

## A Priest Invites His Family ... "Take A Stake In The Priesthood."

by Fr. Mario Barbero  
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Dear Lovers,

On the occasion of my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Priestly Ordination, I have received many letters from relatives and friends, among them many married couples. They were thanking me for having said "yes" to the Lord and for my support to their faith and their life. They were rejoicing with me for the gift of my Sacrament of Holy Orders. When I think of it, I realize how much I owe to my family, to the Sacrament of Matrimony of my Parents.

In October of 1990, Bishops from all over the world met with the Pope in Rome to discuss the "Priestly formation", i.e., how to form Priests to respond to the needs of our time. The Bishops shared the experiences and expectations of their Churches from all continents.

On one point they all agreed: in reaffirming the irreplaceable role of the Christian family in the development of the Priestly vocation. This is not only because all Priests are born from families, but because it is in relationship with Christian families that Priests nourish their faith and find support for their ministry.

In the final message, the Bishops addressed the laity with these words, "You need your priests, and priests and seminarians need your love and support as we work together to build up the Body of Christ in the service of all."

I can confirm the truth of this statement. In 25 years, I have had some rough moments in my Priestly life (as you know, the three stages of "romance, disillusionment, and joy" occur also in the life of priests!), but my greatest help has always come from a deeper commitment to prayer and from the affirmation received from lay people, especially from couples since my involvement with Marriage Encounter.

Could I invite each one of you to heed the appeal of our Pope and Bishops to be sensitive, to encourage, to promote, and to support priestly vocations from your families - from other families. It will be the best gift for my Silver Jubilee, too.

You have a stake in our Priesthood and I am grateful for this.

Love,  
Fr. Mario Barbero