

Dear Friends,

God's blessings come to us in many forms and from many different kinds of people. Some of those people are the Church's ordained clergy and the men and women in religious life. The Church has a long history of praying for vocations to Holy Orders and Consecrated Life. In the Archdiocese of Washington, for example, we pray every Lent for seminarians, removing a card with a seminarian's name and biography from the Vocation Tree and committing to pray for him throughout the season.

Beginning on the First Sunday of Advent, December 3rd, we are beginning a new tradition of prayer for vocations in our parish, a Vocation Cross. At the end of one of the weekend Masses an individual or family will be presented with the Vocation Cross and a prayer card containing a Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life. On receiving the Cross the person/family commits to praying at least once a day before the Cross for vocations to the ordained and religious life *from our parish*. On the following Friday the Cross is returned to the parish office so that it may be given to another person/family that weekend. The prayer card is kept by the individual or family so that they may continue praying for vocations from our parish. Each week the bulletin will also contain the name of the person/family who has the Cross.

The Cross we will be using has special significance. It was given to me two weeks ago by the Gsahouri Family of the Little Bethlehem Christians during their parish visit. It is made from the wood of olive trees found in the Holy Land and contains soil from there as well, all of which connects us to Jesus himself.

At one time the parish made available the Elijah Cup for a similar purpose. Though also a good symbol for vocations, its primary focus is on vocations to the priesthood. The Cross is meant to encompass prayer for all forms of religious vocations within the Church.

In order for this to occur we will need families or individuals willing to take the Vocation Cross home. Beginning today, then, a sign-up sheet will be located in the narthex for anyone interested. Please print your name, contact information and the Mass you normally attend on the sheet. Someone will then contact you to schedule your week.

May the Lord raise up from our parish worthy ministers for his altar; ardent but gentle servants of the Gospel and generous souls who will renounce worldly power to serve Him and their brothers and sisters faithfully.

Peace and blessings,
Father John