

# **Priests guide the Faithful to love God and love one another!**

**How far** would you be willing to drive to go to **Church** and attend **Holy Mass**?

**Some of you** people here today live close by and had to drive **just a few minutes** to get from home to this Church.

**Some of you** live quite a distance away ... and **took some time** to get here ...  
**Some** drive here from **Cleveland** or **Corner** ...  
**Some** drive up from **Gardendale** or **Fultondale**.

**You may know** that they continue to close **churches** in the **Northeast** and consolidate **Parishes**.

**Which** means that **people** that were used to going to **one Church** ...  
now have to travel **further** to attend **another Church**.

**What if something** happened to **me** ... well I serve **2 Parishes** ...  
so they'd have to close **2 Parishes** ... **Gardendale** and **Warrior** ... and you'd  
have to travel to **Adamsville, Birmingham, Cullman** or **Trussville** for Mass.

**What if something** happened to **Fr. Tom Woods** ... well he serves **3 Parishes** ...  
so they'd have to close **3 Parishes** ... **Talladega, Childersburg & Scottsboro**.

**What if something** happened to **Fr. Larry Shinnick** ... well he serves **4 Parishes** ...  
so they'd have to close **4 Parishes** ... **Demopolis, Eutaw, Livingston, Greensboro**.

Can you see **how fragile** we are ... with **fewer Priests** servicing the needs of **more people**.

**Thankfully, if a Priest** gets sick, we can get help from **the Friars of EWTN** or **the Monks of St. Bernard** ... but that would only be on a temporary basis ...  
and **those Priests** would only offer **the Sunday Mass** ... not manage **Parish life**.

**So the fact that your Priests** are stretched so thin  
**is a cause for concern** ... **for prayer** ... and **for action**.

**Today, the Church** celebrates **Priesthood Sunday** for a number of reasons ...

1. To elevate your awareness of **the vital role** that **the Priest** plays  
in guiding and guarding souls to the Kingdom of Heaven.

**No Priest** ... **no Mass** ... **no Eucharist** ... **no Confession** ... **no Last Rites!**

2. To elevate your appreciation of **the Priests you have** and **the work** that they do.  
**Priests: pray** for you 3 times/da. Pay **bills**, **teach** Youth & RCIA, **counsel**, prepare couples for **Marriage**, perform **Funerals** and **Baptisms**, hear **Confessions**, visit **Sick, Homebound, Prisoners**. They keep you aware of **the Greatest Commandments: to love God and Neighbor!**

3. To encourage you to pray for your Priests ... and to pray for more Priests.

If we consider the average lifetime to be **50 years**, I'd like to share with you ...  
**how drastically things can change in one lifetime** ...  
by sharing some statistics that cover the 50 year period 1964 to 2014:

	<b>1964</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Number of Priests</b>	<b>59,000</b>	<b>38,000</b>	<b>- 21,000</b>
<b>Number of Catholics</b>	<b>49 M</b>	<b>77 M</b>	<b>+ 28 M</b>
<b>Parishes w/o a Pastor</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>+ 3,000</b>
<b>Percentage of active Priests</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>- 26%</b>
<b>Priesthood Ordinations</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>- 500</b>

**What do you think? Are you concerned? You should be!**

**Who's going to minister to your children ... and your children's children?**

**Fifty years ago ... you had a younger Priesthood ...**  
**with depth of 2 or 3 Priests at most parishes.**

**Now you have mostly middle age and older Priests in your Parishes ...**  
**with no back up ... and with many handling 2 or 3 or even 4 Parishes!**

**We see it ... hopefully you see it ... and we know God sees it.**

**So what are we to do?**

**Well, as you know ... prayer is always a good starting point ...**  
**and so I'd like to ask that you pray every day for two things:**

- 1. God's blessing on the Priests currently serving the Church.**
- 2. God's blessing on those He's calling ... that they accept the call ...  
to go to Seminary to be trained and formed to serve the Church in the future.**

**To assist you in praying for our 45 Diocesan Priests and 20 Religious order Priests.**  
**we will soon have available a Poster listing all of the Priests ...**  
**spread across the year according to their Birthday ...**  
**so that you would be able to keep them in mind and in prayer.**

**And to assist you in praying for the men who will be our future Priests, I ask you to add a tiny prayer into each Rosary that you pray ... that begs God to send more Priests to serve His Church.**

**I know that this prayer works!**

**It's being used in many Dioceses around the Country and now Bishop Baker has endorsed us using it in our Diocese.**

**I first encountered this prayer living in Atlanta before I entered the Seminary. Everyone in Atlanta prayed this little Prayer for vocations in the Rosary.**

**Please take up your Holy Card and let's pray the Prayer together ...**

**It comes right after each Glory Be and the Fatima Prayer ... so it's prayed 6 times in every Rosary.**

**When I entered the Seminary in 1997, B'ham had 7 Seminarians - Atlanta had 40! Praying this prayer works!**

**You may say ... well Atlanta has a larger population ... and it does ... But the Diocese of Nashville is about our size and they have 30 Seminarians The Diocese of Knoxville is about our size and they have 40 Seminarians And the Diocese of Wichita is smaller than us and they have 60 Seminarians!**

**So the prayer works. And it will work for us here in Birmingham.**

**And when it does, we're going to have to be ready to fund the training and formation of many extra men in the Seminary.**

**And so Bishop Baker is resurrecting a fund that's unknown to many ...**

**The Burse Fund under the new name The Seminarian Fund.**

**I'm proud to say that we've never set that fund aside in our two Parishes and have remained two of just a few Parishes who consistently contribute to the training of our future Priests.**

**The guideline from years ago was to contribute \$2 a month to this collection in your envelopes. I want to encourage you to continue that practice and to begin it if you haven't already.**

**With everyone playing a part, we'll have the money to train 20 or 30 men/ year.**

**We need replacement Priests badly!**

**Last year, we lost 4 active Priests to death!**

**3 in their 50's: Fr Michael Wrigley, St. Barnabas, Birmingham**

**Fr. Andy Sullivan, St. Joseph, Florence**

**Fr. David Buchanan, St. Cecelia, Jasper**

**1 in his 70's: Fr. Jim Naughton, St. Theresa, Leeds**

**This year, we've lost 1 active Priest to poor health & retirement to nursing home.**

**Fr. Don Forsythe, Our Lady of the Shoals, Tuscumbia**

**On Friday, we lost Fr. Des Regan, a retired Priest to death.**

**And we have no supply of extra Priests to replace them. Why?**

**We did not have any Priests ordained this past June.**

**We will not have a Priestly ordination next June.**

**And it will be until June of 2016 before we ordain 2 Priests for our Diocese ...**

**God-willing ... Jim Handerhan and Wyman Vincent!**

**Priests are fragile ... just like you ... and they don't go on forever.**

**Bishop Baker is very sick and remains hospitalized now for 2 weeks.**

**Thankfully. Bishop Foley is taking over some of his duties.**

**Please take this Priesthood staffing situation seriously.**

**How far do you want to drive on Sunday**

**to be able to pray the Greatest Most Powerful Prayer ... the Mass,**

**and be able to receive ... the Bread of Life?**

**On this Priesthood Sunday,**

**Renew your commitment to pray for Priests ... current and future.**

**Renew your commitment to contribute monthly to the training of future Priests.**

**Remember,**

**No Priest ... no Mass,**

**No Priest ... no Eucharist**

**No Priest ... no Confession**

**No Priest ... no Last Rites**

**Invest yourself in prayer and action**

**to generate an increase in the number of Priests**

**to care for you ... your children ... and your children's children.**

