

I am grateful for the generosity of our parishioners who financially support the formation of our seminarians. Our Diocesan Finance Council recommends our keeping this appeal separate. Their reasons are several. First, to publicly highlight the need to call men for ordained ministry. Second, to offer a transparent connection between a dedicated collection and a cause that people are happy to support. And third, over years, donors take some satisfaction from having taken part in the preparation and ordination of their individual priests.

Just as the times reshape the “vineyard” in which we minister, so too the men who discern whether priestly ministry is for them. They have come up through a variety of educational and work experiences. The culture has impacted their understanding of work, marriage and family, but also religion and any other institutional commitments. In a day when someone rarely works his whole life for a single employer, they try to comprehend taking on lifetime identity that is theirs 24/7.

For most of us ordained men, we do not hold priesthood as a personal possession. Rather, we participate in the body of priests who minister in our diocese. This body is called the Presbyterate. And this does not exist apart from the Presbyterium, the body of priests with their bishop. Each of us priests has one or more roles, but all at the service of the whole diocese, and the whole Presbyterate.

There is an admitted temptation for people to rate priests in terms of energy, talent, humor, administrative knowledge, languages, gregariousness and the “feeling” of their Masses. But we priests understand, early in our ministries, that we would not be who we are without the chemistry that each of us brings to the whole Presbyterate. And this includes the newly ordained as much as the eminent retirees. Most importantly, our standing comes from the One who daily calls us, rather than our locations or perceived personal merits (not that I discount these).

As you read about reassignments in these pages, remember that they follow from a process that has invoked the Holy Spirit in consultations and interviews. In the end, it is my responsibility for making assignments to parishes, prisons and the military. At the same time, I must shepherd the welfare and development of individual priests AND the vitality of the Presbyterate as a whole. You should not wonder why we pray for the bishop at each Mass!

A piece of wisdom that has sustained me is this: The people to whom a priest is sent will reveal aspects of the Kingdom of God as no other place can. And that priest brings elements and limitations beyond parishioner expectations, but something that they also need at this time. Some people correctly say that clergy transfers test their faith. A test can be a stressor, but also an opportunity to evaluate the contents of one’s personal faith. Any change can produce the second type of test, and it should not be feared. We have the assurance of Scripture that we will not be tested beyond our strength (1 Cor. 10:13)

We all desire to be open to the Holy Spirit who is two things for us. The first thing is that the Spirit sustains ancient constants for the integrity of the Church and the effectiveness of the sacraments. That same Spirit, here on Pentecost Sunday, is also very modern because it disrupts complacency. The same Spirit that gathers us for work, worship and the common good, also periodically scatters us to new frontiers, both physical and psychological.

It will be brave hearts that today pray: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love! Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth! O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.