



# Into the Depths

## Priests Pedaling for Prayers: A Vocations Awareness Ride

by Fr. Tom Otto

Ambitious. Crazy. Exciting. Painful. Zealous. These are perhaps a few of the words to describe an idea that originated in the mind of our diocese's newest priest, Fr.



Michael Pica (affectionately known as "Padre Pica"). Still too young and too enlivened by the Holy Spirit to distinguish possible from impossible, Padre Pica proposed to Fr. Adam Cesarek and me that we ride our bicycles across the entire Diocese of Peoria.

The. Entire. Diocese. In case you are unaware, our diocese stretches from Iowa to Indiana, so riding the entire width of our diocese means riding all the way across the state of Illinois! He suggested that the point

of the ride would be to stop at parishes and schools along the way to talk about the vocation of the priesthood. Given our love for both the priesthood and cycling, Fr. Adam and I immediately and wholeheartedly agreed...without quite realizing just how colossal of an undertaking this would be!

Well, several months and reality-checks later, we are still on track for the first-ever event that we have dubbed: "Priests Pedaling for Prayers: A Vocations Awareness Ride." (Our goal was to keep the name shorter than the ride itself...we barely succeeded.)

On Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup> we will depart from the Quad

Cities and on Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, we will (hopefully!) arrive in Danville, after a week of sharing our love for the priesthood and challenging thousands to pray for vocations! Our route will include stops in the following towns: East Moline, Rock Island, Monmouth, Galesburg, Peoria, Morton, Bloomington-Normal, Pontiac, Champaign-Urbana, and Danville, and perhaps a few more. Stay tuned for more info on these events in the coming month!

We are hoping to make this event an annual one, so even if we aren't stopping in your town this year, next year's route just might take us right past your front door! We hope to see you at one of our events or cheering on the side of the road somewhere along the route...but most of all, we hope that you make praying for vocations a part of your everyday prayer life. God answers our prayers in ways that we often cannot see

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|   <b>Tentative Schedule</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| Sunday, April 23rd   | Quad Cities                                |
| Monday, April 24th   | Quad Cities to Monmouth/<br>Galesburg      |
| Tuesday, April 25th  | Monmouth/Galesburg to<br>Peoria Area       |
| Wednesday, April 26th  | Peoria to Bloomington<br>(via Pontiac)     |
| Thursday, April 27th   | Bloomington to Danville<br>(via Champaign) |

# Upcoming Events

The excitement continues into the spring as we plan our upcoming events. For more information on the Peoria Priests Pedaling for Prayers ride across the diocese, please check our Facebook page: [Facebook.com/FollowMePeoria](https://www.facebook.com/FollowMePeoria).

We invite every one of our vocation supporters and their families to commit to praying and sacrificing with the priests as they ride. To commit online, go to [comeandfollowme.org/howtohelp/prayer-and-sacrifice](https://comeandfollowme.org/howtohelp/prayer-and-sacrifice). There will also be commitment forms available through the parishes and schools

at which the priests will be stopping.

Please keep the current applicants to the seminary in your prayers in a special way. We will be able to announce our new seminarians in the summer issue of this newsletter.

Speaking of this newsletter, in order to save resources, we are moving to a quarterly edition. We are also grateful for those who opt to receive an electronic version. To do so, simply email Amy at

[achovan@cdop.org](mailto:achovan@cdop.org).

Finally, we are grateful for your continued prayers as we prepare for Emmaus Days and Totus Tuus. Emmaus Days has been going strong for more than 30 years, and it continues to be a consistent source of vocations, as well as a great opportunity for young men of the diocese to grow in virtue and

come closer to Christ. Please encourage any young men who are entering 7th grade or older to attend Emmaus Days. You may consider sponsoring one.



## Priestly Vocation Statistics\*

58% attended at least 1 year of Catholic School

50% were active in a Catholic Newman Center

58% attended Emmaus Days before entering seminary

Age when they heard the call:

- 5 or Under: 5%
- 6-13: 32%
- 14-18: 21%
- 18-21: 32%
- 22+: 10%

45% said a parish priest first made them think about the call

89% said Eucharistic adoration had a positive or very positive impact on their decision

87% had parents who were married in the Church

\*from a survey of seminarians and junior clergy of our diocese

## What is Your Apostolate?

by Fr. Timothy D. Hepner

There was a palpable feeling of excitement at the Hundredfold Parish Vocation Apostolate Workshop on January 21st. It was the feeling of gaining traction, of developing a plan, and of finally putting

flesh on a long-held (though sometimes nebulous) desire. After hearing author and speaker Rhonda Gruenewald lay out practical advice on developing a parish vocations plan, talking it over with each

other, and handing it all over to Jesus in Mass, 150 people from around the diocese left Peoria energized and ready to begin the next steps.

Each group has a plan, along with members and resources to help them get started. As you read this, many are taking

their first steps—planning vocations holy hours, putting petitions for vocations in the Mass, writing to seminarians, inviting religious sisters to speak at their schools, and just digging their hands into the soil to

create a climate for vocations.

From here, we at the Office of Priestly Vocations plan to stay in touch with the vocations apostolates and help provide them with resources. Many of our religious communities were able to make

personal connections with faithful from around the diocese as well, and they have generously offered themselves as resources also. Sometimes beginning a new endeavor can be daunting, but Gruenewald helped the groups break things down into small steps

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# Passage to Pray With:

## YOU ARE SALT AND LIGHT

“Jesus said to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”

~Matthew 5:13-16



## Ground cont'd.

that even a few people could do. Each group is encouraged to start with prayer, which is the simplest and most effective way to promote vocations.

They've also been asked to make contact with their pastor and ask for his blessing. But the beautiful thing is that most of the ideas that were shared at the workshop can be initiated and sustained by the laity. As the scripture quote above this article and the quote from John Paul II to the right indicate, we live in an age in which the laity are urged to engage in the activity of the Church and to show their dignity through apostolic activity. This is how they will shine their light before others, “that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”

As I recently said in a homily (which can be heard by going to [www.comeandfollowme.org](http://www.comeandfollowme.org) and clicking on the “Resources” tab, then “Homilies & Talks,” we don't have a crisis of a particular vocation in the Church—be it priesthood, religious life, or marriage—as much as we have a crisis of Christian discipleship. If each baptized Christian brought the sacrificial love of Christ into their work and life, vocations would naturally spring from this. We would all be reminded that a life totally given to Christ isn't wasted at all, but adds something irreplaceable to the world—like salt to food.

So what is your apostolate in the world? Does it involve actively praying for and promoting vocations? Do you fall into the trap of thinking that the apostolic life is only for priests and religious? Or do you hear Jesus telling you that *you* are salt and light, and know that you have the power through baptism and the Eucharist (and matrimony if you are married) to bring the irreplaceable love of Christ into the world?

If you weren't able to make it to the workshop in January but would still like to participate in a parish vocations apostolate, contact our office at (309) 671-1550 or [fr\\_hepner@cdop.org](mailto:fr_hepner@cdop.org) and we can connect you with an apostolate nearby, or give you the tools to begin one yourself.

One final note: we would like to thank those who have already been praying and working for vocations for many years in the diocese. Many former vocation teams, as well as individual efforts by parishioners, are still persevering like hot embers from a fire. Our hope is that we can reinvigorate these embers by drawing them close together and giving them new inspiration, and allow this fire for vocations to continue.

## Quote of the Month

“A new state of affairs today both in the Church and in social, economic, political and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action of the lay faithful. If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle... Since the work that awaits everyone in the vineyard of the Lord is so great there is no place for idleness. With even greater urgency the ‘householder’ repeats his invitation: ‘You go into my vineyard too.’ (Matthew 20:7)”

~ St. John Paul II, *On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*

## THE LIFE OF PRAYER:

“By prayer the soul is cleansed from sin, replenished with charity, confirmed in faith, strengthened, and refreshed in spirit. Prayer establishes the inward man, brings peace to the heart, knows the truth, conquers temptations, expels sorrow, renews the senses, stirs up languishing virtue, puts to flight tepidity, and scours the rust of vices. In prayer, the quick sparkles of celestial desires are incessantly sent forth, from the burning coals of divine love. The privileges of prayer are rare, the prerogatives admirable. Prayer unlocks the gates of heaven, manifests divine secrets, and always finds free access to the ears of God.”

~St. Bonaventure

“If you would: Patiently endure adversity; Overcome tribulation and temptations; Trample upon your perverse inclinations; Know the deceits of Satan, and avoid them; Live joyfully in the work of God; Peacefully endure the way of labor and affliction; Exercise yourself in a spiritual course; Not walk according to the desires of the flesh; Put to flight your vain or troubling thoughts; Nourish your soul with holy thoughts; Cultivate in your heart good desires, fervor, and devotion; Strengthen and establish your heart and constant purpose in the service of God; Uproot vice and sin and plant virtue in your soul...**be a person of prayer.**”

~Johannes de Caulibus

or understand, so always remember to “ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest!” (Mt. 9:38) Oh, and pray, too, that our legs don’t fall off!



*~Fr. Tom Otto is a parochial vicar in Monmouth, Raritan, and Alexis. He was ordained in 2013.*

## Upcoming Installations & Ordinations

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| April 21st | Taylor Caputo will be Installed in the Ministry of Lector, Mount St. Mary’s Seminary  |
| April 22nd | Danny McShane will be installed in the Ministry of Acolyte, Mount St. Mary’s Seminary   |
| May 20th   | Ryan Mattingly and Andru O’Brien will be ordained to the transitional diaconate (invitation-only event due to large number of permanent deacons being ordained as well), Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Peoria |
| May 27th   | Dcn. Lee Brokaw will be ordained to the priesthood, Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Peoria  |

**WANT TO SUPPORT PRIESTLY VOCATIONS? KNOW A YOUNG MAN WHO MAY BE CALLED? CONTACT US:**

**CALL 309-671-1550 OR VISIT US ONLINE AT [COMEANDFOLLOWME.ORG](http://COMEANDFOLLOWME.ORG)**

# FOLLOW ME.

Everyone is called to something. What’s your calling?

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*Want to save paper and help us be good stewards? Sign up for an electronic copy: email [achovan@cdop.org](mailto:achovan@cdop.org).*