Your Bishop

Diocese of\_\_\_

Your chancery address

Your City, State, Zip Date

Dear Bishop\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We wish we could have met in person to discuss our grave concern about the priest shortage and the future of Catholic sacramental life in (our Diocese) before your United States Conference of Catholic Bishop’s fall assembly. We were disappointed that neither you nor anyone in diocesan leadership had 45 minutes to talk with us.

We are a group of faithful and very worried [your diocese/city] Catholics who want to discuss the 2008 Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate study showing that half of the 19,302 active diocesan priests in the US plan to retire by 2019. Since the church is ordaining only about 380 new diocesan priests each year, in just eight years, we will have only 13,500 active diocesan priests to serve our 18,000 parishes, presuming ordinations remain constant, as they have for over a decade.

We see [your diocese] vibrant parishes closing, or being merged while our priests are exhausted from having too much to do with too little help. [Give some concrete examples from your diocese] We don’t understand why our church won’t even discuss a married priesthood, let alone allowing priests to serve who left the active ministry to marry. We encourage our US leaders to take up Pope Francis’ call to look closely at how the People of God than being nourished by the Mass and the sacraments and present solutions to the priest shortage to Rome. We wonder why we are closing parishes rather than opening ordination.

We ask you as our bishop and our brother in Christ, to begin a courageous dialogue in the US about the need to explore leadership and ministry options including restoring our early traditions of permitting both married and celibate priests and women deacons in our Church.

We ask that you open this dialogue within the [your] diocese, at the US Bishops’ Conference, and encourage representatives to take solutions to Pope Francis.

Thank your for listening to our concerns and please do not hesitate to contact us at the number below, should you change your mind about meeting with us.

Sincerely yours….

Your name and telephone,

the names of those you represent

cc Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops