

**Pastoral Letter: Vocations Awareness Week 2024**

***To be read on weekend 31<sup>st</sup>August/ 1<sup>st</sup> September***

***- The Twenty-Second Sunday of the Year***

Dear brothers and sisters,

In a few weeks' time, the Church in Scotland will hold our annual Vocations Awareness Week. During this time, we will be praying especially for an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life.

This year's Vocations Awareness week takes place as clergy, religious and lay faithful begin to gather in Rome from across the world for the final session of the Church's Synod on Synodality.

There, together with the Pope, the Synod will reflect upon how we as a Church are living up to the vision and ideals Our LORD Jesus set out for us and how we can live out His mission more effectively in the world today. The Synod does not look to change what our Church believes but to reflect upon how we can more fruitfully teach and communicate the salvation offered in our Catholic faith. It is calling us to be a Church that lives with deeper bonds of communion among ourselves and that is razor-focused on mission through the full participation of our lay faithful in the life of our parishes and dioceses.

In these times the Holy Spirit is encouraging all of us – Bishops included –to take greater responsibility for the life of our Church and our parish communities.

That responsibility, more than ever, extends to our efforts to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Vocations ministry, which includes praying, encouraging and supporting vocations, cannot be left to our Diocesan Vocations Director and his Office. Instead, it is a responsibility that the LORD Jesus has entrusted to all of us, clergy, religious and laity, as He promises always to give us labourers to His harvest (Mt 9:38) whenever we ask Him from the depths of our hearts.

Thankfully, we have seen our prayers answered in recent years with the ordination of five men to the priesthood in our diocese, along with another to be ordained next year and yet another entering seminary this year.

With this in mind I want to encourage each of you, without exception, to set aside some time for prayer for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life, and I want to commend the following practices to you and your parish communities:

1. A time of Eucharistic Adoration in every parish – weekly or monthly – dedicated to prayer for vocations.
2. The recital of the Rosary every Thursday, in public or in private, for an increase in vocations.
3. The practice of praying every day at 4.00pm or thereabouts for vocations. You may want to use the prayer our Scottish bishops issued for this intention<sup>1</sup> and which is available in your parishes and on the Diocesan website<sup>2</sup>.
4. I also warmly invite you to attend our Diocesan Vocations Mass at St. John's, Port Glasgow on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September at 6.30pm. Your presence at this Mass will be an encouraging witness of your support of our diocesan vocations ministry and I have asked your parish priests where possible to facilitate transport to this event

One final thought! At a recent meeting in Rome. Pope Francis thanked Parish Priests across the world for their ministry and witness, and commented that without them, their hard work and daily sacrifices, the Church could not continue.

On your behalf, I want to thank our own priests and religious for the generous work that they carry every day in our diocese, sowing the seeds of the Gospel in every kind of soil (cf Mk 4: 1-25)<sup>3</sup>.

With assurance of my closeness and blessings for you and your loved ones,

Yours in Christ,



Bishop John

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<sup>1</sup> *Lord Jesus, at this hour, you called Andrew, our patron and his companion, to be your disciple. We pray that the men and women of our country may hear your call to discipleship at this same hour. May they respond to your call with generosity, confidence and enthusiasm. Inspired by the example of Mary Immaculate, may they say 'yes' to service in the priesthood, the consecrated life and the diaconate? Mary, Star of the New Evangelisation, pray for us. Andrew, Patron Saint of Scotland, pray for us. All Saints of our land, pray for us.*

<sup>2</sup> <https://rcdop.org.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2024/documents/20240502-lettera-parroci.html>