



August, 2009

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With the recent new assignments of priests in the Diocese, the Church of Santa Rosa has again experienced the shortage of priests to serve our growing population. To date most parishes still have a resident priest, but the larger parishes with many people, are now with fewer priests to attend to the needs of our people. I ask all to pray for vocations to the priesthood for our Diocese and to support our seminarians, our future priests.

To meet the needs of our Spanish speaking population that now makes up forty- one percent of our parishioners, I will be visiting Mexico in October to see if some bishops will allow me to recruit among their priests and seminarians for the Diocese of Santa Rosa.

The priest shortage has been studied by myself with the help of the Presbyteral Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. In January 2005, the priests of the Diocese held a workshop to analyze the question. At that meeting the Presbyteral Council established a committee to further study the matter and propose solutions. At the same time the Diocesan Pastoral Council surveyed our parishes on how the laity might assist in mitigating problems posed by the priest shortage. Together these two consultative bodies underlined the need for more priests for our Church, but also undertook studies that have led to the Diocesan Pastoral Council Lay Pastoral Director Project.

As our Diocese plans for the future, we must consider various solutions when priests will not be available. The Diocesan Pastoral Council Project proposes one such solution. Where feasible a Lay Pastoral Director may be appointed to assist in parish management and leadership responsibilities. Our ordained deacons are an excellent source of candidates for this role, as would be qualified lay women and man.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council has developed a fine PowerPoint presentation to illustrate these possibilities. It can be viewed on the DPC website, [www.santarosadpc.com](http://www.santarosadpc.com), and in the coming year various deaneries will view it for discussion.

I appreciate and endorse the work that the Diocesan Pastoral Council has done to date. Please continue to pray for vocations for our Diocese. For a sacramental community of faith to exist the ordained priest is a necessity. As Pope Benedict has stated: "Without [the ministerial priesthood] there would be neither the Eucharist, nor even the mission nor the Church herself." Therefore, I ask your support for this proposal and for our seminarians, deacons, and priests to strengthen and enrich our parishes.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am

Your Brother and Servant in the Lord,

Reverend Daniel F. Walsh  
Bishop of Santa Rosa