

2007 Shepherds' Trust Pulpit Address

Good morning/afternoon,

As a layperson, it is hard for me to imagine the call to priesthood. It is even more difficult to envision responding yes to God's call.

Selfishly, I begin to list all of the things I would be giving up – the obvious of course, certain personal freedoms, marriage, children, grandchildren, perhaps a lucrative career, owning my own home, and a planned retirement.

And yet, even after considering all of that, our priests answered yes to God's call. In doing so, they gave up a lifestyle they were both familiar and comfortable with. They so loved God they gave up what many of us take for granted. They did it not because God promised them an easy path, because God promised them just the opposite. He promised them a life lived in service to others. They did it out of love for God and for his people. Answering their call to priesthood was and is, a true act of love.

Our priests responded, "Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord? I will go Lord and I will hold your people in my heart. They didn't say, how will I be compensated Lord, or what will happen to me when I can no longer serve?"

Our retired priests have held us in their hearts every day since they answered the call to priesthood. They have held us in their hearts through the tremendous ups and downs of life, comforting us and counseling us through broken marriages and the loss of loved ones, administering the sacraments, strengthening our faith when we were ready to give up, building schools and churches, helping us to find jobs, or a place to live, lending a helping hand to those rejected by society, and other endless and often heroic works of charity. Our priests are with their flock at their happiest moments and at their

saddest, and their presence is deeply felt and appreciated by those whom they serve.

My dear friends, we have been richly served for many years. I have a profound respect and affection for the priests that I know and continue to come to know. Our priests deserve our deepest gratitude. They also need and deserve our continuing support.

Our retired priests have saved what they could for their retirement, but their earning opportunities were different than most and their wages through years of service to us, were modest. Because they retire at age 75, illness and disability in retirement can mean increased hardships.

The Shepherds' Trust bridges the financial gap to allow our priests to retire with dignity care, and peace of mind, providing adequate pensions, healthcare and other assistance as needed. For those priests who are ill or otherwise infirm, the Shepherds' Trust is there to ensure that they have access to nursing home facilities and medical care.

The idea of the Shepherds' Trust began with a group of lay people and to me is a fitting reflection of our gratitude. We have reaped the benefit of our clergy's unselfish service to ourselves and our families for generations. Now we are called to serve them. Let us respond in kind, here I am Lord.

Your donation to the Shepherds' Trust collection next week can be made in a single donation, a series of post dated cheques (like I do), a transfer of securities or even a remembrance in your Will. Donations can also be made online through the Shepherds' Trust web site.

I know our retired priests can count on the parishioners of **[parish name]** to be as generous as possible. I know too, that they are grateful

and deeply touched not only by your generosity but also by your genuine love for them and your recognition of their years of devoted service to you and your families. Dignity, care and peace of mind are our gift to them.

Thank-you and God bless you all.