

## ***Sample Letter***

*Use this letter as a model and insert your own name, the name of your diocese, and other information specific to your request, as noted within the brackets below. Or develop your own letter requesting a meeting.*

*<Date of Letter>*

*<Name of Your Bishop>*

*Diocese of <Name of Your Diocese>*

*<Address of Chancery>*

*<City State ZIP>*

Dear Bishop *<Name of Your Bishop>*

We would like to meet with you in person to discuss our grave concerns about the priest shortage and the future of Catholic sacramental life in *<Name of Your Diocese>*. We are faithful *<Name of Your Diocese or City>* Catholics who wish to discuss the findings reported in 2008 by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). The study projected that half of the active diocesan priests in the U.S. plan to retire by 2019 and the number of new priests available to serve in their places is far from adequate.

Already the Church is ordaining many fewer priests than are retiring each year—estimates are that by the end of this decade we will have only 13,500 active diocesan priests to serve our 18,000 parishes. As of 2012, data collected by CARA showed only 26,661 diocesan priests in the U.S., some of them already retired or too ill to serve, trying to meet the needs of more than 66 million Catholics.

The results of this shortage are obvious. More than 3,300 parishes across the U.S. have no resident priest. In others, a single priest must serve two or three clustered parishes. And here in *<Name of Your Diocese>* we see vibrant parishes closing or being merged while our priests are exhausted from having too much to do with too little help.

*<Give additional specific examples from your diocese>*

Given these obvious losses, we do not understand why our Church hierarchy has not proposed options for a married priesthood. Without such open discussions, it seems as if our Church leaders believe that mandatory celibacy is more important than nourishing the People of God with Mass and the sacraments or maintaining vibrant parish communities.

It makes more sense to us to open ordination instead of closing parishes. It makes more sense to restore our early traditions of permitting both married and celibate priests in our Church, than to restrict the sacraments, eliminate Masses, and shut down parishes.

We ask that you participate with us in a dialogue, already started by many laity, bishops, and priests, about the need to address the priest shortage. We will be contacting your office to see about arranging a meeting to discuss our concerns.

Sincerely,

*<Signature>*

*<Your name and telephone, and the names of those you represent>*