

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY: Oct. 28, 2018

**In midst of scandal, Catholics urged to honor
good and holy priests in nationwide event**

The last Sunday of October, Oct. 28, 2018, is designated as Priesthood Sunday, a one-day celebration of the priesthood calling all United States Catholics to show support for their priests with prayer, public recognition and dialogue. The annual celebration is organized by parish lay leaders and has been sponsored by the USA Council of Serra International, a worldwide Catholic lay organization, since 2005.

The USA Council of Serra International's choice to reinvigorate their promotion of Priesthood Sunday this year coincides with the new clergy sex abuse scandal sending shockwaves through the Church. Members of Serra International, an organization formed in 1935 to support and encourage vocations to the ministerial priesthood and consecrated religious life, recognize the challenge confronting their promotion of a day to honor the priesthood when such disturbing stories of abuse come to light. However, the distressing news has strengthened their resolve to honor good and holy priests – the innocent majority whose reputations and even safety have been threatened by the unconscionable acts of a relative few.

“There has never been a more important time for Serra,” said Anne Shepherd-Knapp, vice president of the USA Council's Vocations Committee. “The news is very disheartening but this is not a time to lose faith. We need to pray with great fervor for the purification of our Church and offer our support to the faithful: fellow Catholics who have suffered, those who are losing faith, and our dear priests who have served honorably but are being unfairly associated with the few who have caused such concern and anguish.”

“Our hearts and prayers go out to all those who have been touched by this scandal, especially the victims,” said John Halloran, Serra’s USA Council Membership Committee chairman. “May our Lord hold those still affected by this tragedy in his healing hands and surrounded them with loved ones until they can be made whole again.”

In the weeks leading up to Priesthood Sunday, Catholics are called to reflect on the service priests provide to parishes, schools, and the community at large through various forms of priestly ministry, including the sacraments central to the Catholic faith. On Priesthood Sunday itself, parishes may honor and celebrate their priests in whatever style they choose. In the past, parishes have chosen to mark the occasion with special liturgies, cards, art made by parish school children, a reception after Mass, and more.

Led by Shepherd-Knapp, the Vocations Committee has been instrumental in the push to get Priesthood Sunday on the calendars of parishes across the United States. The committee creates, curates and shares materials to help parishes plan Priesthood Sunday celebrations at the USA Council’s official website (<https://serraus.org/priesthood-sunday/>) and at the Serra Promotion and Resource Kit (SPARK) website (<https://www.serraspark.org/11-priesthood-sunday.html>). These pages contain tips, suggestions, links, and downloadable materials.

Along with National Vocations Awareness Week (Nov. 4-10, 2018), World Day for Consecrated Life (Feb. 3, 2019) and World Day of Prayer for Vocations (May 12, 2019), Priesthood Sunday is part of a suite of global and national events designed to promote a positive culture of vocations in contemporary society.

Priesthood Sunday is coordinated and sponsored by the USA Council of Serra International. Serra International is a worldwide Catholic organization of lay men and women dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Nearly 8,000 members in over 200 clubs are active in the United States. The USA Council office is based in Chicago.

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