

Pope Benedict XVI affirms call to priesthood

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of the most inspired recent actions of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, and inspirational as well, was his declaration proclaiming the time between June 2009 and June 2010 as the Year for Priests.

Interestingly, and I believe intentionally, the Holy Father did not say the Year OF the Priests, but rather the Year FOR Priests. I read into that as the pope's desire to give highlight to the great sacrament of the priesthood as the sublime vocation that gives man the unique privilege of sharing the Priesthood of Christ, the Eternal High Priest. But secondarily, I believe that the Holy Father also wanted to affirm priests everywhere in their ministry and service in the

Church, which also calls on the people of God for their recognition of the pastoral work rendered by priests, and offer appreciation and support of them. Surely, the Holy Father would also intend a stimulus for vocations to the priesthood.

However, the Year for Priests has prompted me to see it as an invitation to self-reflection on the tremendous gift of the priesthood, as I have received this privilege and lived it throughout my life. A priest's life, from my own experience, all the more so the life of a bishop, is filled with hyper-activity. In the Gospel imagery, too much "Martha," and unfortunately not enough "Mary."

And so, I find myself prompted to give time during this priestly year for prayerful introspection, with a simple



Year for Priests

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hope and goal: to grow holier and more intimate with Christ, and to give Him thanks for all that has been in my life.

These latter months of the year are occasions of various priestly anniversaries in my life, and the years are mounting. On Dec. 20, I'll mark my 48th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. On Nov. 3, I celebrated my 27th

anniversary as a bishop, and on Oct. 28, my fifth anniversary of coming to Buffalo.

What a blessing that was for me! I can truly say of all of it, I have tasted the goodness of the Lord. Also, resonating with Mary's Magnificat prayer: "God has looked with favor on his lowly servant ... the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

In his sermon on the occasion of the opening of the Year for Priests, Pope Benedict exhorted priests "to be completely enthralled by Christ ... to seek that knowledge of love which can only be learned in a heart to heart encounter with Christ." So now I have my agenda for the Year for Priests.

God Bless!

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