



Home » Home Page » Archdiocese opens Year of Consecrated Life with Mass

HOME PAGE / LOCAL NEWS / NEWS

ARCHDIOCESE OPENS YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE WITH MASS

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By Eileen Connelly, OSU • The Catholic Telegraph

The season of Advent reminds us to be hope-filled, holy and faithful, to be grateful for the abundant blessings in our lives and keep our lives centered on Christ.

It is a fitting time to recognize those who have accepted the call to consecrated life — in religious and secular institutes, societies of apostolic life, public and private associations of the faithful, consecrated virgins, brothers, sisters and clerics — those whose joy, faith and generous “yes” to God through their vocations is a witness to all of us.

Pope Francis, himself a member of the Society of Jesus, has proclaimed 2015 a Year of Consecrated Life, starting on the First Sunday of Advent, the weekend of Nov. 30, 2014, and ending on Feb. 2, 2016, the World Day of Consecrated Life.

Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr has set the following objectives for this celebration in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati: to increase the visibility of religious life/consecrated life; to express appreciation; to highlight the joy experienced in this vocational choice; and to educate on the importance of on religious life/consecrated life to the church.

In the archdiocese, the year honoring these women and men began with a special liturgy at Emmanuel Parish in Dayton on Nov. 30. Auxiliary Bishop Joseph R. Binzer was the celebrant, with about half a dozen priests from various religious communities concelebrating. Approximately 150 women and men religious, parishioners and friends filled the historic church for the Mass. Members of religious congregations took part in the liturgy as lectors, gift bearers and Eucharistic ministers.

“It is a blessing for all of us to be here to celebrate and say ‘thanks’ to God for those who have accepted the call to consecrated life,” Bishop Binzer said during his homily. “I would imagine that all of us here are blessed to know someone in consecrated life who shares the joy of Jesus Christ in his or her ministry in a school or parish, hospital or agency in service to others or in prayer for us.”

“The Year of Consecrated Life is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the gift consecrated life has been and is to the church, the ministries consecrated women and men are doing today and to extend an invitation to join us in this vocation,” said Sister of Notre Dame de Namur Marilyn Kerber, director of the archdiocesan Office of Religious, “With prayer, scripture, song and the breaking of the bread the opening liturgy at Emmanuel Church was a meaningful way to launch the activities and events that will take place this year to celebrate the consecrated life in the archdiocese.

Parishes in the archdiocese are commemorating the Year of Consecrated Life in a variety of ways. At Monica-St. George Church, each of the nine religious communities represented in the parish will be highlighted in the bulletin. Also planned are a luncheon during which parishioners will have the opportunity to learn more about each religious community, and a dinner with consecrated members of the parish and University of Cincinnati students who also make up the Newman Center parish.

During each Sunday of Advent, Steve Warner’s “Wake the World with Dawning Joy,” the song composed for the Year of Consecrated Life, was the closing hymn at St. Andrew Parish in Milford, and the song will also be used other times throughout the year. At St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish, the Vocation Committee has invited religious communities to visit the parish one weekend each month to share their calls to consecrated life and respective charisms. On April 26, the vocation ministers of the archdiocese will host an archdiocesan day of reflection for single women interested in religious life at St. Max. The parish Vocation Committee will provide lunch that day as a way to encourage and support consecrated life.

During the Year of Consecrated Life, those who have responded to this call “will have the opportunity renew your commitment and rekindle the fire that inspired and continues to inspire the gift of your yourselves to Jesus Christ,” Bishop Binzer noted. “And others will



Top, *Women Religious sing during the Mass for the Opening of the Year of Consecrated Life at Emmanuel Catholic Church in Dayton Sunday, Nov. 30, 2014.* Second, *Sharon Borgert, Consecrated Virgin in the World, lights an Advent candle during the Mass for the Opening of the Year of Consecrated Life at Emmanuel Catholic Church in Dayton Sunday, Nov. 30, 2014.* Bottom, *Men Religious, including many Marianists, sing during the Mass for the Opening of the Year of Consecrated Life at Emmanuel Catholic Church in Dayton Sunday, Nov. 30, 2014.* (CT Photos/E.L. Hubbard)

have a chance to thank you, and not only that, follow your example. Your example is a blessing to us.”

David Eck, communications director for the Sisters of the Precious Blood, also contributed to this article.

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