

**Homily for the Opening of National Vocation Awareness Week
32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time**

Yesterday we had the great joy of coming together as an Archdiocese at St. Mary's University for our 2016 Assembly. 4000 faithful from throughout the Archdiocese gathered to represent all of our parishes and communities under our beautiful theme, "United as Church." Indeed we were gathered as a Church in Christ Jesus. And now this morning, throughout our country, we have the joy of starting the annual National Vocation Awareness Week. This is a week in which we remember the vocations to which God calls his people in this life, and how we are all called to promote vocations in the Church, as a Church. Pope Francis reminds us of our unified mission to help all our brothers and sisters find their vocation. As our Holy Father said last year: "The call of God comes to us by means of a mediation which is communal. God calls us to become a part of the Church and, after we have reached a certain maturity within it, he bestows on us a specific vocation. The vocational journey is undertaken together with the brothers and sisters whom the Lord has given to us." So, as you can see my brothers and sisters, we are united as a Church to help each other find God's will for our lives.

In the Gospel today, Jesus brings awareness of our vocational call in a unique way. The question posed to him about the woman who marries brothers one after another as they each meet their untimely death was meant to trap the Lord, to mock him. But Jesus is not fooled. Jesus understands the calling of marriage. It is a great gift, a gift that shapes the world and builds society. Jesus rejects any

mockery of marriage and in many of his words throughout Scriptures challenges those called to marriage to answer that call with hope and with conviction. But today, he focuses on other vocations in his very powerful words: “The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage..., for they are like angels.” In this Jesus points to the vocations in the Church that point to this heavenly reality that transcends marriage: priesthood and consecrated life.

Priests are called to unite themselves to the Church and to guide her members to the future when we are all united completely with the Lord. The consecrated and religious women and men of the Church point to that same future reality. They witness to a deeper way of life. The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience remind the world around them that heaven is our home, and this life is only a step along the way. Both of these vocations are vital to the Church, and God calls men and women to these sacred lives in order to build up his kingdom.

The women and men religious, the priests, the seminarians, and the people in religious formation who are present here today depend on your prayers – as do those who minister throughout our Archdiocese and beyond. Today we celebrate those who have answered the call and we thank you. We also celebrate this Vocation Awareness Week by renewing our commitment to support young people in their discernment.

**How are you promoting the culture of vocations in your life?
Are you helping the Church in her mission to guide others in finding**

their call? Families, pray with your children for our seminarians and religious in formation. Talk about these vocations with your children, so that they may know that consecrated or ordained life may be their calling. Do not be afraid to help your children answer God's call whatever it may be. Parish leaders, ministry leaders, priests and religious, renew your commitment to supporting vocations Never be afraid to talk with one of your young sister or brothers in Christ who shows signs of holiness and signs of a calling. Encourage them to think and pray about the possibility of being a religious sister, religious brother, a priest, or a consecrated person. God is calling, and we must be willing to help people listen.

I also ask you young people here today to open your hearts to the possibility of God's call. He has made you for a purpose, never be afraid to respond to the Holy Spirit moving in your heart. Though the first reading spoke of very painful things, it definitely shows us people of courage. May you take a lesson from our brother who held out his hands and said: "It was from Heaven that I received these." You have received your hands, your talents, and your lives from God. Use them for the reason he gave them to you. May we all celebrate this Vocation Awareness Week to the fullest, and keep building the vocation culture in the Archdiocese and beyond.

Dear Mother Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us all who have been called by God to serve. May we stand always united as Church in this life, working and journeying together to the life to come.