step is to approach the other with compassion and understanding. In true ecumenism we strive to understand first what it is we believe. In this the Congregation has tried to help. That being said, we move into an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust rooted in Christ.

Toward that end may we work that "all may be one" (John 17:21).

(This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles.)