

# THE YEAR OF THE PRIEST

**“THE HARVEST IS GREAT BUT THE LABOURERS ARE FEW”  
BUT WHO ARE THE LABOURERS AND WHAT IS THE HARVEST?**

In this ‘Year of the Priest’ - which will end in June - Pope Benedict has asked us to celebrate the priesthood - which we can so easily take for granted. Here are two suggested ways of doing this:

Firstly, we can resolve to be more active in praying for, and promoting vocations, within our own particular sphere of life; and secondly, we can pray for those priests who are trying to live-out their priesthood in today’s world, praying that they will have the grace of perseverance, giving thanks for all the good priests from whose ministries we have all benefitted over the years.

**How can we be more active in promoting vocations?** I suggest we begin by reflecting on who the labourers are and what is the harvest! When we hear or read this famous passage from the gospels “the harvest is rich but the labourers are few” we probably think of the labourers as referring mainly to the priests; and the harvest as mainly the laity amongst whom they will be working. This is the way most of us have come to understand this text when praying for and promoting vocations. Our Lord, when he spoke these words, was probably speaking about evangelisation in general, rather than the priesthood in particular. However, when praying for and promoting vocations to the priesthood, I wonder whether we should, in a sense, think of it the other way around, i.e. the labourers as mainly the laity; and the harvest being the harvest of vocations to the priesthood waiting to be reaped.

Personally, I believe ‘the labourers’ should be seen as all of us, priests and people, but mainly the laity who are working at the ‘coal face’ so to speak, in the work of promoting and discerning vocations. It is the laity, in their homes, their work places or wherever, who are better placed to read the signs of a vocation, in their children, work colleagues or whoever. They are well placed to suggest to the relevant persons that they should at least consider a vocation. This role of the laity is an important indeed vital part of the work of ‘labouring in the harvest’

If we only think of lay people as part of the harvest and not in any sense the labourers, there will a tendency to “pray to the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest” and then sit back and wait for the labourers to come. No, the laity have their role within their particular apostolate and the ordained priest has his - but they are both labourers in the work of harvesting vocations.

When I think of my own experience of vocation there were three important influences... (a) Priest role models - one in particular... (b) A Parish Mission which made me think seriously, and... (c) This third element was the most influential, and it was the approach by a member of the family who simply said to me, “have you ever considered the priesthood.” The fact that their comment was unexpected - in fact was quite a surprise - was sufficient to prompt me into action. Although I had been thinking about it, I needed their words, which I took as a sign, to do something about it - and I did! Don’t underestimate your influence in

this respect; the Lord needs you, as a lay apostle, to discern the signs of a vocation, and to approach a likely candidate with that question: “Have you ever thought of the priesthood?” They may be waiting - as I was - for that question to be put to them. One shouldn’t be afraid to ask the question. If there is no vocation there nothing is lost; if there is a vocation much could be gained.

**A second important way** we can celebrate this ‘Year for Priests’ is by praying for priests who are already working in the harvest, those recently ordained and those on the mission for many years. We should pray that the Lord will sustain them and give them the grace of perseverance. Your prayers are are much appreciated. We priests are very conscious of your prayers for us and very consoled by them - thank you. With this in mind, I end with the words of the famous Jesuit theologian, the late Karl Rahner:

## THE PRIEST

The priest is not an angel sent by God.  
He is a man chosen from among men,  
a man and a Christian, he knows he needs  
to communicate God’s Word to you.  
Perhaps he has not entirely understood it himself,  
perhaps he adulterates it, but he believes,  
and despite his fears, knows  
he must proclaim God’s Word.

So, my dear friends,  
pray for us, carry us,  
so that we may be able to  
sustain others by bringing them  
to the mystery of God’s love,  
revealed in Christ Jesus

Rev Canon Michael Flook  
Vocations Director

**menevia vocations**

**HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT THAT GOD MAY BE CALLING YOU TO SERVE HIM IN THE PRIESTHOOD, DIACONATE OR RELIGIOUS LIFE IS THIS PART OF WALES?**

**HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT?**

**HAVE YOU EVER PRAYED ABOUT IT?**



Diocese of Menevia

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT A VOCATION WITHOUT MAKING ANY COMMITMENT, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PRIEST OR THE VOCATIONS DIRECTOR:**  
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## Missio welcomes the bishops of England and Wales to its chapel where Cardinal Newman was ordained a Catholic priest

Further to Bishop Tom’s report on page 1, of the bishops of England and Wales ‘ad limina’ (5-yearly meeting) in Rome with the Pope. This enabled them to discuss with Pope Benedict the current situation of the Catholic Church in England and Wales and its most urgent challenges. It was also an opportunity for the Pope to officially announce his intention to visit England and Wales later on in 2010.

In view of the forthcoming beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) possibly during the Pope’s visit, the bishops particularly wished to visit two places connected to the life of the cardinal. This took them to the ‘Chapel of the Three Kings’ and the ‘Cardinal Newman Chapel’ inside Missio headquarters, where Cardinal Newman celebrated his first mass.

This visit, led by the President of the Bishops’ Conference, Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster and accompanied by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, was hosted by Cardinal Ivan Dias, head of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and the staff of ‘Missio’.

The cardinals and archbishop concelebrated Mass in the Chapel of the Three Kings, where Newman was ordained a Catholic priest. The Archbishop of Westminster spoke about ‘the constant call to conversion’ that resides in the heart of everyone and seen clearly in the life of Cardinal John Henry Newman, who will hopefully soon be beatified (declared ‘blessed’). He also spoke of the great longing that Newman experienced for a ‘universal and infallible authority’, which was what “eventually led him here.” In fact, Newman was not only ordained a priest and said his first Mass in the chapel in what is now the headquarters of the Missio, but he also lived and studied inside the building. Archbishop Nichols called Newman ‘a remarkable convert’ and said that it was ‘moving for us to be in this place, where we come so close to him.’

As Archbishop Nichols mentioned at the close of the Mass, this visit to the chapel of Cardinal Newman’s ordination as a Catholic priest, had been a ‘precious part’ of their visit to Rome and would remain forever in their memory.



The bishops at mass in the Chapel

After the Mass, Bishop Michael Campbell of Lancaster commented that the forthcoming beatification of John Henry Newman, ‘a great Englishman,’ was an important event in the Catholic Church, but also for the ecumenical movement in England and Wales, as he is ‘revered by Catholics, Anglicans, and all as a scholar, a gentleman, and soon a saint.’

In Missio’s London office, Monsignor John Dale, the National Director, commented, “It is a great privilege for Missio in this country to be associated with such an important person as Cardinal Newman. Just as Newman bridged a gap between Catholics and Anglicans at a time when relationships were not always easy, so Missio works to bridge differences in language, culture and religion as it works across 120 countries to support the Church in the developing world. That Newman spent such a significant period of his life in the building that would become the headquarters of Missio’s global outreach to the poor and suffering makes his forthcoming beatification a very special celebration for Missio in England and Wales.”

Note: After his reception into the Catholic Church in October 1845, Newman went to live in Maryvale, then a few miles from Birmingham. It was decided that he would undertake studies in Rome, where he arrived in October 1846. He lived at Propaganda Fidei, today the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, and still in the same buildings by the Spanish Steps. He and Ambrose St John made contact with the Roman Oratory (the Chiesa Nuova), making friends particularly with learned Fr Theiner.

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