

'Spiritual mothers' recruited to pray for priests

Vatican launches project highlighting link between Eucharist, priesthood.

By CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — With a letter to the world's bishops and a 40-page illustrated brochure, the Vatican's Congregation

for the Clergy is encouraging eucharistic adoration for the holiness of priests and is recruiting "spiritual mothers" to pray for priests and for vocations to the priesthood.

The project, launched on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, aims to highlight the link between the Eucharist and the priesthood as well as Mary's special role as the mother of every priest, said a letter from the congregation's top officials.

Cardinal Claudio Hummes, congrega-

tion prefect, and Archbishop Mauro Piacenza, congregation secretary, said that as part of a wider effort to address the challenges facing priests today, they wanted to promote perpetual eucharistic adoration "for the reparation of faults and sanctification of priests."

But they also hoped to promote "a commitment on the part of consecrated feminine souls," who, following the example of Mary, "might wish to spiritually adopt priests in order to help them with their self-offering, prayer and penance."

The letter asked bishops to promote in their dioceses "a movement of prayer," centered on perpetual eucharistic adoration and involving priests, religious and laypeople.

They said they hoped that "a prayer of adoration, thanksgiving, praise, petition and reparation will be raised to God incessantly and from every corner of the earth."

The 40-page brochure, "Adoration, Reparation, Spiritual Motherhood for Priests," was focused specifically on encouraging women to pray for priests.

"The vocation to be a spiritual mother for priests" is not well known enough and so it is seldom practiced, even though it is

"fundamental and vitally important," said the brochure, prepared by Archbishop Piacenza.

All women, whether married or single or consecrated, can become spiritual mothers for priests, it said. The brochure ends with the story of the Mater Ecclesiae cloistered convent established by Pope John Paul II in the Vatican in 1994 as a center for contemplative nuns who would

pray constantly for the pope and his ministry.

"Through this initiative, John Paul II made a very clear statement to the whole world about the indispensable importance of silent prayer and

hidden sacrifice for our modern and hectic world," it said.

Benedictine Mother Maria Sofia Cicchetti, prioress of the Mater Ecclesiae community, is quoted in the brochure as saying: "We know that we have been called to become spiritual mothers in our silent and hidden life. Priests and seminarians have a privileged place as our spiritual sons, as do all of those who turn to us asking for support in their priestly life and ministry, in the trials and anxieties they encounter."

On the Web

The letter & brochure are available:

IN ENGLISH:

www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2007-12/07-999999/Adoration_for_priests.pdf

IN SPANISH:

www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2007-12/10-13/Adoracion.html

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