

600 Catholic School 5th Graders Attend Program To Ponder Priestly, Religious Vocations

On October 27 from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., over 600 5th grade students from Catholic schools throughout the Archdiocese will gather at Notre Dame of Maryland University to participate in a program aimed at discussing vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The program is called Focus 11 and is based on studies that indicate priests and women and men in consecrated religious life first began thinking about ministry around the age of 11.

The event is sponsored by the Archdiocese and the National Religious Vocation Conference. Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien and Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski will be present for the program, which includes speakers, Mass, exhibits, panel discussions and music.

Participants will also learn the winners of a prayer card contest held in each school. The winners' work will be used to create professionally designed prayer cards for distribution throughout the Archdiocese aimed at promoting vocations.

A recent study showed that the number of active priests in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will decline from 153 priests to 100 over the next 15 years. Since 1976, the Archdiocese is ordaining an average of only three priests per year.

Archbishop O'Brien recently introduced a parish planning process aimed at addressing the declining number of priests available to serve in the 153 parishes of the Archdiocese, as well as a number of other related challenges. That process is outlined in a document available at www.buildingupthebodyofchrist.org.