



Crucifixion, Andrea Da Firenze, 1370,
Pinacoteca, Vatican

Remembering Vocations in your Lenten Devotions—2023

“... Jesus Christ, who during his earthly life called many to consecrated life, is still doing so in today's world Knowing the Church's needs, he continues to extend the invitation, "Follow me," especially to young people, whom his grace makes responsive to the ideal of a life of total dedication.

"... He also teaches us today that with prayer we can and must influence the number of vocations. The Father welcomes this prayer because he wants it and expects it, and he himself makes it effective. ... In this area the whole Church and every Christian always have a responsibility.¹

Pope John-Paul II

During the years 2022 to 2024, the Church in the United States is conducting a Eucharistic Revival which will culminate in a National Eucharistic Congress in July 2024. Because the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is central to our life in the Church, ample numbers of priests are essential for the practice of our faith. For this year's devotion, we are adding a reflection on a Eucharistic Miracle to focus our prayers and thoughts on the need for more vocations.

Meditation.

February 22—Ash Wednesday: “The source of every perfect gift is God who is Love ... ‘Whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him’ (1 Jn 4:16). Sacred Scripture tells the story of this original bond between God and man, which precedes creation itself. ... Every specific vocation is in fact born of the initiative of God; *it is a gift of the Love of God!* He is the One who takes the ‘first step’...”² **Reflection:** “...Carlo Acutis, a fifteen-year-old boy in love with the Eucharist, was beatified. He did not settle into comfortable inaction, but grasped the needs of his time because in the weakest he saw the face of Christ...” *Pope Francis* “To always be close to Jesus, that’s my life plan.” *Blessed Carlo Acutis*

February 26—First Sunday of Lent: “How can we fail to thank God today for all those missionaries who for five centuries of history were committed to the evangelization of the Continent? The Church is greatly indebted to them. Many of their names are known to us because they have been raised to the glory of the altars. But most of those missionaries remain unknown, the majority of them Religious, to whom America owes much, not only religiously but also culturally.”³ A vocation is a gift and a calling from Christ Himself. **Reflection:** In Lanciano, Italy around 750, a priest experienced doubts concerning Jesus’ actual presence in the Eucharist. As he said the consecration, he witnessed the wine and bread turn into real human blood and flesh. The blood then coagulated into five globules, which represented the five wounds of Christ.

March 5—Second Sunday of Lent: “At the beginning of his public life, the Lord called some fishermen on the shore of the Sea of Galilee: ‘Follow me and I will make you fishers of men’ (Mt 4:19).”⁴ We are part of his plan for the salvation of humanity; we must accept His call. **Reflection:** In Chirattakonam, India in 2001, during Eucharistic Adoration at St. Mary’s parish, three red stains appeared on the Eucharistic host. The priest placed the host back into the tabernacle. Several days later, the priest looked at the host more closely. The red stains had arranged themselves to look like a man.

March 12—Third Sunday of Lent: “... do not tire of proclaiming to a world hungry for truth the living Christ, our sole salvation. He alone is our peace, he alone is that richness from which we can always receive strength and inner joy.”² We pray for priests to lead our celebration. **Reflection:** In Lourdes, France, on August 22, 1888, Pietro

¹ Pope John-Paul II, General Audience of October 19, 1994

² Pope Benedict XVI, 49th World Day of Prayer for Vocations

³ *A New Evangelization*, The Synod of Bishops for America, July 15, 1999

⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, 48th World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Delanoy, who suffered from ataxia for many years, was instantly cured when the tabernacle containing the Eucharist passed by during the procession for the blessing of the sick.

March 19—Fourth Sunday of Lent: “Lent is a season of intense prayer, fasting and concern for those in need. It offers all Christians an opportunity to prepare for Easter by serious discernment about their lives, with particular attention to the word of God, which enlightens the daily journey of all who believe.”⁵ **Reflection:** In Betania, Venezuela in 1991, during the consecration at a mass, the priest broke the host into four sections and consumed one piece. Shortly, one of the remaining pieces displayed a red spot exuding a red substance. After a series of tests, it was confirmed that the red spot was blood of type AB and came from a living heart.

March 26—Fifth Sunday of Lent: “Thanks to men and women obedient to the Holy Spirit, many forms of charitable work intended to promote development have arisen in the Church: hospitals, universities, professional formation schools, and small businesses. Such initiatives demonstrate the genuine humanitarian concern of those moved by the Gospel message, far in advance of other forms of social welfare.”³ Through our prayers for vocations and our sacrifices for the common good, God seeks holy men and women to minister to His flock. **Reflection:** In Spain, Miguel-Juan Pellicer’s leg was amputated due to an accident. In March of 1640, after a vigil in honor of the Virgin, he rubbed his leg with oil from the tabernacle lamp in the Sanctuary. When his mother went to check on her son, she saw him sleeping, and discovered that from beneath the blanket stuck out not one, but two feet. He had miraculously recovered his lost limb.

April 2—Palm Sunday: “I therefore invite parents to pray, that the hearts of their children may be open to listening to the Good Shepherd, and that each tiny seed of a vocation may grow into a mature tree, bearing much good fruit for the Church and for all humanity”⁶ Pray for vocations and support ministries to those who are in need. **Reflection:** In Tixtla, Mexico, in 2006, in the Parish of St. Martin of Tours, a consecrated host began secreting a red substance. In the study to determine its origin a microscopic analysis showed that it was blood of type AB.

April 7—Good Friday: “Christ offers his own example and issues the invitation to follow him. He asks those who hear his voice to give their lives for others. This sacrifice is a source of self-fulfillment and joy, as is seen in the eloquent example of those men and women who, leaving all security behind, have not hesitated to risk their lives as missionaries in different parts of the world.”⁴ We must reflect upon the need for enough priests to minister to the needs of the faithful by celebrating the mass.” **Reflection:** In Legnica, Poland in 2013, on Christmas Day, the priest picked up a consecrated host that had accidentally fallen to the floor and placed it in water to dissolve. Suddenly, a reddish color appeared on the host. Testing determined that the tissue came from a human heart in the agony of death.

Serra Prayer for Vocations ⁷

O God, Who wills not the death of a sinner but rather that he be converted and live, grant we beseech you, through the intercession of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Saint Joseph, her spouse, St. Junipero Serra, and all the saints, an increase of laborers for your Church, fellow laborers with Christ to spend and consume themselves for souls through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

Amen



Christ Blessing the Children, CRANACH, Lucas the Elder, 1535-40, Städtisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt



For information on vocations, go to:

<https://serraus.org/> or

<https://www.catholic.org/vocations/> or

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/clergy-consecrated-life-vocations/vocations>

© 2023, USA Council of Serra International

⁵ Message of His Holiness Pope John-Paul II for Lent 2003

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, 25 April 2010

⁷ Serra Prayer for Vocations

Reflections: <https://www.eucharisticmiraclesoftheworld.org/> and <https://carloacutis-en.org/>

Pictures © www.wga.hu, used with permission, education/not-for-profit