

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

On the first weekend in February, in union with the Church throughout the world as we celebrate the Feast of Christ's Presentation in the Temple, we give thanks to God for the gift of consecrated life. You know them as nuns, as brothers, as priests. They lead what we call "the religious life," making a difference for all of us. From the very earliest days of the Church, we have always been blessed by the selfless generosity of zealous men and women who have chosen to completely consecrate their lives to the Lord through vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience, thus living their baptismal vocation to its utmost.

The Archdiocese of Detroit and our state of Michigan have been enormously influenced by the contribution of women and men religious who founded many of our health care facilities and who have founded and/or staffed countless schools, colleges, children's homes, and social agencies. Indeed, generations of Catholics in the United States have been formed and shaped by the presence and ministry of women and men religious in parish settings, health care, educational and social service institutions. At every moment of the life journey, we have been able to turn to such dedicated professional people, receiving not only competent service, but also a service rooted in love and motivated by deep faith. What a difference they have made!

But where do we go from here? Over the past several decades, we have witnessed the number of women and men religious greatly diminish in our country and in many parts of the world. And yet, for the sake of our needs and the needs of others, the Holy Spirit continues to call men and women to serve the Church in religious life. The vocation to religious life is a necessary and healthy complement to the diocesan priesthood, Christian marriage, and the single life.

A call to religious life is ultimately a call to commit one's entire life – body and spirit – to the Lord and the Church. This call can take many forms of expression: as a cloistered contemplative or in pastoral service in parishes or other settings. While ministries vary, those called to religious life find joy in their commitment to their community, as well as through loving relationships with those they serve.

Undoubtedly, your parish enjoys the gift of someone in religious life. Feel free to speak to him or her about their experience, and if you would like to learn more about one of the many religious communities located within our Archdiocese or would like to surface the name of someone who might be a good candidate for religious life, please feel free to take one of the cards available in your church and mail it back to the archdiocesan Vocation Office. This process of using cards to identify candidates proved very successful in the past; I trust the same thing will prove true with our current initiative.

You may recall that approximately a year-and-a-half ago we started a similar process, "*Try It On*," for vocations to the diocesan priesthood. Today, we are focusing on religious life. Whatever your vocation, God calls each of us to intimacy with Him through lives of prayer and service. Inspired by Christ's Presentation in the Temple, let us pledge to the Lord and each other our commitment to live our baptismal calling as fully as possible each and every day.

With deep gratitude for the presence and ministry of the many religious in our Archdiocese over the years, I remain
Sincerely yours in the Lord,

†Adam Cardinal Maida
Archbishop of Detroit

Issued on the Feast of Christ's Presentation in The Temple
February 3, 2003