

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend we welcome the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose's Immaculate Conception Academy from San Francisco. The sisters are joining us for the 5pm Saturday evening Mass to celebrate the upcoming National Vocations Awareness Week (November 3-9). The Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose have been ministering to the people of the Archdiocese since 1876 at the invitation of our first Archbishop, Joseph Sadoc Alemany, himself a Dominican. The Sisters have historically and continue to have an impressive ministry of educating youth, particularly, economically disadvantaged youth. Today, their schools include St. Anthony-Immaculate Conception, St. James, and Immaculate Conception Academy-Cristo Rey. Following Mass, the sisters will be hosted at a dinner and joined by Very Rev. Stephen H. Howell, Vicar General of the Archdiocese as well as former pastors Jim MacDonald and Paul Rossi. We are most grateful for the generous witness and lives of service of all sisters, brothers, and priests who faithfully serve the people of the archdiocese.

Sister Lilly Fitzpatrick, O.P. will be speaking at the 8:00am and 9:30am Masses this weekend. Sister represents the Immaculate Conception Academy-Cristo Rey program in San Francisco. Cristo Rey was founded in 1996 by Father John P. Foley, S.J., a Jesuit of the Chicago Province. This unique model offers a solid college preparatory education with a corporate work study program. Today, there are 37 schools with 12,000 students in 24 states. These students come from low-income households and Cristo Rey offers them access to a quality, Catholic-based education and practical work experience. This model is truly impressive and has changed the lives of thousands of youth. Sister Lily will be sharing the story of ICA-Cristo Rey. This high school supports young women in San Francisco and it is hoped that local employers might be interested in being a part of this wonderful educational enterprise. Sister's appeal is not for direct financial support from our parish but is an informational appeal.

It is fitting that our sisters join us in light of today's readings. In Sirach, we hear that God is truly impartial to all but hears the yearnings and appeals of the poor. Throughout the history of the United States, religious sisters have played a pivotal role in supporting the poor through access to education, affordable and dignified health care, and other social services. It is generally acknowledged that the social safety net in the United States is a direct result of Catholic sisters' ministry now over two centuries. The enduring witness of ministering to the poor and dispossessed, a direct response to the psalmist's claim that the Lord hears the cry of the poor, continues today. The words of St. Paul resonate so powerfully with the lifetime of religious service our sisters have rendered: "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith."

As we seek an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, we pray for holy women and men who reflect the heart of our Blessed Mother and our Lord: generous, humble, open with freedom to God's actions in their lives. Luke's Gospel is a challenge to remember that the call to religious life is one of humility and recognition of one's own weakness, poverty, and inadequacy. What unites us in a particular way is God's love and grace which heals us and forges even tighter bonds of fraternity and Christian witness. Lest we forget, "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Fr. Tom