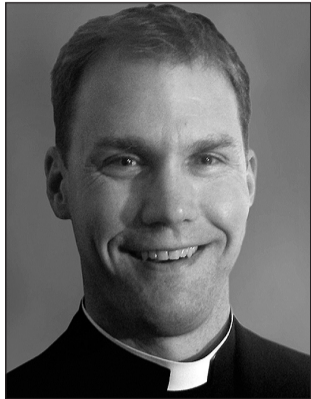


Vocations boost as more and more turn to priesthood

THE oft-stated claim that young men nowadays don't want to be priests is given the lie by the number of them in Sydney alone who are now in training for the priesthood – the 39 young men at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd, 21 young men at the Redemptorist Mater Seminary and countless numbers in formation with orders such as the Dominicans and the Capuchin Friars.

The number of seminarians is increasing worldwide and this has been apparent in Sydney for some time.

The past two years has seen the ordination of 10 young men in St Mary's Cathedral, with further ordinations scheduled for May this year.



'NO PRESSURE': Fr Michael de Stoop.

The Vocation Centre of the archdiocese of Sydney is hard at work offering confidential spiritual guidance and retreats for those discerning priestly and religious life.

This year it offers two discernment retreats for *Men considering the*

Priesthood (April 8-10, September 23-25), two seminary inquiry days (May 29 and October 30) as well as monthly reflection days throughout 2011 called *Silence and Solitude Sundays*.

There is also a retreat for women on prayer, discernment, marriage and consecrated life (March 11-13), as well as one later in the year for women considering consecrated life (November 25-27).

On top of it all, the Vocation Centre is about the launch a new DVD on the priesthood as well as a weekly Vocations Show on the online Catholic radio station CRADIO, offering in-depth interviews, testimonies and the chance to ask questions about vocations.

"These retreats, reflection and inquiry days for young men considering whether Christ is calling them to the priesthood is a time for these men to go deeper, ask questions, and meet up with peers who are undertaking a similar journey" says the archdiocesan director of Vocations, Fr Michael de Stoop.

"The men take much spiritual enrichment, knowledge and support from these retreats.

"They know when they come along that there is no pressure and no strings attached.



'SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT': Seminarians at Theology on Tap last year with the rector of the Good Shepherd Seminary, Fr Tony Percy. Photo: Giovanni Portelli.

"You see, my role as director of vocations is to help young people discern what God is really calling them to; there is never a question of trying to 'recruit' or influence someone who is not called.

"For instance, I have assisted some young men to see they are actually called to marriage.

"It is their vocation, their choice as to how they exercise their freedom and it's also their responsibility to genuinely listen to what God is asking them."

The Vocation Centre is also hard at work helping parishes to be supportive and caring places for young people discerning their vocation.

This month sees the launch of a Vocations

Co-ordinators Resource Kit.

And today (Sunday, February 27) the Archbishop of Sydney, George Cardinal Pell, in a service at St Mary's Cathedral, is commissioning the first group of lay volunteers who will implement the kit in their parishes.

Elizabeth Arblaster of the Vocation Centre says: "The lay people who have volunteered to be parish vocations co-ordinators know that we need to support priests in this work so that our young people hear vocations stories, see positive examples of all vocations and have a prayerful and informed community that will support them as they listen

to God's call.

"In doing this work, these lay people are giving life to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI's desire that young people need to be supported in their local churches and 'feel the warmth of the whole community as they respond yes to God and the Church'.

"We want to hear from those lay people and we feel passionate about training and supporting them."

For discernment resources, information about retreats, receiving confidential guidance, or becoming a parish vocations co-ordinator, call the Vocation Centre on 9390 5970, email vocations@sydneycatholic.org or visit www.vocationcentre.org.au

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Fr Gabriel Maliakkal OCD

March 18-20: A Retreat for Young Adults, 18-35
'Come Away to Chill'
Come away for a peaceful weekend to deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ. Enjoy a time of faith-sharing, meditation and prayer with like-minded peers.
Fr Bernard Hancock OCD

FOR DETAILS VISIT OUR WEBSITE
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CWL starts its year with Mass and a new State president

By Jennifer Duke

CAROLYN Metcalfe was inducted as the new NSW state president of Catholic Women's League earlier this month.

The installation Mass was held at St Mary's Church, Noraville, and was concelebrated by the Bishop of Broken Bay, Bishop David Walker, and Fr Peter D'Souza msfs, parish priest of Toukley, and assistant priest Fr Joseph Rebello msfs.

Past president Catherine McGrath entered the church with the state banner and was escorted by the former executive members.

Executive members were then presented with their badges.

Moya Potts, president of CWL Sydney, welcomed Mrs Metcalfe to the role and wished her well on behalf of Sydney members.

CWL Sydney celebrated the start of its working year on February 8 with a Mass at the Polding Centre and an address by Kathryn Greiner.

"Mrs Greiner engaged the audience with her many and varied commitments, while speaking highly of our organisa-



CWL YEAR: Kathryn Greiner and CWL Sydney president Moya Potts after the CWL meeting.

tion and the continued role CWL plays within the Church," Mrs Potts said.

"She spoke of her mother's involvement with the League and was delighted to know the work of the CWL continues."

Fr Ray Farrell, CWL Sydney chaplain, asked members to pray for victims of recent natural disasters.

The Sydney branch will host a Mad Hatter's Tea Party on March 22, with all proceeds being donated to the CWL Project of the Year in Sri Lanka.

"We look forward to a successful and productive year for CWL," Mrs Potts said.