

Come out, come out, wherever you are!

Several weeks ago, an invitation was issued by Bishop Denis J. Madden and the Office and Board of African American Catholic Ministries. The invitation called forth leaders in the African-American Catholic community to gather to explore issues impacting parish life as discussions on the clergy shortage have pursued and to brainstorm new insights toward increasing leadership and vocations within our community.

Ever since the establishment of the Office of African American Catholic Ministries, each board has held as its priority the promotion of indigenous leadership and vocations. Conversations and retreats have been held through past endeavors such as “The Greater Task Leadership Campaign.” We continue this commitment, which encourages lay leadership and vocations. However, a new conversation and strategy is warranted as the heat is turned up and our beloved clergy are stretched to do more and be more for the people of God, in the name of Jesus.

The call of our clergy and religious men and women to “go out into God’s vineyard” to serve is also the call of all who are baptized.

The following is from Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2005): “God calls. We respond. This fundamental, essential pattern in the life of every believer appears throughout salvation history. The Father calls a chosen people, patriarchs and prophets. Jesus calls his apostles and disciples. The Risen Lord calls everyone to labor in his vineyard, that is, in a world that must be transformed in view of the final coming of the Reign of God; and the Holy Spirit empowers all with the various gifts and ministries for the building up of the Body of Christ”

Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien, in the Oct. 7 Catholic Review, sounded the alarm, stressing “the challenges of our parishes and priests face due to the dwindling numbers of priests, shifts in population and a change in attitudes toward the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.” He continued, “I would be negligent in my responsibilities as

your Archbishop if I were to further delay the pressing need to address how we provide for the spiritual and pastoral needs of our people given the resources we have today and those we project to have in the future.”

Can we shake the sleep from our eyes and look collectively at the critical nature of leadership in our parishes by attending a gathering to discuss these pressing concerns? The gathering will be held Dec. 13, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the church hall of St. Mary of the Assumption in Govans, 5500 York Road.

We must act and pray now! God is still calling and waiting for a response, for Scripture says “Why was no one there when I came? Why did no one answer when I called? Your insights, leadership and prayer are needed at the gathering. If you plan to attend, please register by calling the Office of African American Catholic Ministries at 410-625-8472.

Additionally, all are invited to attend a free lecture by Oblate Sister of Providence M. Reginald Gerdes, exploring the topic of “Mother Mary Lange: Founder of America’s First Black Sisterhood” on Dec. 18 at 2 p.m. The lecture, part of a series on historic people and periods, will be held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore, at Cathedral and Mulberry streets. In this time of prayer for the canonization of Mother Mary Lange, increasing our knowledge of her faith-filled journey becomes inspiration for our journey of faith. This lecture will share Mother Lange’s history and why so many advocate for her to be lifted to the high altar of sainthood.

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