



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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Pastoral Letter
4th Sunday of Easter
8th May 2022

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we continue to celebrate our Diocesan Year of the Eucharist, the joy of the Easter Season offers us a privileged time to reflect on the new life and vision offered to each of us by the Risen Lord. We have already heard Jesus' voice speaking to us in the Gospel and soon we will share in His offering of perfect praise, as we participate in his supreme act of love and redemption which we recall in every celebration of the Eucharist.

At every Mass, in the mystery of the bread broken and the blood poured out for the world, we draw strength from the Risen Christ. We are not only fed with His Body and Blood but also called to become what we receive and to grow in our likeness of him. The Mass is the centre of our lives from which many graces flow! This action of Jesus and our act of adoration takes place in our communities where, as priests and people, we gather as one in him. It is the Eucharist, celebrated in our churches, which is the source of our Christian vocation. In the Eucharist, every believer is called to conform themselves to the risen Christ totally - Jesus offered and given.

Whilst appreciating the vocations of all who are baptised in the Lord, today I should like to focus on the ordained ministry of those called to the priesthood. Pope Saint John Paul II reminded us: 'There can be no Eucharist without the priesthood, just as there can be no priesthood without the Eucharist' (Gift & Mystery). We cannot contemplate the Eucharist without contemplating the Priesthood. Jesus the Good Shepherd feeds and instructs us, he cares for us and shows us his love even today; he does so through the ministry of priests. Every one of us has benefitted from the ministry and support of a priest.

On this Vocations Sunday, the Liturgy of the Word presents to us the two fundamental aspects of priestly vocation, a life dedicated to preaching the Gospel and celebrating the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, for God's people. Like Paul and Barnabas, the priest is called to proclaim the gospel faithfully even in the face of indifference or hostility. He does so at Mass but also in his care for the sick, the lost and the broken hearted. In his fidelity to the teachings of Christ and the Church, he becomes a voice for the voiceless and a herald of justice. The priest sows seeds for the Kingdom living with God's people and serving them generously.

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Secondly, the Book of Revelation reminds us that the priest is the servant of the mysteries of Christ. As the instrument of Jesus, the priest leads the people to the ‘springs of living water’ that flow from the sacraments and are ministered by his own human hands. The priest touches the lives of God’s suffering people and brings them the hope of Jesus in his ministry. Every priest is called to model himself on Christ, by his personal dedication to prayer, service of others and devotion to the Eucharist. The priesthood is truly a means of living life to the full and experiencing the joy of knowing God by being close to him in the Sacraments and his people.

Today, especially, we pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood for our Diocese, that God will raise up men after his heart to continue to shepherd and feed us. Perhaps today there are men who hearing this letter ask themselves: ‘Is God calling me?’ I invite you to find out more by contacting the Diocesan Vocations Director or by speaking to your priest. The call to priesthood is a daily challenge but those who respond to God’s call find a profound joy and fulfilment in their life of service.

To every member of Christ’s faithful, I invite you to pray every day for priestly vocations in our Diocese and to do so as a community during Masses and devotions. Also, please remember our seminarians and enquirers. Currently, we have three seminarians at St. Mary’s Oscott and two at the Venerable English College in Rome. It is an immense joy for us that Paul Kilduff and Endre Kormos will be ordained deacon this year before proceeding to the priesthood next year, and we pray especially for them.

On the Solemnity of Corpus Christi (19th June) we will have the opportunity to celebrate our Eucharistic faith publicly in a Blessed Sacrament procession. More details will follow but I hope this will be the highlight of the Eucharistic Year with many clergy and faithful taking part.

As we continue to engage as a Diocese with the Synodal process, we pray that the Lord’s Eucharistic presence and his Holy Spirit will guide us into a deeper love for and understanding of Christ and his Church. Let us pray that this Vocations Sunday may bring forth not only vocations for our Diocese, but also many blessings upon us all.

Yours devotedly



✠ Rt Rev Robert Byrne CO
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