



ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
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OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

November 19/20, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Sunday Mass this weekend is the celebration of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the Church calendar prior to the beginning of Advent next week. I wish you a happy liturgical “new year.” May it be a year of grace and blessing for us all.

There is one blessing in particular that we need to ask of God for the wellbeing of the Church. Today we are facing a very serious decline in the number of priests to serve our archdiocese. This year we lament the fact that there were no ordinations to the priesthood.

We are not the only diocese facing this situation, but that is scant consolation. We can learn, however, from those dioceses that are moving in the other direction. At an episcopal ordination in Ohio I asked the Archbishop of Cincinnati the reason for the success his archdiocese is having with priestly ordinations (He ordained seven priests this year). His answer: the vocation prayer that is said at his direction at every Mass on weekends in his archdiocese. Other bishops have spoken likewise.

Sometimes we may be tempted to make light of prayer, as if the pledge of prayers is just a pious gesture. However, it is Jesus Himself who spoke of “sheep without a shepherd,” and said that we must “ask the harvest master to send laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 18:20). We cannot doubt the Lord Himself, and we need to heed his words. It is urgent that we pray together publicly for vocations to the priesthood.

For some time now I have directed that the St. Michael prayer be said immediately after the dismissal at Sunday Masses (after, as distinct from the liturgical prayer of the Mass). I was inspired to do so by Pope Francis, who had directed that it be prayed universally after the rosary for a set time. That time has passed but the timeliness of the St. Michael Prayer remains. Now that you have been introduced or re-introduced to it, it is my hope that you will continue to pray it privately.

In its place, beginning on the First Sunday of Advent, November 26/27, I want us all to say the *Prayer for Priestly Vocations* that I am sending to your pastor to be made available in church. There is great power in praying together, as Jesus told when he said “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20).

Some may question why we are only praying for priestly vocations. More inclusive prayers can be offered by anyone at any time, and should be, but our public and urgent plea to the Lord is for priests, without whom there can be no sacraments, especially Penance and the Holy Eucharist, the life’s blood of our union with Christ.

May God answer our prayers, and may he bless you for all that you do to promote priestly vocations.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford