



# We call him Father

>> **Father Ron Hutchinson**, is director of priestly vocations for the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

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s I mentioned in my article in the June issue of FAITH, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI inaugurated the Year For Priests on June 19th. This year is meant to be an opportunity to focus our attention on the divine gift that priesthood is to the church and to the faithful. In addition, the Year For Priests has become a great opportunity to further educate the faithful in our parishes and the diocese about the role of the priest in the midst of the church. With that in mind, my column throughout the coming year will focus on specific aspects of priestly life and ministry.

One of the biggest changes in my life after ordination was the way I was addressed by the people around me. From the moment I stepped foot out of the cathedral after my ordination to the priesthood everyone started called me “Father,” including my own father. It wasn’t until a few weeks later that it really sunk in that with this title came great responsibility.

Fathers give life to their children, and provide them with everything needed for living a good life. As “father,” the priest initiates the faithful into new life by immersing them in the waters of baptism. He also helps to open the door that leads to eternal life in heaven as death approaches. In between these two doorways to life, the priest is with his flock at all their major moments, to guide them towards living faithfully and consistently as children of God. These responsibilities are all done in genuine care, concern, and love for the faithful entrusted to him, all the while realizing that the great high priest, Jesus Christ, holds him responsible for their protection, security, and spiritual nourishment. The priest is a true “father,” who must keep working tirelessly for the holiness, salvation, peace, and well-being of the children of God entrusted to his care.

Although I will never have biological children to care for and nurture, God has called me, and I have responded whole-heartedly to be the spiritual father to many. It has always been with joy that I welcome infants, children, and adults into the family of God at baptism. I am filled with pride as I welcome children to the table of the Lord at first Communion. And sadness fills my heart when I



say my goodbyes at the funerals of those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. However, like the fathers in my parish, the blessing of fatherhood is not always easy. In order to offer the protection, security, and spiritual nourishment my vocation demands, it may mean that I cannot provide the children of God what they *want*. However, I have always provided, to be the best of my ability, what they *need*.

The challenges and responsibilities of being a “father” are great, but I am sure the fathers out there will agree, the rewards are priceless!

Catholic Diocese of  
Grand Rapids  
online vocational  
resources:



Priestly vocations

[dioceseofgrandrapids.org/vocation/welcome.htm](http://dioceseofgrandrapids.org/vocation/welcome.htm)

Religious orders

[dioceseofgrandrapids.org/clergy/religiousorders.htm](http://dioceseofgrandrapids.org/clergy/religiousorders.htm)