



A Statement on Papal Honors
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Pope Benedict XVI names four 'Monsignors,' honors 12 lay Catholics

Good morning. Thank you for your presence... to hear good news!

The Roman Catholic Church is now several months into an international celebration of the 2009-2010 "Year for Priests." (*backdrop*)

Implemented by Pope Benedict XVI, this "Year for Priests" is designed to encourage priests in their "striving for spiritual perfection on which, above all, the effectiveness of their ministry depends" and to highlight "the importance of the priest's role and mission in the church and in contemporary society."

With that intention in mind, I requested the pope – through the Secretary of State in the Vatican – to consider issuing particular papal honors for both the priests and laity in our Diocese of Lubbock.

I am now pleased to report his response to the Catholic faithful in this local church of more than 80,000 parishioners who gather at 62 churches in Lubbock and 24 surrounding counties.

I am happy to announce that Pope Benedict XVI has conferred the title of "Prelate of Honor" on one of our local priests and named three other priests as "Chaplains to His Holiness," an honor which carries the title of "Monsignor" for both Prelates and Chaplains.

I am also delighted to announce that the pope has bestowed his highest distinguished service award, the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" Cross, on 12 local lay Catholics.

I will present the pontifical honors during a 2:30 p.m. ceremony on Sunday, December 13 in Christ the King Cathedral (4011 54th Street, Lubbock).

With a grateful heart, I offer my sincere congratulations to our new monsignors. When the Holy Father honors four priests of our diocese in this way, it is a tribute to the ministry of all our other priests, as well. As more than a billion Catholics throughout the world continue to celebrate the church's "Year for Priests," this announcement gives us cause to reflect upon the gift of the priesthood to all our people on the Llano Estacado and Low Rolling Plains of West Texas.

And, at the same time, the pontifical honors recognize the holiness of the Catholic faithful, as 12 awards are conferred upon those who represent our parishioners. Both the priesthood and the laity make up one holy Catholic Church.

The title of "monsignor" is a title of distinction given by the pope to certain Roman Catholic priests in recognition of their service to the church. As the Bishop of Lubbock, I have the privilege of nominating candidates for the honor by submitting their names to the Holy See. The Holy Father then, if he wishes, confers the honor upon the nominees.

Once decided by the pope, the Vatican Secretariat of State issues a diploma designating the new title and rank and recognizing the newly made monsignor's service to the Catholic Church.

There are two noteworthy grades of papal honors which carry the title "Monsignor:" The *Prelate of Honor to His Holiness*, which is historically associated with the chamberlain of the papal court, and the *Chaplain to His Holiness*. Priests who are given these papal honors – and, thus, named "monsignor" -- are considered members of the papal household and are listed as such in the *Annuario Pontificio*, which is the papal yearbook.

Receiving these honors in the Diocese of Lubbock are:

Monsignor Eugene J. Driscoll, our present Vicar General for the Diocese of Lubbock and pastor of Lubbock's Holy Spirit Parish, who is elevated to Prelate of Honor from his previous rank of Chaplain to His Holiness;

Father Nicolás Rendón, our present Chancellor for the Diocese of Lubbock and pastor of Slaton's Saint Joseph Parish, who is named a Chaplain to His Holiness, with the title "Monsignor;"

Father David R. Cruz, pastor of Lubbock's Our Lady of Grace Parish, who is presently overseeing construction of a new church building for the northwest Lubbock parish, is named a Chaplain to His Holiness, with the title "Monsignor;" and,

Father James O'Connor, pastor of Lubbock's Saint Elizabeth University Parish, who is named a Chaplain to His Holiness, with the title "Monsignor."

In honoring these priests during the "Year for Priests," the Holy Father has honored our diocese and the parishes in which our new monsignors labor, recognizing the holiness they confer on the Catholic lay faithful. We are profoundly blessed and truly grateful.

We give thanks, as well, for the pontifical honors bestowed upon 12 lay members of this local church, the Diocese of Lubbock. Again, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has acknowledged the priestly ministry that confers true holiness on our faithful – and our faithful respond to God's grace.

Given for distinguished service to the church, the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" Cross is the highest medal that can be awarded to the laity by the Holy Father. "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" is a Latin title that means "For Church and Pope."

Receiving the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" Cross are:

Roberta Meyer, a parishioner at Christ the King Cathedral Parish in Lubbock, has dedicated her entire life to the apostolate of Catholic education as a teacher, principal, and Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Lubbock.

Virginia Alamanza, a parishioner at Saint Elizabeth University Parish in Lubbock, has dedicated her life to serving the poor through her work at Catholic Family Services;

Sue Arnold, a parishioner at Christ the King Cathedral Parish in Lubbock, is a professor in music at Texas Tech University and the Director of Sacred Music for the cathedral;

Larry Craig, a parishioner at Holy Spirit Parish in Lubbock, helped create that parish, the newest church in the diocese;

Lewis Eggenberger, a parishioner at Saint Elizabeth University Parish in Lubbock, serves the poor through his ministry with Catholic Family Services.

For many years, devout and skillful laity who had been trained and commissioned to lead parishes administered several of our churches. For many years, these Commissioned Pastoral Ministers (CPM) have been serving unselfishly and without recognition for their apostolic labors.

The Holy father, Pope Benedict XVI, thought that this was a worthy opportunity to rectify that situation by recognizing their dedication and holiness.

Receiving the “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice” Cross are the original Commissioned Pastoral Ministers (CPM) for the Diocese of Lubbock:

Maria Elena Arellano of Saint Joseph Parish in Lockney;

Manuela Cuevas of Saint Isidore Parish in Abernathy;

Anna Gomez of Saint Theresa parish in Lubbock (Carlisle);

Eloisa Quintanilla of Holy Trinity Parish in Hamlin;

Andrea Ramirez of Saint Michael Parish in Anson, who presently resides in Abilene, Texas;

Glenda Shamburger of Saint Michael Parish in Levelland; and,

Frances Zambrano of Saint Joseph Parish in Rotan.

I am very happy for these faithful lay Catholic leaders and servants. This honor from the Holy Father is a recognition of the faith, hope, and love they have poured into their labor

as they graciously serve Jesus Christ in this Vineyard of the Lord. We are grateful to His Holiness for giving them these papal honors.

As Bishop of Lubbock, I am delighted and extremely happy that our Holy Father – in the name of the Roman Catholic Church -- has recognized these Monsignors and lay Catholics who are outstanding in their service and holiness. We rejoice with them as they accept their new titles, diplomas, and beautiful medals -- fitting tributes to the testimony of their lives, men and women who are faithful to their baptismal call and to the particular vocations entrusted to them by the Lord. Both clergy and laity have the same universal call to holiness. We are one in the Lord. We make up the One, Holy, Catholic Church in West Texas.

I look forward to a beautiful ceremony, a time of prayer and gratitude to God when the new Monsignors and 12 recipients of the Cross of Honor will receive their diplomas and insignia in Christ the King Cathedral on Sunday, December 13, 2009 at 2:30 p.m. I hope to see you there. You are most welcome to witness this ceremony and congratulate them.