

## Pope prays for vocations to priesthood



On Sunday, the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Pope Benedict XVI asked families, communities and local parishes to help young men in discerning their vocation to the priesthood.

“Dear friends, pray for the Church, every local community, that they are like a garden in which can germinate and ripen all the seeds of vocation that God sows in abundance,” said the Pope in his midday Regina Caeli address to pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square April 29.

“In particular, families are the first environment into which ‘breathes’ the love of God, which gives inner strength even in the midst of the difficulties and trials of life.”

Earlier in the morning Pope Benedict XVI had ordained nine new priests for the Diocese of Rome in St Peter’s Basilica. He explained that those young men were, in fact, “no different from other young people” apart from the fact that “they had been deeply touched by the beauty of God’s love, and could not help but respond with their whole lives.”

The Pope gave thanks to God for the ordinations, deeming them a sign of God’s “provident and faithful love for the Church.” He asked pilgrims to pray that “all young people be attentive to the voice of God that speaks inwardly to their heart and calls them to break away from everything to serve Him.”

“The Lord is always calling” he said, adding that “many times we do not listen” due to being “distracted by many things” or by being “afraid to hear the voice of the Lord because we think it might take away our freedom.”

The answer to these fears is the recognition that our freedom is “fully realized” in responding to love and, in particular, to the love of God.

The newly ordained priests, the Pope said, had met this love of God through “Jesus Christ in the

Gospels, the Eucharist and the Church community” where they too discovered that “the life of every man is a love story.”

“Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you!” Pope Benedict continued, quoting the famous phrase of St. Augustine’s “Confessions.”

Recent statistics have shown the numbers of men applying for the priesthood around the world is on the rise. The Pope commended all those discerning such a vocation to the Virgin Mary, calling her “mother of every vocation in the Church.”

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