



# Men of prayer

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sk any parishioner what he or she is looking for in a priest, and you will receive a variety of answers: better sermons, more availability, faster responses to sick calls, practical teaching on real family problems, and so forth. I'm not sure that one of the top ten responses would be that the priest should be a man with a vibrant prayer life. And yet this should be at the top of the list.

Without a life founded on and nourished by prayer the priest can become like a dried up well from which water cannot be drawn. He will have nothing from which to draw in order to preach, teach, offer comfort, etc. *Nemo dat quod non habet*. ("We can't give it if we don't have it.") In addition, each priest (whether he realizes it or not) is in the eyes of our people, the official pray-ers of the Church: the people of our parishes count on us to pray with them and for them. Perhaps the most common request I receive each day is, "Father, please pray for \_\_\_\_\_."

People constantly take priests into their confidence, entrusting to us their special intentions. And I, like every priest respond, "I will pray for \_\_\_\_\_." For me this is never a hollow, trite, or throwaway line. Each evening as I recall the various moments of my day and examine my conscience, I also recall all the many different individuals who asked for prayers for themselves or loved ones. Even



though my prayers might not be the best, even though I constantly urge people to pray themselves and not just count on me, and even though I confess that the people asking for my prayers are often far holier than I am, I know that it is my sacred duty to be an official pray-er for the people of God.

Priests are expected to be close friends of God and therefore very influential intercessors. Nowhere was this belief made clearer to me than when I went on a reverse mission trip to Oaxaca, Mexico. Even though my Spanish speaking skills are no better than that of a child's, I found myself overwhelmed by the villagers at each stop as they surrounded me and asked me to bless them, their children, their homes, and even their farm animals. It didn't matter if the blessing or prayer was in English; they still saw me as someone close to God and someone who had God's ear.

These moments and many others in my priesthood have made me realize that we priests must believe in the power of prayer, teach prayer, and depend on prayer, and be generous in the prayers we offer on behalf of our people. Even if the people of God don't list it as the most important thing they look for in their priest, I believe that they take it for granted that we are first and foremost men of prayer.

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)