

[The splendid light of Christ shines out in life's graced moments](#)



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As a son of the church for over 30 years, I have had the privilege of being present for countless grace-filled moments. Armed with the gift of our faith, I can proclaim that these graced moments of life far outweigh the struggles and tragedies we face.

The most inspiring of these moments have been the events where a baptized disciple of Jesus Christ made a commitment to follow the Lord by making public promises.

- I have seen the joys of Christian marriage celebrated in its grandeur.
- I have kept watch as a newly consecrated sister made the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.
- I have witnessed a newly ordained permanent deacon and his wife stand side-by-side and accept the challenge of Gospel service.
- I have prayed as the Book of the Gospels was placed upon the head of a newly ordained bishop.

Each year, I and the other priests of the Diocese of Green Bay renew our priestly promises at the Chrism Mass.

What is most remarkable is that each person I just described, after making their vows or promise, appeared different than they had before their commitments. A change had taken place:

- Their faces were brighter;
- They seemed to glow with the light of joy;
- Light emanated from their souls as they embraced the grace of their God-given vocation.

The challenge of living a vocation is to keep that same light shining brightly by living a life strengthened by the grace that comes from the sacraments.

As we enter National Vocation Awareness Week 2012, we hear the words of the prophet Isaiah at holy Mass, "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you."

The word "splendor" comes from the Latin splendere, which means "to be bright" and "to shine." God wants the church to shine!

One of the most promising sources of light in the world today is that supernatural light which shines forth from the faces of those who make commitments in the church. Vocations bring light to the world.

Where will this much-needed light come from?

From you and from me.

The Lord calls us each to rise up from the darkness and drama of everyday life to live brilliant, holy lives. As I attended World Youth Day, the Steubenville Prayer Conference, the National Catholic Youth Conference, the March for Life and

numerous other events this past year, it was apparent that the young church is ready to respond to this call from the Lord. The drama of everyday life should no longer define who we are as human beings. As we recommit to prayer and devotion, as Bishop Ricken's recent pastoral letter calls us to do, holiness will define us. Holiness will yield vocations. Vocations will bring light and splendor to the church.

What is preventing us from rising up in splendor?

I have noticed a rising obsession with technology, especially evident in our children's fascination with video games, cell phones and the Internet. From these can come forth all kinds of temptations to darkness and evil, and a loss of a sense of the sacred. These technologies also seem to claim the part of the brain that requires silence, prayer and discernment — the place where we can encounter God.

A loss of the sense of the sacred also hampers the splendor of the church. If we as Catholics are just like the rest of the world, if we do no more than blend in, then we have nothing unique to offer. Christ alone is unique and holy and, by following him in the church, we are set apart.

Finally, as I mentioned last year at this time, the church desires a renewed sense of missionary zeal. It disturbs me that there are only 88 active priests in our diocese, a diocese that has 157 parishes. How important our senior priests are in this picture, since many of them are very active in helping in our parishes.

There are also 36 brothers, 137 deacons, and 498 women religious in our diocese. The rest of the people are married, in single life or in transition. Our greatest need today is for more parish priests, but not all of us are called to that vocation. However, the need remains in every person under the sun to make some form of commitment as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Cultivating missionary hearts is a necessity for this great task.

The light that shines forth from the face of a new bishop, a new priest, a new deacon, a new sister, a new brother, a newly consecrated virgin, a newly committed single person, a new married couple, a newly baptized, and the newly confirmed is evidence enough that God wills the church to rise up in splendor. The light comes from Christ, and it shines forth from the souls of those who live their vocations with simplicity of heart. Let's turn on the lights in the Diocese of Green Bay.

Fr. Schuster is vocation director for the Diocese of Green Bay.