Prayer Service for a Pastor’s Anniversary of Ordination

INTRODUCTION:
Good morning/afternoon. And welcome to our prayer service to celebrate Fr. ______________’s ____ anniversary of priestly ordination. Please join us as we begin our prayer with our opening song, ________________________________.

OPENING PRAYER
Let us begin with the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
And let us pray:
God our Father, we praise You for the great mercy You have shown by sending priests to shepherd us, to preach Your holy word, to bring us new life in Christ, to nourish, forgive, heal and strengthen us through the sacraments of Your Church. We thank you for the gift of Fr. ______________’s priesthood, and for all that we and so many others have received through Fr. ______________’s generous self-giving service. Open our hearts now to the joy of Your Spirit as we listen to your holy word and praise You for the gift of our beloved Pastor. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, the Eternal High Priest, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.
And now, let us listen to God’s word.

READING
A reading from the Gospel of John (Jn 15, 12-17)
“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

RESPONSE
What a comforting thing to know that Jesus chose someone to help us walk as His disciples. He is the Good Shepherd, and He cares about His sheep. And just as Jesus gave His life to serve the human family, so too, He calls certain men to stand in His place today and continue to give their lives in service to us.

A priest is a priest twenty-four hours a day. During the day, he must celebrate Mass, visit the sick, and counsel people who need his help. He must stay close to his young people and the parish school; he must watch over and guide the many groups that are part of his parish family. He must prepare his sermons so that they help his people understand and live out the word of God. He must pray daily for God’s help – for himself and for his people. He must stay in touch with families to encourage them as followers of Jesus. At night, he must be ready to get out of bed and be there when someone is sick or dying or in an accident and in need of the sacraments. A
priest’s heart is an open door that many people knock on at all hours.

The priesthood is not a job. It is a calling from Jesus, to bring Jesus to His people, and to bring the people to Jesus. We are so glad Fr. __________ said “Yes” when Jesus called him. When we get to heaven, we will understand more fully what a great gift our priests are. We will understand that it was our priests who gave us new life with the Risen Jesus through Baptism. It was our priests who fed us with the word of God and the Holy Eucharist each Sunday to give us the strength to live as followers of Jesus. It was our priests who forgave us our sins; it was our priests who made it possible for our parents to come together in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony to raise us as followers of Jesus. Many of our relatives were made ready to go to heaven by our priests, who anointed them and forgave their sins in their dying moments.

So today, we give God our praise and thanksgiving. We have so much to be thankful for. ONLY the hands of the priest can bring us the Body and Blood of Jesus; ONLY the priest is given God’s power to forgive sins. And so, we say Thank You to God for our Pastor, Fr. __________, who said “Yes” to Jesus, who for ____ years has brought Jesus to His people, and His people to Jesus. May God bless Fr. __________ with abundant blessings in return for his “Yes” every day, 24 hours a day, for ____ years. May he be blessed with many more years, and be carried by the joy of Jesus, who sees the happy souls Fr. __________ has brought close to Him.

OPTIONAL: PRESENTATION, SONG, SPEECH BY PRINCIPAL OR STAFF MEMBER OR WORDS OF THANKS FROM PARISH PRIEST

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
Let us turn to God in our needs as we pray:
1. Let us pray for the Church. That all who follow Jesus will have the courage to say “Yes” to the call of Jesus every day, with generous, self-giving love.
   We pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

2. Let us pray for the world. That all God’s children will come to love one another as Jesus has loved us, and to love Jesus in one another.
   We pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

3. Let us pray for Christians in the world who are without priests. That God will send them generous priests to shepherd them, preach the word of God and bring them the renewing, nurturing and healing power of the sacraments.
   We pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

4. Let us pray for our priests in this diocese. That they might find encouragement and joy as they celebrate with one another and with their parish families the beautiful gift of their priesthood.
   We pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

5. Let us pray for ourselves and our families – that each of us might have hearts open and ready to say “Yes” to Jesus call to carry the light of His Good News to others as priests, sisters, deacons, mothers and fathers and single people in the world.
   We pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
6. Let us pray in thanksgiving for Fr. _________‘s family, for the Christian values and nurturing they gave him as his first teachers in faith, for his teachers, for the priests who taught and helped him along the way, and for the families who became his friends and supported him over the years: they God may richly reward them for helping Fr. _________ say “Yes” to Jesus’ call.
We pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

7. And now, let us join the prayers we have spoken out loud and those in our hearts to the constant prayer of Jesus before the Father, using the words He gave us: Our Father...

CLOSING PRAYER
O God, how good and generous You are for pouring out so many blessings on Your people through the priesthood of Fr. _________. We ask you to continue to bless Fr. _________ as he ministers to us each day.
Make us more and more grateful for the precious gift of Your priests, whose open hearts and open hands bring us the gift of Jesus Your Son. May their generosity be a light that inspires us to say “Yes” to Your call to love and serve, each according to the plan You have for our lives. We make this prayer to You in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

CLOSING SONG
Please join us in our closing song: ________________________________.