

## “YEAR OF CALLING”

On 20 April, 1986 the Old Collegians' Association of De La Salle College, Malvern, Victoria, Australia held its Annual Reunion Mass and Dinner, a highlight of its constant and varied activities. This particular occasion was of special significance, for it marked the 40th Anniversary of the reformation of the Association which took place in 1946 at the end of the Second World War. (The Association, which was first constituted in 1929 seventeen years after the De La Salle Brothers began at Malvern, had been in recess during the War Years).

The 1986 Reunion was also the occasion for the launching of the “Year of Calling” programme, aimed at increasing awareness of the need for Vocations to the Priesthood and the Religious Life, and also seeking prayerful consideration of the ideal calling in life for each and everyone, especially those students of the Brothers who are presently completing their schooling.

Some twelve months ago, one of the older members of the Malvern Association made an offer of a substantial donation for the purpose of preparing and distributing a special card with appropriate prayers for vocations which could be made available to students of the College and to members of the Association. In due course, after discussion at the Committee level, it was decided to accept the offer and to augment the donation with additional funds so that the widest distribution would become possible. At that time the National Federation Secretariat, which had previously distributed book-mark cards and memento cards for the Canonization of St. Miguel Febres de Cordero F.S.C., both bearing prayers for vocations, agreed to design the card and to utilise such capabilities as it has to contact all the Brothers,

Houses in the Australian District for the purpose of requesting the Directors and communities to participate in whatever way they could. A decision was made to print 10,000 prayer cards to begin and to commence the distribution to those attending the Reunion and then to widen the circulation through the entire District.

A Brother Moderator on the Association Committee came forward with a theme which was adopted for the initiative - it reads

“All are called to a Vocation

All are called to a degree of Religious Vocation

All are certainly called to what is, for each, a good vocation”.

Two prayers were selected. The first is “To know my vocation”.

In the Divine Plan everyone has a special role in life and it is in the fulfilment of that role that the greatest happiness will be achieved, both spirituality and materially. It is essential to know how each and every one should fit into the role for which each is best suited and in the prosecution of which one's God given talents can be utilised. This is something to pray for and about, so that in all our actions we might be guided by Providence. The second prayer is “For special Vocations”. These are Vocations to the Religious Life, so this prayer asks God to call many of our youth to become good priests, Brothers or Sisters in the “vineyard of the Church” and as an extension of that request seeks the graces necessary for those who are so called to accept the challenge, in order that the work of the Church may go on.

In the case of our own Institute, the figures prepared for the 41st General Chapter, recently concluded in Rome, indicate some vital facts. The steady decline in the number of our Brothers is a matter for real concern. A comparison of figures taken from the early 1970s with those for the early 1980s indicate that we now have almost 4000 less Brothers and further there are currently 100 less novices than was the case fifteen years ago.

The average age of our Brothers throughout the world at 31 March, 1986 was 57 years and 7 months. 190 Brothers died during the course of 1985 and 139 having either perpetual

or temporary vows left the Institute during that year. With greater calls than ever being placed on the available personnel, this situation must be reversed if the Institute is to survive. This is grim reality. If Vocations to the Institute do not increase dramatically, how long can the work of the Holy Founder continue? "The harvest is great, but the labourers are few".

What applies to the world scene, certainly applies to Australia, where Priests, Brothers and Sisters are far fewer than needed and considerably less than 30 years ago, whereas the population is increasing and the pressure of educational advancement is placing more and more stress on the Catholic Church and the education system which it has fought to preserve and maintain. Since their arrival in Australia in 1906, the De La Salle Brothers have been leaders in the field of Catholic Education, despite the fact that their numbers have been historically less than many other religious congregations having education as their principal work.

The "Year of Calling" programme provides an opportunity for our students and alumni along with our associates and friends to join in prayer to the end that our greatest need, that of increased vocations, will be fulfilled.

Other Districts, all of whom are experiencing the same difficulties to a greater or lesser degree, may decide to follow this initiative and embark on a similar programme, for

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of".

It can be anticipated that many individuals and groups with the advancement of the Institute and its works at heart will come forward with offers of assistance for such a programme which aims at involving as many people as possible in the simple effort of regular *PRAYER FOR OUR NEEDS*.

Continued prayer moves God and touches men- St. John Baptist De La Salle.

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*20 July, 1986. (Australia)*

#### **Prayer to know my vocation**

Heavenly Father, You have created me to fulfill some particular work which nobody else but me can do. Enlighten me, O Lord, to know my vocation in life, then give me the courage and strength to follow that enlightenment. Whatever you want me to be and do, I, like the prophet, Isaiah will say, "Here I am, Lord, send me".

#### **Prayer for special vocations**

O Heavenly Father, Your Son Jesus Christ said; "The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. Pray therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to do his harvesting". Therefore, we beg You to invite many of our youth to become good Priests, Brothers, Sisters, and lay apostles in the harvest of the Church.

Amen.