



Archdiocese of Philadelphia  
Office of the Cardinal  
222 North 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299

June 21, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With these words, *holy priests for a holy people*, I am pleased to announce the observance of the *Year of the Priest* in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has called for this year of grace for the whole Church as a new opportunity for priests to grow in holiness and live more fully united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and for all the members of the Church to recall the essential role of priests among us and in society.

The universal observance of the *Year of the Priest* began with the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus just celebrated this past Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, and will conclude on the same date next year in Rome with a worldwide meeting of priests with our Holy Father. A significant part of this *Year of the Priest* is the commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Curé of Ars, Saint John Vianney, who continues to inspire all of us as a priest ever at the service of his people.

As Archbishop of Philadelphia, I invite everyone in the Archdiocese, all priests and all the faithful, in solidarity with our Holy Father, to observe the *Year of the Priest* as a splendid opportunity to reflect on the gift of the priesthood of Jesus shared with his priests. This gift belongs to the whole Church and is for the whole Church. I ask of you, sharers and benefactors of this gift from Jesus, to participate wholeheartedly in this *Year of the Priest* here in Philadelphia.

Our primary participation is through prayer. Pray for priests. Pray for priests as they announce God's Holy Word and celebrate the Sacraments. Pray for their holiness.

An archdiocesan Prayer for Priests will be made widely available for use in our parishes, schools and religious education programs and other institutions. I invite you to pray this prayer as families, in parish groups, and alone. I especially encourage praying for priests in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

I also invite you to participate through the many programs to be offered throughout the year by the Archdiocese and our parishes. Those to be offered by the Archdiocese have been published in the *Catholic Standard and Times*, this past Thursday, June 18. One of these programs includes an opportunity for every parish for one week during this year to pray for our priests through the intercession of St. John Vianney as his statue and relic travel from parish to parish throughout the Archdiocese.

This *Year of the Priest* offers all of us a unique occasion for many blessings. May our observance of this *Year of the Priest* truly provide the Archdiocese of Philadelphia with *holy priests for a holy people!*

Sincerely in Christ,

**+Justin Card. Rigali**

Cardinal Justin Rigali  
Archbishop of Philadelphia