

# THE PASTOR'S DESK

June 27, 2010 - Year of the Priest



## Dear Parishioners,

Last Saturday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, the Year of the Priest came to a close. During this past year, I have been so pleased to see so many of you take advantage of the opportunity to gain a plenary indulgence. I'm sure many graces flowed back and forth as the priests received the benefit of so many prayers and the faithful received healing from the attachment to sin.

Last Saturday also saw a great event for the Archdiocese and a great event for the parish. Eight men were ordained to the sacred Priesthood of Jesus Christ for the Church in Washington including Deacon (now Father) Blake Evans. He has been serving here at St. John's for the past two years. I was pleased to see a large contingent from the parish there. Fr. William, Fr. Francis and I were all there to concelebrate. It was truly a beautiful and moving ceremony. The priesthood ordination ceremony gives us an incredible view of our local church assembled around our Archbishop. Fr. Blake Evans received the news that he is assigned to St. Jude's in Rockville. So, he will be relatively close by. But, leave him alone for a while. Let him settle in. He will be here on Sunday, July 11<sup>th</sup> to offer the 11:15 Mass and the 5:00 pm Mass in Spanish. Keep him in your prayers as he begins his priestly ministry.

As a footnote to the Year of the Priest, we could read and reflect upon the first paragraph of the Holy Father's Homily at the Mass in St. Peter's Square held on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. The Holy Father was preaching to priests assembled from all over the world as well as to the Church throughout the world:

*The [Year for Priests](#) which we have celebrated on the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the death of the holy Curé of Ars [St. John Vianney], the model of priestly ministry in our world, is now coming to an end. We have let the Curé of Ars guide us to a renewed appreciation of the grandeur and beauty of the priestly ministry. The priest is not a mere officeholder, like those which every society needs in order to carry out certain functions. Instead, he does something which no human being can do of his own power: in Christ's name he speaks the words which absolve us of our sins and in this way he changes, starting with God, our entire life. Over the offerings of bread and wine he speaks Christ's words of thanksgiving, which are words of transubstantiation – words which make Christ himself present, the Risen One, his Body and Blood – words which thus transform the elements of the world, which open the world to God and unite it to him. The priesthood, then, is not simply "office" but sacrament: God makes use of us poor men in order to be, through us, present to all men and women, and to act on their behalf. This audacity of God who entrusts himself to human beings – who, conscious of our weaknesses, nonetheless considers men capable of acting and being present in his stead – this audacity of God is the true grandeur concealed in the word "priesthood". That God thinks that we are capable of this; that in this way he calls men to his service and thus from within binds himself to them: this is what we wanted to reflect*

*upon and appreciate anew over the course of the past year. We wanted to reawaken our joy at how close God is to us, and our gratitude for the fact that he entrusts himself to our infirmities; that he guides and sustains us daily. In this way we also wanted to demonstrate once again to young people that this vocation, this fellowship of service for God and with God, does exist – and that God is indeed waiting for us to say "yes". Together with the whole Church we wanted to make clear once again that we have to ask God for this vocation. We have to beg for workers for God's harvest, and this petition to God is, at the same time, his own way of knocking on the hearts of young people who consider themselves able to do what God considers them able to do. It was to be expected that this new radiance of the priesthood would not be pleasing to the "enemy"; he would have rather preferred to see it disappear, so that God would ultimately be driven out of the world. And so it happened that, in this very year of joy for the sacrament of the priesthood, the sins of priests came to light – particularly the abuse of the little ones, in which the priesthood, whose task is to manifest God's concern for our good, turns into its very opposite. We too insistently beg forgiveness from God and from the persons involved, while promising to do everything possible to ensure that such abuse will never occur again; and that in admitting men to priestly ministry and in their formation we will do everything we can to weigh the authenticity of their vocation and make every effort to accompany priests along their journey, so that the Lord will protect them and watch over them in troubled situations and amid life's dangers. Had the [Year for Priests](#) been a glorification of our individual human performance, it would have been ruined by these events. But for us what happened was precisely the opposite: we grew in gratitude for God's gift, a gift concealed in "earthen vessels" which ever anew, even amid human weakness, makes his love concretely present in this world. So let us look upon all that happened as a summons to purification, as a task which we bring to the future and which makes us acknowledge and love all the more the great gift we have received from God. In this way, his gift becomes a commitment to respond to God's courage and humility by our own courage and our own humility. The word of God, which we have sung in the Entrance Antiphon of the liturgy, can speak to us, at this hour, of what it means to become and to be priests: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29).*

God bless, Fr. LaHood

## CONGRATULATIONS

to our parishioner

Deacon Barry Levy

on his ordination to the Permanent Diaconate.  
From the clergy, staff and parishioners of  
Saint John Neumann Parish.