



## **PRAYER** FOR **VOCATIONS**

Heavenly Father, Bless your Church with an abundance of holy and zealous priests, deacons, brothers, and sisters. Give those you have called to the married state and those you have chosen to live as single persons in the world, the special graces that their lives require. Form us all in the likeness of Your Son, so that in Him, with Him, and through Him, we may love you more deeply and serve you more faithfully, always and everywhere. With Mary we ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



## **PRIESTS FOR TOMORROW**

SUMMER 2019



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*DIOCESE of LA CROSSE*



**Father Alan Wierzba**  
Director of the Office for Vocations



**... all Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will. In this temporal service, they will manifest to all men the love with which God loved the world.”** (LG #42)

Holiness and doing what God wants us to do is our first vocation. Holiness means ‘to be set apart’. From what are we supposed to be set apart? The answer is sin. What is a holy person? Someone who strives to live a good life by seeking virtue and avoiding vice. God wants for us to be with Him forever, to live as saints in His Divine Love. In *The Confessions*: St. Augustine wrote, “*Our hearts are restless O Lord, until they rest in Thee.*” The restlessness we feel leads us to seek a close and personal relationship with God.

Whether we are married or single, ordained or consecrated, God knows each of us intimately. When we live according to God’s plan for us, we can accomplish great things. St. Catherine of Sienna once wrote, “*If you are what you should be, you will set all (the world) on fire.*”

As Christians, we are all bound together as the one body of Christ. The good that we do in our individual lives of holiness affects the goodness of all people.

We strive to help our seminarians live lives of virtue and to choose to avoid sin; this is part of the formation they are taught. We want to form the best, holiest, and healthiest priests we can to serve the Diocese of La Crosse. In this issue of the newsletter you will hear about the Universal Call to Holiness and how each one’s holiness helps us all to stand firm in faith.

— Father Alan Wierzba

# Universal Call to Holiness



At every period of history, the Holy Spirit prompts the teaching office of the Church, according to His holy will, to emphasize a particular aspect or facet of Christian life so as to ensure the organic growth and flourishing of His Church. What is the

Holy Spirit prompting His Church to do right now? What is the Holy Spirit asking of us at this time (our time) in history? A perceptible desire of the Holy Spirit, which is seen clearly in one of the principle documents of the Second Vatican Council (Lumen Gentium), would have to be ‘the universal call to holiness.’

Holiness is not only for priests and religious! It is universal, that is, for every person. Paragraph 41 of Lumen Gentium captures it wonderfully: “Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.” One of the things that Lumen Gentium does so well is to show just how personal God is – how He invites, prompts, and calls each of us to holiness in a particular way. But how do we get there? God loves to build upon and use our natural virtues and talents. He made us and gave each of us the virtues and talents that we have. It is a beautiful act of obedience to do the things that we are good at. Far be it from us to forget the words of St. Paul to the Romans: “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly” (Rm. 12:6). The tasks which God has placed in front of us correspond to the talents, capacities, and strengths He has given.

St. Paul does not advise us to do the things

that we are really lousy at. It can also be a real act of humility to admit our incapacity in those things that we have not received the talent or grace to accomplish. An auctioneer and a concert pianist differ essentially! It would seem very strange and out of place to see one attempting the task of the other. When we ask someone else to supply what we lack, it brings us out of ourselves. To ever really be holy, we have to ‘get over’ ourselves.

— *In Christ*, Eric Mashak



The universal call to holiness is a call and reminder that everyone, no matter what context they find themselves in, are called to be holy. Holiness has been defined in many ways, but the one that sticks with me most is this: that holiness is closeness

to God. Which is to say the closer we are to God, the holier we are. Sometimes I think we can confuse holiness with outward actions of piety. Piety is a gift of the Holy Spirit, so it is a good thing to be pious, but the mistake comes if we think that to be holy means that we have to do more things, say certain prayers, or do more actions. But then we can come to confuse holiness as something we do, as an action that we perform, instead of seeing it as a gift of God, of being in a relationship with Him. If holiness is closeness to God, then to be holy we should seek to become more like God. The Catechism (n.460) even goes so far as to say that we are called not only to act like God, but in a way to become God. This is not to say that

*continued on the next page*



**We work together for your joy.  
For you stand firm in your faith.”**

— 2 Cor. 1:24







## **CONGRATULATIONS TO FATHERS BRANDON GUENTHER AND ETHAN HOKAMP**

On June 22, 2019, Bishop William Patrick Callahan ordained Deacons Ethan Hokamp and Brandon Guenther to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

## Universal Call to Holiness... continued

we all become our own gods, but that in Baptism, God's Spirit came to dwell in us, that he has shared his own divine nature with us and we became truly Sons and Daughters of God. It is from this relationship with God that all our good works should flow.

God is the one who initiates the life of holiness; he is the one who first draws near to us at baptism – before most of us we were old enough to remember it. God is the one who loves us first (1 John 4:19), and now we are called to respond to that love. It is this response to His love that puts the universal call to holiness in its proper context. Since it comes from our baptism, all Christians are called to be close to God, not just priests and religious. However, the particular life of holiness will look different for each person. St. Francis de Sales in his *Introduction to the Devout Life* says, "It is therefore an error and even a heresy to wish to exclude the exercise of devotion from military divisions, from the artisans' shops, from the courts of princes, from family households."

The theme for this newsletter comes from 2 Cor 1:24 "We work together for your joy. For you stand firm in your faith". The aspect that sticks out most to me from this passage is the "working together" part. We see that the call to holiness is a gift and an initiative from God himself, but he has so ordered his gift that it be given by men. No one comes to holiness by themselves. We cannot baptize ourselves or forgive our own sins, we can't all celebrate our own private masses.

We come to receive God's gift through others. It is from this recognition that we are, in turn, called to witness that gift with others, whether that is in a parish, or at work, or in our own families, that they too might come to share this great gift.

— Timothy Reither



There is a primary vocation among every person regardless of the state of life to which God has called us, and that is the universal call to holiness (or, to become a saint). Whether we are parents raising children, or discerning religious life or the priesthood, or living a single life generously, we are each called to become saints

and to live eternal life in the joy and the beatitude of seeing God. How do we accomplish this call?

We cannot do it alone or by ourselves or independently. If we do try, it is certain that we will fail.

Trust me, I know. As a recovering perfectionist, I learned that the fruits of my labors that are done independently, without God or others, end up being bitter or sour or unripe. Besides, since we belong to the mystical Body of Christ, with Jesus as the head of the body, it is impossible to do something without affecting others around me or others affecting me. The fingers cannot move without the nerves and the muscles in the arm which are controlled by the brain. Thus, I found that it is futile to labor apart from the rest of the body.

Since we are all one in communion in this mystical body of Jesus Christ, our actions either bring joy to the body or bring harm upon the body. When St. Paul writes to the Corinthians in his second letter that "we work together for your joy," he is providing an example to the people in Corinth as to what it means to live as a member of the body of Christ and to live as Christ. We can be confident that our actions are truly a fruit of charitable love when there is genuine joy. This builds up the Kingdom of Heaven in which the communion of angels and saints experience perpetual and eternal joy, for God who loves us and is love itself desires for us to live in joy and to enjoy it forever. We are called to work together in joy and to encourage each other to live holy lives.

In a society that is very secular, materialistic, relativistic, and hedonistic, it is imperative that we live saintly lives. It is counter-cultural, but if we live a saintly life filled with joy and a genuine love toward building up the Kingdom of Heaven, our lives will be attractive to others. Each person yearns for genuine love and joy. This love and joy come from God, and people who experience genuine love and joy are experiencing God and are attractive. Love and joy attract others to live with love and joy. Thus, we stand firm in our faith as we strive to deepen our relationship with God, and by doing so authentically, we can encourage others to do the same.

— Matthew Bowe

**“Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.”**

## Dare to Follow Jesus Retreat

The Dare to Follow Jesus retreat was held June 14-16. Fathers Barry Saylor and Kyle Laylan had 14 young men get together to learn more about the Catholic faith and talk about the vocation of priesthood. And, of course, HAVE FUN! This is an annual event that some of the young men look forward to every year.



## Threshold Retreat

The Threshold Retreat (July 12-14th) was a great success. Seven high school and college men get together for three days of prayer and reflection about priesthood. It was a great opportunity for them to discuss the next threshold in their lives.

## Golf Outing

Our 1st Annual Golf Outing and Dinner was a great success! The La Crosse Vocations Society held this event for the past 19 years, and have given all the proceeds to the Office for Vocations. This year we partnered with them. We had 64 golfers enjoy a great day of golfing and dinner. It was a good way to have fun and support Vocations in the process!

## Mark Your Calendars

### SAVE THE DATE - Tuesday, October 8, 2019

#### Vocations Guild Dinner

St. Michael's Parish, 611 Stark, Wausau  
Adoration at 5:30 PM, Social at 6:00 PM,  
Dinner at 6:30 PM followed by a short presentation.  
Background music and guest speaker is Jim Busta,  
father of Mollie B of Mollie B's Polka Party.

Register online at [diolc.org/vocations-guild-dinner](http://diolc.org/vocations-guild-dinner).  
For more information contact Renee' Orth at  
608-791-2667 or [vocations@diolc.org](mailto:vocations@diolc.org).

### SAVE THE DATE - Monday, June 22, 2020

**Second Annual Golf Outing** to support vocations will  
be held at Cedar Creek Golf Course in Onalaska.

## Birthdays

### August

16 - David Dachel  
16 - Isaac Pecha  
23 - Jared Clements  
26 - Matthew Bowe  
26 - Daniel Buchal

### September

24 - Isaac Wolfe  
28 - Arturo Viguera  
30 - John Zweber

### October

6 - Timothy Reither  
8 - Daniel Smyth



**The Lord has blessed me with a wonderful family, great job (retired now 8 years), whatever happened in the meantime, I trust, was meant to be. In the troubled times that we are experiencing now, we need help.”**

— From our Spirit of Light Award Recipient

## **WHY DO YOU SUPPORT VOCATIONS?**

I was born into a religious family with a number of uncles who were priests, one even became a missionary in South America. Our family, from time to time, would send these priests things in appreciation of their work. As the years went on, I grew to realize what a fantastic thing that was to do.

My father worked very hard to raise 6 children. He had his struggles, and to help him, my mother had us kneel on the hard floor and pray 54 day novenas. We did this for many, many years, and the Lord answered our prayers.

I served Mass in grade school, high school, and I still do today (for funerals). In 8th grade we had a priest from Poland. He was funny as the dickens! He talked to me about going to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at St. Henry's proprietary seminary. After being there for a period of time, the calling was not meant to be.

In the meantime I did 27 years in the military. I started active duty, and then went on as a citizen soldier and served in the Persian Gulf. One thing we really need in the military is more Catholic priests. I would go to interdenominational services here in the US. Sometimes I was the only one to show up. When I went overseas it was standing room only in the makeshift churches. "There are no Atheists in foxholes!" Others told me in the Service that it was crazy to go to church because "we were going to win anyhow."

I married my wife, Shirley, and we have 4 children and 6 grandchildren. Once we were sure that our family was provided for, we could help others. We could reach out and assist the church and our neighbors in various ways.

I'd like to end with a prayer "May those who dedicate themselves to the Lord our God, a very challenging vocation indeed, turn to Him in these times of needs."

Al & Shirley Kroll

***You are encouraged to write to our seminarians as a way of showing your support and prayers throughout the school year using the addresses provided below.***

**ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY**  
3257 South Lake Drive | St. Francis, WI 53235

**PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE**  
Via del Gianicolo, 14 | Rome, Italy 00165

**MUNDELEIN SEMINARY**  
1000 East Maple Avenue | Mundelein, IL 60060

**IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY SEMINARY**  
750 Terrace Heights | Winona, MN 55987

**ST. JOHN VIANNEY SEMINARY**  
2115 Summit Avenue | St. Paul, MN 55105



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*Check out  
our website*

