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Your God's Gift donations at work: Helping people discern their vocations

Father Kurtis Gunwall

The Vocation Office for the Diocese of Fargo primarily helps men discerning ordained ministry and we have some connections to other religious vocations.

One part of this work involves preaching vocations at parishes. This year, the message I preach is about God's call, our vocation, in life.

Everyone needs reminders, whether you are 16 looking ahead at work and education; 36 with a family, job and home; or 76, retired and possibly alone in life, we are constantly being called by God to live more deeply in love.

Only when we recognize, receive and share that love are we fully prepared to follow God's call to priesthood, diaconate, religious life, marriage or service in the single life.

The prayers of God's people, the Church of the Diocese of Fargo, are so important — some offer daily prayers for vocations, others offer their sufferings, our religious communities pray for priests and the priests lead our parishes in prayer for vocations.

The God's Gift Appeal is the financial foundation to the Vocation Office and it supplements the many endowments for seminary education.

Our seminarians will be spread out amongst four seminaries this next year providing for a rich diversity of education and formation, cultural experiences and connections to future priests across the country and throughout the world. Without your support, we would struggle to provide for the needs of our seminarians.

In return, even now they contribute by working at parishes and other ministries like the Young Disciples during their summer breaks.

Since coming to the Vocation Office, I have been privileged to share the vocations message and celebrate the Eucharist in Belcourt, Bottineau, Westhope, Velva, Karlsruhe, Langdon, Wales, Pembina, Drayton, Pisek, Lankin, Bechyne, Minto, Warsaw, Langdon, Wales, Larimore, Carrington, Sykeston, Esmond, Balta, Maddock, Wishek, Zeeland, Nortonville, Edgeley, Dickey, LaMoure, Verona, West Fargo (Blessed Sacrament), Fargo (Sts. Anne & Joachim and St. Paul's Newman Center), Grand Forks (St. Mary's and St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center), Casselton, Buffalo, Cooperstown, Jessie and Aneta.

I have subbed at other parishes and intend to return with the vocations message to each of them, too. It will take three years to visit each parish in our diocese with this message and I am excited to do this.

The Vocation Office also coordinates the Quo Vadis camp, has been involved with youth camps over the years, and reaches out to young men with the Live-In weekend at Cardinal Muench Seminary. (We hope to work with a nearby seminary for future years.)

This winter we offered Vocare men's groups at Shanley High School and St. Paul's Newman Center for guys to examine their choices and hear God's voice during these formative years. I have also been able to accept invitations to speak to youth groups at a few parishes in the diocese as part of their religious education and youth ministry nights.

The Diaconate program for the diocese continues to draw men to service of the Bishop and the Church in ordained ministry. This next year will include an examination of the program by Msgr. Gregory Schlesselmann as it has developed the last 10 years so that we can move forward with a renewed vision of this ministry in our parishes and throughout the entire diocese.

The announcement of the new diocesan Franciscan Order under Father Joseph Christensen is welcome news for young men considering a call to religious life within the diocese. This will supplement the SOLT community, which serves in the diocese in the Turtle Mountain region.

Our women's religious communities also serve in many ways in the diocese and, although they are each independent of the diocese, we try to keep in communication with them and create and distribute a poster for all women's religious vocations available in the diocese.

If you want to know more about what is happening in vocations here in the diocese, you can give us a call at (701) 271-1205, visit our Facebook group "DoF Vocations" or follow the links on our website at www.fargodiocese.org/vocations.

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