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y dear friends,

On the last Sunday of Advent I was privileged to preside at the 50th anniversary of the ordination of one of our priests, Father Charles Dautremont. Because of the timing of the celebration on a Sunday morning many of the priests in the area were unable to concelebrate the Mass because of their parish commitments. They came later in the day. At the Mass were six of our priests and my classmate, Father Michael Danner, who was the youngest present with 45+ years of priestly ministry. We had all been trained in the seminary to serve in a church that was very different in the early 1960's. In many ways, it was a celebration of the faithfulness exhibited by our priests in the midst of a changing world and Church.



As I looked at the group of priests in attendance, my thoughts went back to the day when these men (young at the time) responded to the call of Christ to serve as priests and to the excitement of beginning their service as priests. We hear the calling to religious vocations in different ways and places: some in grade school: some from another priest or religious; sometimes through a family member or friend. In every case the call is a personal call, an invitation from the Lord to love him intimately, to be a man for others and to grow in holiness

>> The newly ordained Father Hurley (center) leaves Blessed Sacrament Cathedral following his ordination ceremony June 5, 1965. Sixteen priests were ordained for service in the Archdiocese of Detroit that year by Archbishop (later Cardinal) John F. Dearden.



through a life of prayer and service. We have so many priests in our diocese who have served so long and well. They are not perfect and, as we all do, they bring their strengths and limitations to their chosen ministry.

All Christian vocations require surrender and self sacrifice. The priesthood means embracing a lifestyle that demands discipline, obedience and a lifetime commitment to serving God's people. Being a priest is a challenging vocation in every age, but especially today. Studies indicate that the majority of priests are happy and satisfied with their chosen ministry.

The Diocese of Grand Rapids is blessed with outstanding priests both diocesan and those who are members of religious

>> A Mass celebrating the 50th anniversary of Father Charles Dautremont's ordination was held Sunday, Dec. 19 at St. Dominic Church in Wyoming



communities. There is no doubt that they experience stress and at times feel overworked and underappreciated. They too have been embarrassed, hurt and angry about the scandals that have hit us all so hard in recent years. However, our priests are men of prayer and action and strive to be faithful to our church and to the people they serve.

We owe our priests a tremendous debt of gratitude. Please pray for them, thank them often and support them in every way we can. Please invite others to consider following in their footsteps in a life of service and joy.



## LIFE ISSUES

Saturday, Jan. 22 marks the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized unrestricted abortion in our country. It was a sad day in the history of our nation. When he visited the United States in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI encouraged us to be clear in our beliefs, act consistently with them and be animated in our efforts to transform our culture. During his homily at St. Patrick Cathedral in New York he said, "The Church...is called to proclaim the gift of life, to serve life, and to promote a culture of life. ..."

Over the years many pro-life groups, individual parish communities, pregnancy resource centers, Catholic Charities agencies and others have provided practical assistance, education and support to women facing difficult pregnancies. Other dedicated and faith-filled people pray, march, counsel and work with legislators. Their efforts have brought about considerable results. They have saved lives and changed hearts and minds. Because of their resolve, there are fewer abortions each year and fewer doctors willing to perform them. Their pro-life work has raised awareness and, as a result, more citizens are willing to step outside the status quo and declare that they are pro-life.

In the last two years the diocese has made a modest contribution to the ten pregnancy aid centers in different areas of the diocese. In addition, we provide support for Project Rachel which is coordinated by Catholic Charities West Michigan.

On the anniversary of the tragic Roe v. Wade decision, we remember in a special way those who work tirelessly to uphold and defend the dignity of all human life - especially that of the unborn. It is gratifying and hopeful to see young people and other representatives from our diocese actively take up the cause of life through participation at the Annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. this year. I thank all the students who are attending the march including those from our Catholic high schools, Aquinas College and Grand Valley State University; members of the Right to Life groups, and the many individuals participating from our diocese. These representatives along with all those supporting every stage of human life, from conception through natural death, provide courageous witness for all Christians.

As we continue our work to protect human life, I invite you to pause in prayerful thanksgiving for those who work unselfishly to support and sustain God's greatest gift - the gift of life itself.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,  
Bishop Walter A. Hurley

>> Mass of Chrism 2010 - The Mass of Chrism, manifests the unity of priests with their bishop and is the Mass during which the bishop blesses three oils to be used in the administration of the sacraments throughout the diocese for the year.

## March for Life 2011

>> The national March for Life in Washington, D.C., will be held on Monday, Jan. 24, 2011. The event is usually held on Jan. 22, the anniversary date of the U.S. Supreme Court decision on Roe v. Wade. The date change this year is because the anniversary falls on a weekend when lawmakers do not keep office hours.

On Jan. 22, 1974, the first March for Life was held on the west steps of the Capitol. An estimated 20,000 committed, pro-life Americans rallied that day on behalf of our preborn brothers and sisters and other issues surrounding the dignity of human life. Throughout the years, the numbers attending the march have risen and given testimony to the increasing ranks of pro-life Americans and to the importance of the march's work.

>> For more information, contact Sister Colleen Ann Nagle, FSE, diocesan director of pro-life activities, **616.551.5633** or [cnagle@dioceseofgrandrapids.org](mailto:cnagle@dioceseofgrandrapids.org) or Mark Mann, family, youth and young adult ministry coordinator, **616.475.1243** or [mmann@dioceseofgrandrapids.org](mailto:mmann@dioceseofgrandrapids.org).



>> Young adults from the Diocese of Grand Rapids joined the March for Life in Washington, D.C., January 2010. (From left) Mike Milanowski, Patrick Carr, Jenny Mohre, Jared Zimmer and Ken Root.