

From Your Pastor

June 19, 2009 – June 19, 2010 ~ *The Year of the Priest* ~ *Church Teaching on Priesthood, V*

Pope Benedict XVI has designated this year “*The Year of the Priest*” and has named St. John Vianney the universal patron of all priests. Following is an excerpt from paragraph 6 of the Second Vatican Council’s *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (1965).

6. Exercising the office of Christ, the Shepherd and Head, and according to their share of his authority, priests, in the name of the bishop, gather the family of God together...Through Christ they lead the community in the Holy Spirit to God the Father. For the exercise of this ministry, as for the other priestly duties, spiritual power is conferred upon them for the building up of the Church. In the building up of the Church, priests must treat all with exceptional kindness in imitation of the Lord. They should act toward others, not as seeking to please them, but in accord with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. They should teach them and admonish them as beloved sons and daughters...

Priests therefore, as educators in the faith, must see to it either by themselves or through others that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity, and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free. Ceremonies however beautiful, or associations however flourishing, will be of little value if they are not directed toward the education of men to Christian maturity. In furthering this, priests should help the faithful to see what is required and what is God’s will in the important and unimportant events of life. Also, Christians should be taught that they live not only for themselves, but according to the demands of the new law of charity; as every one has received grace, he must administer the same to others. In this way, all will discharge in a Christian manner their duties in the human community.

Although they have obligations toward all, priests have a special obligation to the poor and weak entrusted to them, for our Lord himself showed that he was united to them, and their evangelization is mentioned as a sign of messianic activity. With special diligence, attention

should be given to youth and also to married people and parents. It is desirable that these join together in friendly meetings for mutual aid in leading more easily and fully and in a Christian manner a life that is often difficult. Priests should remember that all religious, both men and women, who certainly have a distinguished place in the house of the Lord, deserve special care in their spiritual progress for the good of the whole Church. Finally, and above all, priests must be solicitous for the sick and the dying, visiting them and strengthening them in the Lord.

The office of pastor is not confined to the care of the faithful as individuals, but also in a true sense is extended to the formation of a genuine Christian community. Yet the spirit of the community should be so fostered as to embrace not only the local church, but also the universal Church. The local community should promote not only the care of its own faithful, but, filled with a missionary zeal, it should prepare also the way to Christ for all. In a special way, catechumens and the newly-baptized...are entrusted to his care.

No Christian community, however, is built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist; from this, therefore, all education to the spirit of community must take its origin. This celebration, if it is to be genuine and complete, should lead to various works of charity and mutual help, as well as to missionary activity and to different forms of Christian witness.

The ecclesial community, by prayer, example, and works of penance, exercises a true motherhood toward souls who are to be led to Christ. It is an effective instrument also for arousing, nourishing and strengthening the faithful for their spiritual combat.

In building the Christian community, priests are never to put themselves at the service of some human faction or ideology, but, as heralds of the Gospel and shepherds of the Church, they are to spend themselves for the spiritual growth of the Body of Christ.



God bless each of you.

Mrs. Fay