

**5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
FEBRUARY 7, 2010**

**PASTOR'S CORNER
WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE**

Today, depending on what Mass you attend, you will be hearing a word from either Sr. Marie Solms SSND or Fr. Jojo Orosa MI.

Our Vocation Committee accepted the offer of the Vocations Ministers of the Milwaukee Archdiocese to come and speak on what it means to be a religious in our day and time. This is our way of celebrating the World Day of Consecrated Life. Most of us Catholics owe a debt of gratitude to men and women religious who, somewhere along the path of our lives, have ministered to us in educational, health care, or any number of other settings. As we hear the story of these two religious, we thank God for all religious and ask God to continue calling His people to such a dedicated life.

As we celebrate this day we do so in the reality of a real vocation crisis. As an example, again in 2009 the number of diocesan priests in this Archdiocese alone diminished by two. That was with the ordination of five men. That means that within the last 9 years we have 106 fewer priests. Religious orders are hurting just as badly.

What is the Holy Spirit calling us to? Certainly there are many new vocations in our Church. Lay parish directors who replace pastors for administrative and non-sacramental ministry, lay or religious pastoral associates who replace ordained associate pastors, youth ministers, child ministers, Eucharistic ministers, directors of administrative services, adult and family ministers, human concerns ministers, lay principals and teachers, music and liturgical ministers, and ordained permanent deacons are all new ministries in the Church that were not present in anywhere near the way they are now when I was ordained 33 years ago. That is a good thing, and there are undoubtedly more of those kinds of ministerial positions coming in the future. Today our Church could not survive without dedicated lay people hearing those calls from God. But without priests present, a parish is a very different place. Ask some of those in dioceses where priests are circuit riders who get to a parish twice a month for a Mass.

I don't have the answer, and right now no one seems to. However, we must continue to invite people to consider a religious vocation. We must encourage young men who seem to have a call to ordained ministry. We must pray to understand what God is asking of us as a Church with fewer priests and religious. Please welcome our guests this weekend and take their message forth.

Blessings,

Fr. Ken Knippel