



A Pastoral Letter

On the World Day of Prayer for Vocations

To be read at all Masses on Sunday 26th April 2026

My dear brothers and sisters,

On this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Pope Leo calls young people across the world to *“listen to the voice of the Lord who invites you to a full and fruitful life.”* The Holy Father urges the young to seek something more than self-knowledge, for, he insists it is in *“the beauty of the Divine light”* they will find their vocation by *“the interior encounter with Christ in prayer.”* Pope Leo encourages them to do this by spending generous time in Eucharistic Adoration, meditating on the Word of God and frequenting the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharistⁱ.

Today, I want to join Pope Leo in inviting all considering their calling to take these steps to discover their vocation, whether this will be found in Christian Marriage; the Consecrated Life of Sisters or Brothers; the Catholic Priesthood; the service of the Diaconate; or the greatness of the lay vocation lived in the midst of the world. On this Good Shepherd Sunday, I want to focus on the one vocation on which all other vocations in the Church depend: namely, the Ordained Priesthood. During his apostolic visit to Britain, Pope Benedict called for an outpouring of prayer for vocations to the Priesthood because, he said, *“the more the lay apostolate grows, the more urgently the need for priests is felt”*ⁱⁱ.

Saint John Vianney invited everyone to consider the place of the priest in their lives, from the day of our Baptism to every Mass and Holy Communion, to every Confession and Absolution, and in the great crises of life, most especially the last. We might think of the many priests we have known, yet the Scriptures remind us there is but one Priest and Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. It is into His Priesthood that every priest is ordained, to give his life for the salvation of his brothers and sistersⁱⁱⁱ. By this total self-gift of each priest, we can recognise the true Shepherd of our souls^{iv}, He who came *“that (we) may have life and have it abundantly”*^v.

Today, in Shrewsbury Diocese, we must give thanks for the 12 men who are at various stages of their training for the Priesthood; for the constant stream of men coming forward to engage in our Discernment Programme in both Stockport and Shrewsbury; and for those regularly attending our Vocations Group to first consider their calling. The flourishing of all these initiatives is supported by your prayer and the dedicated prayer every day at our Diocesan Shrine of Eucharistic Adoration at Saint Joseph's, Stockport.

The Second Vatican Council insisted every member of the faithful has a responsibility to so pray and support new vocations to the Ministerial Priesthood.^{vi} This is a good day for us to consider our part in praying and supporting new and generous vocations to the Priesthood, not least by the joyful living of our own vocation. I want to thank all the priests of the Diocese for their faithful witness; and recall the moving moment when they gathered at the Cathedral on the eve of Holy Thursday, to renew their priestly commitment in the light of that day when the Eucharist and the Priesthood were 'born together.' They declared their resolve from the day of ordination to the end to *"follow Christ the Head and Shepherd, not seeking any gain, but moved only by zeal for souls"*^{vii}.

Our Lady is the model of this joyful faithfulness, as Pope Leo observes, showing every member of the Church how to listen in prayer and receive the gift of their vocation. Let us entrust to Our Lady's prayers, the 12 men now preparing for the Priesthood, and all coming forward to consider the priestly vocation on which the future mission of our Shrewsbury Diocese so much depends.

United with you in this prayer,

+ *Mark*

Bishop of Shrewsbury

ⁱ Message of Pope Leo XIV for 63rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 26th April 2026

ⁱⁱ Mass at Westminster Cathedral, 18th September 2010

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Preface of the Chrism Mass

^{iv} I Pet. 2: 25

^v Jn. 10: 10

^{vi} Cf. Decree on the Training of Priests, *Optatam Totius*, No. 2

^{vii} Renewal of Priestly Promises at the Chrism Mass