



# WE ARE CALLED



## "Creating A Culture of Vocations Plan"

DIOCESE OF OGDENSBURG

2015

*Forward from*

***Bishop Terry R. LaValley***

An integral part of our recent diocesan envisioning process was to identify priorities that the Church in the North Country would address with special focus and renewed energy. This document, *We Are Called*, is part of our effort to **Create a Culture of Vocations** in the Diocese of Ogdensburg by offering a helpful guide to enhance vocational awareness in our parishes and families. We all must pay attention to this crucial priority.

Every person has a vocation. The first vocation that each of us acquires by virtue of our baptism is to become a saint, to be holy. As the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** teaches: “All the faithful,

whatever their condition or state—though each in his own way—is called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect.” (CCC, #825) We will build a culture where such awareness of our baptismal call is nurtured and where Church vocations are encouraged and celebrated. Genuine vocations will surface, indeed, flourish in the Diocese of Ogdensburg as our energy and fervor to bring Christ to others increase.

As you read this document, I know that you will find it to be a rich treasury from which to nourish your own vocation and a real aid in raising vocational awareness in your parish family. I am grateful to all those who have contributed to this document. May all who use it find it to be a valuable resource in fostering a keener awareness of their own baptismal responsibility to respond to the universal call to holiness and a helpful guide in the promotion of Church vocations.

May we encourage and support one another in discerning and living out our Christian vocation. We pray that the Lord help us to foster a culture of vocations in which His seed will bear much fruit.



*+ Terry R. LaValley*



## “We Are Called” Vocational Plan

The document, *We Are Called*, is our effort to **Create a Culture of Vocations** in all our parishes throughout the Diocese of Ogdensburg. It is our hope that the plan will foster and nurture an appreciation of each person’s call to holiness.

By our Baptism each of us became a child of God and was given the gift of faith and a “vocation”, a calling from God, unique to everyone, to follow Him in a special way. Every moment, every event, every person in our lives can offer us encouragement to respond to this call. To know what is the plan created just for us, we have to listen and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The implementation and effectiveness of the “We Are Called” Vocational Awareness Plan is dependent upon the establishment, commitment and enthusiasm of a “Parish Vocation Committee.” This committee is the foundation, core, heart and essence of the *We Are Called* Vocations Plan. The parish committee will lead the parish in raising *vocational awareness* among all parishioners. The Vocation Plan in its entirety contains guidelines for starting a Parish Vocation Awareness Committee, a parish assessment tool, and resources and suggestions to support the committee’s goals and activities.

With the establishment of a Parish Vocation Committee, the availability and use of the many resources provided in the Plan, and assistance from the Diocesan Vocation Office, many will be supported in discerning God’s call in their lives and ultimately, ‘find their home in Christ’.

Our team will be available to support your efforts. Let us all find our hope in Christ:

*Renew Faith, Nurture Hope, Discover Love!*

Christ-led, Christ-fed, and Hope-filled



### Creating a Culture of Vocations Team

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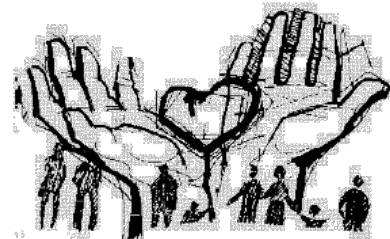
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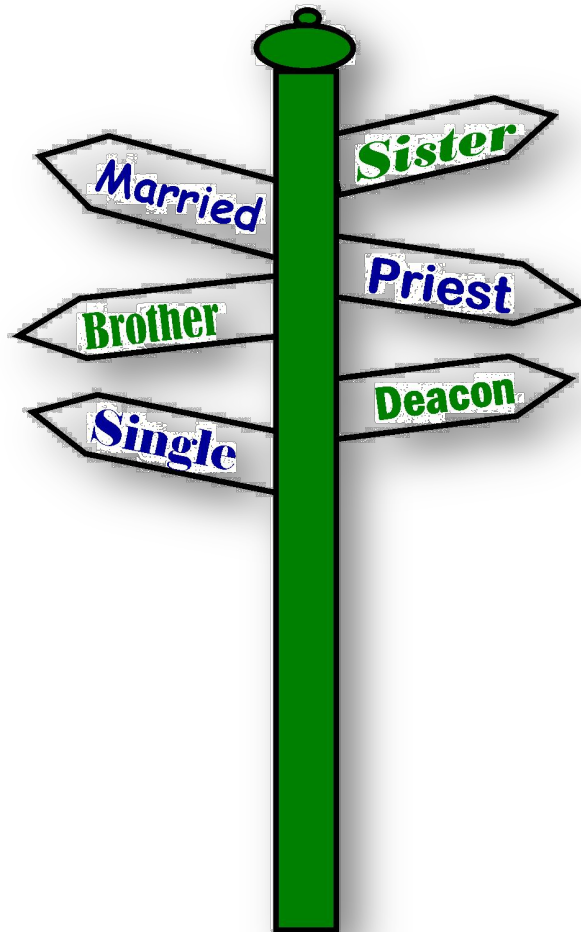
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# "WE ARE CALLED"

Parish Vocation Committee  
Guidelines



*Fostering a  
"Culture of Vocations"  
in the  
Diocese of Ogdensburg*

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# ***1. Parish Vocations Awareness Committee: Introduction and Overview***

Parish communities are encouraged to strive to make a parish family “vocation conscious.” Our parishes need to remind us that God calls each of us to fullness of life. We need to respond to that call by choosing a vocation that expresses our love of God in the world. Such a parish committee can raise awareness about and share information about the various Catholic vocations: priesthood, diaconate religious, married, and single life.

As a parish-based organization, a Parish Vocations Committee needs to work closely with the Pastor and parish Priest(s), Parish Councils, school staffs, youth groups and other groups that make up the parish community. As a committee of the parish, a Parish Vocations Committee needs to establish definite goals, objectives, and activities.

## **1.1 Why Form a Parish Awareness Committee?**

The parish community needs to pray and work together to encourage and foster a culture of vocations. Special attention can then be given to the fostering of religious and priestly vocations once a sense of “everyone has a vocation” has been established.

## **1.2 Who Forms a Parish Vocations Awareness Committee?**

The initiative to establish a committee comes from our bishop, Bishop Terry LaValley in his Pastoral Letter: “Find Your Home In Christ”.

# ***2. Suggested Steps for Starting a Parish Vocations Awareness Committee:***

## **2.1 Getting Organized**

After consultation with the Pastor and Pastoral Council, a committee chairperson(s) would need to be appointed and decide how often the committee will meet. Create a Vision Statement and Guidelines. *(The Sample Guidelines in Appendix.1 may be of assistance... Adapt the wording to your local situation if necessary.)*

## **2.2 Planning Activities**

The purpose of a Parish Vocations Awareness Committee is to promote a *culture of vocation* through:

- Prayer
- Education of the Committee and parishioners
- Identifying potential candidates
- Personally inviting young people to consider the options of religious life and priesthood and/or the permanent diaconate
- Presentations on Discernment Skills
- Promotion of the various vocations: married, single, ordained and consecrated life
- Provide resources and contacts for those with questions about their vocation

## **2.3 Communicating with the Pastor and Parish Council**

Always inform the Parish Priest of your plans and vision. Invite his input and participation. It is also important to meet regularly with the Pastoral Council to inform them of your activities. Give them copies of your vision statement, and reports of your on-going activities, so they have a handy summary of your work and role.

## **2.4 Communicating with the Parish**

Be sure to let the parish know you exist by:

- \*Putting an announcement in the parish and school bulletins (see sample announcement in Appendix 4).
- \*Giving a short presentation at the end of all Masses on a particular Sunday, explaining to the people what you hope to accomplish (see sample script in *Appendix 5*)

## **2.5 Teaming Up With Others**

It would be helpful to collaborate with groups in the parish, including youth ministry, young adult ministry, religious education, parish school, ministers to the sick, parish prayer groups, liturgy committee, Knights of Columbus, parish ethnic communities, small faith communities, people who attend daily Mass, etc. You may wish to attend their meetings and ask for their suggestions and help. It is a good practice to give them something to pass on to others: e.g. prayer card or brochure.

## **2.6 Becoming Informed**

Become familiar with vocations resources available:

- Contact information for various religious communities (Directory available through Diocesan Vocation Office): <http://www.rcdony.org/vocations.html>
- VISION Magazine: [www.visionguide.org](http://www.visionguide.org)
- Vocation information websites – See *Appendix 14*

## **2.7 Networking**

Stay in contact with other parish vocation committees in our deanery/diocese. They can be a source of support and new ideas. Consider organizing regular meetings at a deanery/diocesan level.

## **2.8 Finding New Members**

Be on the lookout for new members for your committee. Your committee can include as many as 10 members or as few as 2 or 3.



## Appendix 1

# Sample Guidelines for Parish Vocations Awareness Committee

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### Name

The name of this group will be the Vocations Awareness Committee of (*parish name*).

### Purpose

The purpose of the Parish Vocations Awareness Committee is to inspire and assist the community of (*parish name*) in fulfilling its mission of fostering a *culture of vocations*, and, in particular, encouraging young people to develop the skills to discern their vocation and to provide resources and information about all vocations. The committee will do this mainly in four ways:

#### 1. Promotion of a Vocations Culture

Committee members will foster a vocations culture in the parish through a variety of ways such as:

- Displaying posters and other materials that highlight all Christian Vocations: marriage, single life, religious life, priesthood and diaconate
- regularly promoting religious and priestly vocations by various means
- providing information and resources for the annual National Vocations Awareness Week that are available on the website: <http://www.usccb.org/> (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) and <http://foryourvocation.org>
- regularly featuring vocations in the Sunday Prayers of the Faithful
- participating in the annual World Day of Prayer for Vocations
- establishing '31 Club' (Refer *Appendix 8*)
- establishing the Parish 'Vocations Cross/Chalice/Statue Program (Refer *Appendix 9*)

#### 2. Formation/Education of the Committee and Parishioners

It is essential that members of the Committee have an understanding of the Church's *Theology of Vocation*. This can be achieved through:

- Reading and discussing relevant material, including the Vatican II Document *Lumen Gentium* (# 32 & 40), *HORIZON* magazine from NRVC (National Religious Vocation Conference), the USCCB Vocation website <http://www.foryourvocation.org/>
- Attending workshops/conferences
- Familiarization with Vocational Discernment Processes
- Understanding the various forms of both personal and communal prayer

### **3. Prayer**

The Committee will organize ongoing prayer for vocations in the parish.  
This may include:

- Prayers of the Faithful
- 'Vocations' prayer cards for specific use by the elderly, sick and housebound
- Prayer groups and morning Mass goers be asked to pray for vocations
- Families be invited to pray that children will make informed choices about their vocation in life
- Parishioners be encouraged to pray specifically for the young of the parish: that they respond generously to God's call for them
- Inviting young adults to gather for communal prayer experiences
- Holy hours and perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Membership in DOVS (Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocations Society) and participation in the annual DOVS pilgrimage for vocations

### **4. Inviting Individuals to consider a Religious or Ordained Ministry (Priesthood or Diaconate) Vocation**

Committee members will spend time in prayer and reflection before, during and after consultation with parish staff, the local religious community/ies and other parish personnel, so that they might identify potential candidates for priesthood, permanent diaconate and religious life. In addition they will consider options for providing education regarding discernment skills development, specific information about all vocations, particular information about religious life and diocesan priesthood. Personal invitation is often key to getting a response to the invitation to consider a vocation to priesthood, diaconate or religious life.

\* The resources contained in *Appendix 11* of these guidelines could be helpful.

### **Relationship to Other Groups**

Our Parish Vocations Awareness Committee is responsible to and reports regularly to the Pastoral Council. The committee will also work closely with other groups in the parish: e.g. youth ministry, young adult ministry, religious education, parish school, ministers to the sick, parish prayer groups, liturgy committee, small faith communities, people who attend Morning Mass and the Diocesan Office of Vocations. The committee will also try to meet regularly with other vocation committees in the deanery/region/diocese.

### **Membership**

Our Parish Vocations Awareness Committee is composed of not more than 10 members approved by the Pastor. Ideally, we will have representation from each of our vocational groupings: priest, deacon, married couple, single person, religious sister and/or brother on the committee. It is recommended that members serve not more than five consecutive years unless there is a good reason to do otherwise. The members select the Co-coordinator and other officers as needed.

### **Annual Review**

It is recommended that this Committee review annually their goals and achievements and plan for coming year.

### **Approved by the Parish Priest and/or Pastoral Council**

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ Pastoral Council President \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 2**

# *Parish Vocations Awareness Committee Roles*

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### **Coordinator: Personal Attributes and Responsibilities**

- Has a passion for the promotion of a culture of vocations
- Is open to on-going personal formation in this area
- Is willing to devote time, talent, and energy to help the Committee and other parishioners come to a better understanding of the Church's Theology of Vocations
- Has skills in communication and team-building
- Has the ability to speak publicly on behalf of the group
- Is willing to ensure that the Parish Vocations Awareness Committee remains vibrant through prayer, study, and planned activities for the parish
- Has a readiness to serve as the "connecting link" with the Diocesan Vocations Office, and other Vocation Committees
- Has the support and approval of the Pastor and/or Parish Administrator.

### **Team: Personal Attributes and Responsibilities**

- Has a passion for the promotion of a culture of vocations
- Is open to on-going personal formation in this area
- Is willing to devote time, talent, and energy to help the Committee and other parishioners come to a better understanding of the Church's Theology of Vocations
- Places announcements in parish bulletins and newsletters, as well as requesting announcements regarding upcoming vocation events
- Displays up-to-date flyers, brochures, and announcements
- Distributes appropriate flyers to youth and young adults, the Parish Council, school staff and other appropriate parish personnel
- Is present at parish vocation events
- Is affirming of all involved in active ministry in the parish
- Publicizes deanery, regional, diocesan and national vocations events
- Enlists the support of the Pastor/s and/or Parish Administrator for vocation events
- Links with the diocesan vocation office and DOVS (Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocations Society)

## Appendix 3

# Parish Assessment Tool

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### VOCATION EDUCATION and AWARENESS SURVEY

Please indicate on the scale shown (0 – 5) the degree to which the concept discussed is presently being implemented in your parish.

#### PERCEPTION:

Assisting people to come to a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the church, vocations and ministry.

1. **Vocations awareness grows in a parish environment in which many people minister and are aware of themselves as ministers.**

*In our parish do we promote awareness and understanding that each person is called and each has a vocation rooted in baptism?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

2. **Discerning a vocation depends partly on a person's awareness that Christ's call to service extends beyond the boundaries of family and parish.**

*Does our parish have ways to extend our ministry to other areas of church and society, to the poor and oppressed, nearby and far away?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

3. **We live in a time of tremendous challenge in our church and world, in which both face many difficulties and injustices.**

*Does our parish believe that in the midst of real challenge there is reason for hope and a need to invite people to minister among us?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

## EDUCATION and RESOURCES

**Increasing people's understanding of the different vocations: marriage, single life, ordained ministry and religious life.**

- 4. Parents exercise a crucial role in fostering in their children a world-view in which service to God and people is a high value.**

*a) Does our parish educate parents about their role in fostering a culture of vocation within their families?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

*b) Does our parish educate parents about their role in fostering religious and priestly vocations by providing them with a positive and image of these lifestyles?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

- 5. Parents are not the only ones exercising this crucial role in creating in children and young people a world-view in which service to God and people is a high value.**

*a) Does our parish educate all parishioners about their role in fostering a culture of vocation within the parish?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

*b) Does our parish educate all parishioners about their role in fostering religious and ordained ministry vocations (priesthood and diaconate) by providing them with a positive image of these lifestyles?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

- 6. People need to know how God calls a person.**

*a) Do our parishioners share their own vocation stories as a means of sensitizing others to God's call in their own lives?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

*b) Do the priests/deacons and religious of our parish share their own vocation stories as a means of sensitizing others to God's call in their own lives?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5



7. **Has our parish made use of any materials or support provided by the Diocesan Vocations Office, [www.rcdony.org/vocations](http://www.rcdony.org/vocations) or Religious Ministries [www.religiousministries.com](http://www.religiousministries.com), for parish or youth ministry?**  
       \_\_\_Yes        \_\_\_No
8. **Does our parish recognize and promote the annual National Vocations Awareness Week?**  
       \_\_\_Yes        \_\_\_No
9. **World Day for Consecrated Life?**  
       \_\_\_Yes        \_\_\_No
10. **Does our parish recognize and promote the annual World Day of Prayer for Vocations?**  
       \_\_\_Yes        \_\_\_No

## INVITATION

**Reaching out to those who search for a direction in life with an invitation to consider a vocation to the religious life or ordained ministry.**

### 11. Young people learn by doing.

*Does our parish make a special effort to invite young people to serve in ministry?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum  
           0        1        2        3        4        5

### 12. For people to be able to consider a future as a sister, brother or priest, they need exposure to role models and information.

*Does our parish provide this for young people?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum  
           0        1        2        3        4        5

### 13. Current research shows that young people desire to be invited.

*When we recognize in a person in our parish the qualities necessary for the lifestyle of a religious sister, brother, deacon or priest, do we invite them to consider that option for their future?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum  
           0        1        2        3        4        5

### 14. Opportunities for prayer and vocational discernment are provided in a variety of ways.

*Does our parish advertise and promote such opportunities?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum  
           0        1        2        3        4        5

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Involving parish people in the work of promoting religious and priestly vocations and creating a healthy climate for hearing and responding to God's call.

**15. By virtue of our baptism, Vocations Ministry is 'everybody's business'**

*Do we communicate the concept that our vocation originates in our Baptism and that self-knowledge and awareness of options aid in promoting good vocation choices?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

**16. Those who minister to young people have a unique opportunity to promote awareness of priestly and religious vocations.**

*Does the parish communicate with the staff of the primary and/or secondary schools and/or Religious Education Programs within the parish to ensure that vocations to ordained ministry and religious life are fostered?*

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

**17. The local church is the place for promoting religious and ordained ministry vocations.**

Does our parish have a functioning Vocations Awareness Committee that animates us in the fostering of a vocations culture?

Minimum \_\_\_\_\_ Maximum

0      1      2      3      4      5

## Appendix 4

# *Sample Bulletin Announcement for the Parish Vocations Awareness Committee*

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### **Parish Vocations Awareness Committee**

Our parish has recently established a *Parish Vocations Awareness Committee*. The task of the committee is fourfold:

1. To promote a *Culture of Vocations*
2. To form and educate the Committee and Parishioners
3. To foster a prayerful environment in which all vocations are discerned
4. To establish a parish process for inviting individuals to consider a Religious or Ordained Ministry (priesthood/diaconate) Vocation

The Committee members are: (names of members)



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## **Appendix 5**

### ***Sample Presentation by a Committee Member***

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*These, or similar words, could be used by a committee member in a presentation at the end of Sunday Masses announcing the formation of the Vocations Awareness Committee in the parish*

**Good evening/morning!**

**My name is \_\_\_\_\_ . I am a member of the newly formed Vocations Awareness Committee in our parish. More parishes are becoming aware of the responsibility of promoting a healthy vocations culture. Our parish is one that is responding to this challenge.**

**As you may have already read in the bulletin, the task of the committee is fourfold:**

- **To promote a Culture of Vocations**
- **To form and educate the Committee and Parishioners**
- **To foster a prayerful environment in which all vocations are discerned**
- **To establish a parish process for inviting individuals to consider a vocation to the religious life or ordained ministry as a priest or deacon**

**I would ask you for your prayers for the success of this committee. Vocations ministry is the responsibility of all of us – every baptized person – and thus we hope that we will find ways through which many parishioners will be involved in this vital ministry. To start us off: prayer cards are available at the entrance to the Church. Please make sure you take one. If you have any questions about our committee, I will be available outside the church following this Mass.**

**Thank you.**

## **Appendix 6**

### *Underlying Principles in Vocations Awareness*

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- Each of us is called by God. This call is rooted in Baptism, and is a way of participating in the mission of Jesus. The promotion of vocational awareness is the responsibility of every baptized person.
- There is a rich variety of calls given by God.
- Most people are called to marriage. Some people are called to be single, and others are called to be sisters, brothers, priests or deacons. All vocations are of equal dignity and make up the Body of Christ.
- The seeds of many religious vocations are sown in childhood, even though the person does not make a vocational decision or commitment until adulthood.
- Sisters, priests, deacons and brothers are ordinary people who don't claim to be perfect, but desire to be of service in how they live and work.
- To be a brother, sister, deacon or priest can be an exciting life.
- A celibate choice is a valid and healthy way of loving that demands an integrated sense of self and one's sexuality.
- Personal invitation continues to be the main reason someone chooses to consider religious life, the diaconate and priesthood as possible options.
- There is need for education regarding the language used in relation to: vocations, ministry, religious life, priesthood, diaconate, e.g. charism, vows, formation, novitiate.
- Religious life, priesthood, diaconate continue to evolve in ways rarely presented by the stereotypical images in the media.



## Appendix 7

### *Vocation Prayers*

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#### **General Christian Vocation Prayers:**

1. **God of all creation,  
Through Baptism, you gift us with new life.  
You call each of us to live that life in a unique way  
So that we may truly become the witnesses of your love. Bless all those you call:  
all single and married people, all priests and deacons,  
all sisters and brothers.  
May we all become builders of your kingdom and sacraments of your love  
as we live out the mission of Jesus Christ through living our vocational call.  
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.**
  
2. **Loving God,  
You are the Creator of the universe. You have gifted us with life  
and called us through our Baptism to be a light to the world.  
Help us to brighten our world  
by sharing our gifts in the service of others and respecting all creation.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.**
  
3. **Gracious God, Source of all life,  
by our Baptism you call us by name and invite us to fullness of life in you.  
Bless each of us as we respond to your call to follow the Son.  
May we encourage and support one another in discerning and living out our  
Christian Vocation.  
Help us to foster a *culture of vocations* in which your seed will bear much fruit.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.**  
*(Diocese of Wollongong, Vocations Congress, 2006)*
  
4. **Pray Now – Decide Later – Love Always!  
Loving God, your faithful love has filled me with joy and hope. My  
desire to be a reflection of your love and goodness causes me to pause  
and question how I can best use my gifts and talents to serve you and  
your people.  
I need your inspiration to know if my vocation is to the  
married, single, or consecrated life. Please help me to know my own  
heart's deepest desire. Amen.**

## **Specific Prayer for Priests, Deacons and Religious**

1. **God of life,**  
you speak to us and nourish us through the life of our Church community.  
In the name of Jesus, we ask you to send your Spirit  
so that men and women among us  
will respond to your call to service and leadership in our Church as priests,  
deacons, brothers and sisters.  
May those who open their hearts and minds to this call be encouraged  
and strengthened through our enthusiasm and support.  
We make this prayer through Jesus your Son. Amen.
2. **Gracious and loving God**  
we come before you today humbly asking for your blessing. Through Jesus,  
you invited us to ask for workers in your vineyard. Look with favor on our  
parish, and bless us with men and women who respond generously to your call to  
priesthood, diaconate and to religious life.  
Bless us with generosity to encourage and support these people. Help us all to  
be good and faithful witnesses to your love, and especially bless those called to  
leadership in our Church.  
We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, our priest, prophet and king. Amen.
3. **God the Father, author of our lives,**  
**Christ the Good Shepherd, high priest of the Church,**  
**God the Holy Spirit, source of wisdom and understanding, guide young people**  
**as they discern their vocation.**  
Give them the wisdom to discover your plan for them, and courage to embrace your  
will.  
Give to the Church wise and holy priests and religious sisters and brothers,  
so that your Gospel may be taken to the ends of the earth,  
Your flock be built up in faith, hope and love,  
and your name is praised without ceasing. Amen.

## **Family Vocation Prayers**

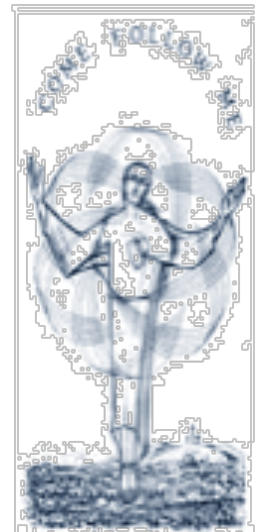
1. **Jesus,**  
You are the Good Shepherd who is always mindful of  
your Church. Watch over those who are baptized in  
your name,  
and grant peace and harmony to all families.  
Bless all parents, and help them to find peace and  
happiness through their vocation. We ask you to help  
all children and young adults  
to discover the vocation that will enable them to live  
life to the full  
as they become their best selves in the service of God's  
kingdom.  
We make this prayer in your name. Amen.



2. **Loving God,**  
each member of our family is a special gift from you.  
You have given each of us gifts and talents  
so that we can enjoy life and share these with others.  
Help us to know how to encourage and support each other so that we can  
respond generously to our Baptismal call. Help us to foster a culture of vocations  
in our family and parish so that each will respond to that call to serve you  
through the vocations of marriage, single life, ordained ministry or religious  
life. Help us to be aware that you are with us as we strive to become the kind  
of people you call us to be.  
We make this prayer through Jesus who lived his call to the full. Amen.

### **Young People's Prayer for Discerning Their Vocation**

1. **God,**  
I know you love me and are calling me to Choose Life!  
But sometimes, I am overwhelmed by the thought of my future. It's scary!  
Help me to listen to your call ~ in all the ways you speak to me:  
through prayer and the scriptures,  
through the Church and the circumstances of my life,  
through those who love and care for me,  
and through my own hopes and desires.  
Guide me to search openly and learn about life's choices, so that I may  
respond generously to your call, and choose the vocation that will enable me  
to love wholeheartedly, and serve others with the special gifts you have given  
me.  
God, today I thank you for your love ~ and for your gifts of life.  
Amen.
2. **Dear Jesus,**  
Please grant to me the grace to know my true vocation.  
In Baptism I was signed in your name and have grown to share  
in the work of bringing the Father's love to our world.  
May I respond to the special life's work to which you are calling  
me.  
I ask that many will hear the call to serve in the Church  
as priests, religious and consecrated lay people.  
To whatever you ask of me, may I freely, courageously and  
lovingly respond. Amen.



## Young Peoples' Prayer for Discerning Their Vocation

God, I know you love me and have great plans for me.

But sometimes I am overwhelmed by the thought of my future.

I sense that you may be calling me to be a sister, brother, priest or deacon. Show me how to walk forward one day at a time. May I have the courage to search openly, to learn about my choices, to listen to others for advice, and pay attention to my own feelings, but most importantly, to listen to you.

By doing this, I trustingly respond to your call, believing that you will lead me to fullness of life. My deepest desire is to serve you, so I trust that you will give me whatever I need to follow wherever you may lead. Amen.



## Sick Person's Prayer for Priestly and Religious Vocations

O God, You are a good and loving Father.

I have great confidence that you are listening to me.

Our world needs many priests and consecrated men and women to serve your church. I offer my sufferings, my illness, the infirmities of old age, and my personal inconveniences for your greater honor and glory.

Encourage our generous young people to listen to, and discern your call.

Show them how they can best serve their brothers and sisters in Christ.

O God, may my sickness be my prayer when I have no words.

I ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Senior Citizen's Prayer for Religious and Priestly Vocations

Loving God,

You call me to be a person of faith,

who desires to grow in wisdom as well as age. Teach me to be open to you by responding to your love in my life. As I grow older, sometimes I am sick or without energy, or feel very lonely. Let me remember that you too know what it is to suffer and yet remain hopeful.

I desire to offer the difficulties of my life for those whom you call to serve as priests, deacons, sisters or brothers.

I ask that you bless our parish community with generous and enthusiastic young people who are willing to respond to this call. I make my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## **Appendix 8**

### ***Parish 31 Club Program***

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If you ask others to pray for vocations, you need to begin by praying yourself.

Make vocations to the ordained ministry and religious life part of your private prayer every day. You may wish to use one of the vocation prayers in *Appendix 7*.

The **31 Club** is one of Serra's simplest, most successful and most fundamental vocation programs. It is an excellent way to make Catholics aware of the need for an increase in priestly and religious vocations at the parish level, where vocations most often begin. ([www.serraus.org](http://www.serraus.org))

#### **How does it work?**

Parishioners are invited to choose one date during the month when they will go to Mass for religious and priestly vocations. At Mass on the designated date, the person prays for all priests, deacons, sisters, brothers and lay ministers who have served, or are serving the parish, and prays that young parishioners will respond to God's call to religious and priestly life. Those making this commitment to monthly Mass also receive a prayer card and are requested to pray each day for priestly and religious vocations.



## Appendix 9

# *Parish Vocation Crucifix/Chalice/Statue Program*

*"The harvest is rich, but there are few laborers to gather it in.  
Beg the Lord of the Harvest to send laborers into the harvest." –Matthew 9:37-38*

Vocations to the religious life and ordained ministry don't grow on trees. They are nurtured in families! For that reason, prayer for vocations should include prayer in the family. One practical way to get families to pray for these vocations is to start a Vocation Crucifix/Chalice/Statue Program in the parish. Vocations are the result of the Christian community actively engaged in prayer.

A Crucifix/Chalice/Statue is circulated throughout the parish, with each family hosting the Crucifix/Chalice/Statue for one week. During that week the family prays every day - usually before the evening meal – for vocations to the ordained ministry and religious life. The Parish Vocations Awareness Committee (PVAC) provides copies of special vocations prayers for use by the family. The Crucifix/Chalice/Statue is put in some prominent place in the house so that family members are reminded of its presence throughout the week.

It is best to present the Crucifix/Chalice/Statue to the hosting family during a Sunday Mass as well as creating a formal setting for the presentation. This reminds the entire congregation to pray for religious and priestly vocations.

To ensure this program runs smoothly the PVAC will need to take responsibility for keeping a calendar. Sponsoring families should sign up well ahead of time to know what Mass to attend to receive the cross/chalice/statue. The celebrant should present it to the family using some appropriate wording such as:



**"I present this \_\_\_\_\_ to you, the (n) family, and commission you to pray each day this week for more vocations to the religious life, priesthood and diaconate, especially from our parish. We, the community, will also join our prayers to yours."**

A copy of the prayers in *Appendix 7* is provided for the family/person who is the custodian of the cross for the week.

- The family may choose one prayer each day
- They may wish to read and reflect on one of the following scripture passages:

Genesis 12:14; 15:6

Thessalonians. 5:11

Deuteronomy 29:3

Exodus 3:11-12

1 Kings. 19:19-21

1 Samuel. 3:1-10

Acts 9:1-19; 13:2,3, 16:9-10

Isaiah. 6:1-9; 22:6-21; 26:12-19

Jeremiah 1:4-10; 17-19; 15:10-21

Amos 7:15

Mark. 1:16-20

Luke. 9:57-60; 5:1-11; 12:49-53

John 1:35-51

2 Timothy. 1:6-13

## Appendix 10

### *Further Possible Activities*

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#### **Individual Prayer: a suggested way of praying with scripture:**

*The following is a suggested structure for quiet reflection to be used by an individual for private prayer.*

- Select a passage — five to ten verses from the Bible (see suggestions listed below).
- Find a place where you will be alone, not bothered, and free to move, speak, and be uninhibited in your response to God's presence.
- Find a comfortable posture, relaxed, and peaceful.
- Be aware of the presence of God. Acknowledge and respond to it.
- Pray the passage from scripture (*select from the following – or any other scripture text*):

Genesis 12:14; 15:6

Thessalonians. 5:11

Deuteronomy 29:3

Exodus 3:11-12

1 Kings. 19:19-21

1 Samuel. 3:1-10

Acts 9:1-19; 13:2.3, 16:9-10

Isaiah. 6:1-9; 22:6-21; 26:12-19

Jeremiah 1:4-10; 17-19; 15:10-21

Amos 7:15

Mark. 1:16-20

Luke. 9:57-60; 5:1-11; 12:49-53

John 1:35-512

2 Timothy. 1:6-13

- Closing Prayer:  
Loving God, fill me with your spirit of love so that the fire of Jesus may blaze within me. May I become a more visible sign of the reign of God.  
I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**

This may be weekly or monthly.

You may wish to incorporate some communal prayer into this time, or it may be totally silent.

#### **Prayers of the Faithful for Sunday Eucharist**

*Suggested Vocations Awareness Prayers that can be selected for inclusion in your parish's Sunday Prayers of the Faithful:*

1. That families will strive to make their homes places where children can hear God call them by name.
2. That parents may realize their responsibility to be an example of faith for their children.
3. That young men and women will listen to the Spirit in their hearts and respond to the call to serve as priest, deacon, or consecrated religious.
4. That those who feel a call to and desire for the priesthood, diaconate or religious life may find the courage to say yes to what God asks of them.
5. That our parish community, by its life of prayer and service, will actively nurture religious and priestly vocations.

6. For men and women in seminaries and religious formation programs, that they may know the support and love of our parish community as they grow in self-awareness and continue to discern God's call.
7. That our daily living may transform our suffering world into a place of love, justice and peace.
8. That the mystery of God's deep love will strengthen those who struggle in their vowed commitment.
9. That we, as a parish, continue to support our priests, deacons, sisters, and brothers who inspire and strengthen us by the witness of their commitment.
10. That God will continue to call women and men of faith to serve as ministers in our church.
11. That God's Spirit will empower us all to respond to his call with courage, faith and generosity.
12. That God will continue to call women and men to serve as sisters, brothers, priests and deacons.
13. That our lives may be a sign of God's presence and love in the world.
14. That parents and teachers may have the courage and faith to speak God's word in what they do and say.
15. That those who seek to know the truth may hear the call of the Gospel and respond generously.
16. That young people, especially those of our parish, may persevere in hope, trusting in God's faithfulness to them as they search for deeper meaning in life.
17. That parents may have the wisdom and knowledge to hand on their faith to their children.
18. That our young priests may experience the support and encouragement they need as they face an increasingly demanding future as shepherds of your flock.
19. That each of us, our families and our friends, may respond to the call of our baptism, and accept the grace to remain open to our vocational call to service.
20. That we, as members of our parish, recognize our responsibility to invite parishioners to consider the call to ordained ministry and/or religious life.
21. That young people may find encouragement from their families to respond to God's call to a life of ministry and service.

## Rosary

Ask those who pray the Rosary before or after daily Mass to pray one of the vocations prayers each day. See *Appendix 12* for a “**Vocation Rosary**”.

## Parish Prayer Groups

Ask the leaders of your parish prayer groups to make vocations a special intention in their prayers and pray one of the vocations prayers regularly.

## Ministry to and by the Sick and Homebound

Ask those who are sick or homebound to pray for vocations to religious life and ordained ministry, and offer up their sickness for this intention. By doing this the sick can become a powerhouse of prayer. (See *Appendix 7* for a suggested prayers. \*) Encourage all who minister to the sick and homebound to leave a copy of this prayer with those whom they visit. They could also leave a copy of the ‘Ministry of the Sick and Homebound’ commitment card. *(these would need to be printed out on cards)*

### ***Ministry of the Sick and Homebound Commitment Card***

#### **Vocations Ministry of the Sick and Homebound**

I will commit myself to:

1. Offer a monthly holy hour at home (by myself or with others).
2. Spend time each week praying for vocations to the religious life, priesthood and diaconate ~ e.g. the rosary, scripture reflection.
3. Pray daily for a young woman or man (by name) who is considering religious life or ordained ministry (priesthood/diaconate).
4. Do some act of kindness for someone else.
5. Accept willingly whatever daily life brings in terms of pain and loneliness.

\*“Vocation Prayer Apostolate” pamphlets are available through our Diocesan Vocation Office.

## **Sample letter to ministers of the sick:**

**(Address)**

**(Date)**

**Dear \_\_\_\_\_**

**I am writing to invite your assistance in promoting vocations to the ordained ministry and religious life.**

**The sick and homebound of our parish can provide a tremendous resource of prayer, and I hope you can help us to ask for their prayer and ministry for this important purpose.**

**I enclose our new prayer cards, “Sick Person’s Prayer for Vocations” and a “Senior Citizen’s Prayer for Vocations”, as well as the “Ministry of the Sick and Homebound” commitment card. Would you kindly distribute these cards to the sick, homebound, and elderly, so that they might offer their illness or infirmities to the Lord for an increase of vocations to the ordained ministry and religious life? We see these people as our ‘Powerhouse of Prayer’ for vocations. Their prayers are united with those of many other people throughout our diocese.**

**Please let me know how many cards you would like. They are available without cost.**

**Thanks for your cooperation!**

**Sincerely yours in Christ,**

**On behalf of the *Parish Vocations Awareness Committee***

## **Further Scripture Passages Relating to God's Call**

### ***Call of God:***

Extended freely by God:

Jeremiah. 1:41ff; Romans 8:30; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; Galatians. 1:15

### ***Demands faith and obedience:***

Genesis 12; Matthew 4:18-22; 16:24-26; 8:18-22

### ***New life in person called:***

Genesis 17:4-8; Luke 1:13, 31-32, 59-63; John 1:42

### ***Corresponds with communication of the Spirit of God:***

1 Samuel 10:6; 16:13; Isaiah 2:2; 42:1; John 15:16, 26; 20:22; 14:16; Mark 3:13

### ***Called to the heritage of everlasting life:***

Matthew 22:1-14; Philippians 3:14; 11 Thessalonians 2:14;

1 Timothy 6:12; Hebrews 9:15; Revelation 19:9

### ***Communal aspect:***

Romans 9:7; 1 Corinthians 12:1ff; Colossians 3:15; Ephesians 4:1-12

### ***Purpose of Call:***

Exodus 3:14; Judges 6:12-23; Psalm 20-38; Luke 1:13-17; 1 Peter 2:9

### ***Assurance of Divine Providence:***

Exodus 19:3; Judges 6:13-14; Ezekiel 3:7-9; Jeremiah 1:7-9; Matthew. 10:1-8; Mark. 3:15;

Luke 9:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:4-6; 4:7; Ephesians 4:11

### ***Results of following God's Call:***

#### **a) Persecution:**

Isaiah 50:5-8; 53:1-12; Matthew 10:16-33; Mark 13:11; Luke 21:14-15;

Acts 9:15-16; 26:17-19

#### **b) Rewards:**

Matthew 19:27-29; John 15:15; 2 Corinthians. 2:15-17

### ***Renunciation:***

Matthew 2:14; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 5:27-28; 9:57-62

### ***Prayer for perseverance:***

1 Thessalonians 1:11-12

### ***Discernment:***

Psalm 25(24); Romans 8:28-30, 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Corinthians. 2:7-12;

1 Peter 1:1-10

## **Appendix 11**

# ***Inviting Individuals to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life or Ordained Ministry (Priesthood or Diaconate)***

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## **People Need An Invitation**

A major task of the Parish Vocations Awareness Committee is to identify individuals in the parish who might make good priests, deacons or religious, and personally invite them to consider this special call. This is a crucial part of vocations ministry. Recent anecdotal evidence indicates that most people in seminaries and houses of religious formation are there because, somewhere in their journey of discernment, they were personally encouraged or invited to consider a religious or priestly vocation. This pattern is not new! It reflects the stories of so many priests and religious!

## **Whom should we invite?**

Following are five easy steps on how to identify potential candidates for personal invitation.

### ***1. Pray about it***

Prayer must always be primary. Before meeting to identify those people whom they believe would make a good priest or religious, spend some time in prayer as a group, asking for God's help and guidance in the important mission you are about to take on.

### ***2. Consult***

Meet with the Pastor and parish staff (especially the youth minister and school staff), and ask them to identify those people they believe would make good priests and religious.

You can enlist the help of the Sunday congregation in searching out candidates. You may put an announcement in the Sunday bulletin (*see sample below*) asking people to identify those they consider would be suitable candidates, and why. Ask the congregation to pray for your committee in this important search. Include the intention in the Prayers of the Faithful that week. Ask the Parish Priest to endorse this project.

### ***3. Search***

In addition to the names already gathered, take a close look at the people involved in the specific groups, making sure to include all ethnic communities in your parish, e.g.

- Liturgical Ministers: altar servers, lectors, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, musicians ...
- Primary and secondary teachers and catechists
- Youth leaders
- Other parish committee/organization members
  
- "Sacred Moment" pamphlets, available through our Diocesan Vocation Office, give points for conversation with potential candidates

There are many young, single Catholics around who are prayerful, generous and involved in the parish and wider community. These are the kind of people who would make good priests, deacons and religious.

### **Sample bulletin insert:**

#### **Search for Candidates**

Research has shown that most people who decide to choose a vocation to the religious life or ordained ministry do so because somebody along the way said to them: “You would make a good priest/brother/sister/deacon.”

This month the *Parish Vocations Awareness Committee* is conducting a search for potential candidates for the ordained ministry and religious life. The people identified will be contacted and personally invited to consider a religious or priestly vocation.

The committee members will consult with the organizations of the parish asking for suggestions. If you know of single parishioners whom you think would make good brothers/priests/deacons/sisters, please contact the committee\* with their name and phone number. And please help by including them in your prayers.

(\*Add contact details)

The following list of qualities is offered to help you identify potential candidates to the religious life or ordained ministry:

- MISSION – Does this person have a fundamental sense of the Church’s mission and a generous willingness and enthusiasm to promote the Church’s mission?
- SERVICE – Does the young person show signs of selflessness?
- SPIRITUALITY – Does this person display a desire to know God better and to deepen his/her spiritual life?
- COMPASSION – Does the person feel empathy for the suffering of others?
- COMMITMENT – Is this a person who follows through on commitments?
- SOCIABILITY – Do these young people interact well with peers? Do others enjoy being around them?
- LEADERSHIP – Can they lead by persuasion and example rather than position?
- TRUST – Do others consider this to be an honest person, someone worthy of trust?
- ATTRACTION – Does this person seem to be attracted to positive ministerial role models? .... Would he or she be an attractive model for others?
- GOALS – Is this a young person who has his or her own goals? One who meets these goals?
- LEARNING – Does this person have the ability to learn, academically and personally?
- MEANING – Does this young person act out of a value system and believes life is purposeful?

These are the people in whom the Spirit is active, and vocation discernment should be seen as a process in which others assist them to complete the good work that God has already begun.

*(Terrance W. Klein: “Discerning Vocations to Ordained Ministry and Religious Life” – America Journal)*



#### **4. Discern**

- Meet as a committee to consider the names that have been submitted.
- Spend some time in prayer.
- In an atmosphere of strict confidentiality invite comments about each suggested candidate. It may be helpful to have the parish priest and parish religious attend this meeting.

#### **5. Personally invite**

It is now time to personally invite candidates whose names you have identified. Nominate which committee member(s) will approach which candidate. Say something like this:

“I am contacting you on behalf of our Vocations Awareness Committee. Our committee feels you have the qualities needed to be a sister/brother/deacon/priest. We would like you to prayerfully consider this matter. If you wish, we could help you to explore the possibility that God is calling you in this way. Please take time to seriously consider this invitation, and, if you would like to follow this up, here are my contact details.”

*(A suggestion: you might also offer the invitation in writing)*

If you feel self-conscious about doing this, remember that you are really complimenting the person. Even if the person is not interested in a religious/priestly vocation, he/she will feel affirmed by your conversation.

If people in your parish respond positively to this invitation, they may wish to speak with your parish priest /a religious/deacon, or our diocesan vocation director(s).

## **Appendix 12**

# *Vocation Rosary*

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Seminarian David C. Deston wrote these meditations on each of the twenty mysteries of the Rosary.

### **The Joyful Mysteries**

There's a word used in theology that means God's will as it unfolds in salvation history. That word is economy, which has a different meaning in a secular context. I bring this up because I want to argue that vocation is, essentially, finding one's place within the economy. This definition gives vocation a much broader context than is commonly understood. For example, when we pray for vocations, we think of priests, nuns, and brothers. However, if when we pray for vocations, we are praying that all people find their place in the economy, then our prayer is more perfect because when someone finds their calling, their true vocation, they are truly happy because they are fulfilled. So, then, let us look at the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary and see how living out one's vocation in conformity with the economy can accomplish great things and bring true, lasting joy into our hearts.

#### **First Joyful Mystery - The Annunciation**

The mystery of the Annunciation illustrates the "call and response" element to vocation. Vocation is an invitation by God that mandates a response. Here, the Lord has asked Mary to be the mother of His son. Few callings are so clear-cut. As we pray this mystery, let us imagine ourselves in the room with Mary. Gabriel has just asked Our Lady to carry the God-Man within her. Imagine the tension in the room, indeed all of creation, as we await the answer. Our Lady agrees within a very short span of time. Let us pray that Christians everywhere be more attentive to God's call and that they follow Mary's example and answer with their own "fiat."

#### **Second Joyful Mystery - The Visitation**

Some people find their calling very early in life, others very late. This mystery illustrates both. Here is the aged Elizabeth who, after so many years, is finally doing what she was meant to - being a witness to God by motherhood. But here too is the unborn Baptist. Even before the birth of the Christ-child, even before his own birth, John proclaims the coming of the Messiah. This mystery is also full of the joy of finding one's place in the economy. Witness Elizabeth's joyful greeting, John's joyful leaps, and most spectacularly, Mary's joyful song of the *Magnificat*. As we pray this mystery, let us once more put ourselves in the room with Mary, Elizabeth, and their unborn children. See the tears of joy sparkle on their faces, smiles wide, and their voices lilting with happiness at the presence of God among them. Let us pray that all Christians seek God and find the joy that comes from following the Lord.

#### **Third Joyful Mystery - The Nativity**

Vocation is not without difficulty. Here, let us look to Joseph, guardian of the Madonna and the Son of God. The journey from Nazareth in northern Israel to Bethlehem in the south with a woman who was eight months pregnant could neither have been easy or comfortable, then to find that the only place available for Mary to bear her child is in a stable. Joseph's struggle is just beginning. Imagine him mucking out the barn and finding clean hay upon which to rest his foster-son, and the pain that God's only Son had to sleep on hay, not down. The flight to Egypt would soon present difficulties for the beleaguered Joseph. Yet, even in the midst of what any of us would consider a disaster, Joseph is calm. His fortitude is rewarded by the visit of the shepherds and the adoration of the Magi. Let us pray that all who struggle in their vocation do so with peace and fortitude, and that God reward them with His grace.

#### **Fourth Joyful Mystery - The Presentation in the Temple**

Through the joy and challenges of vocation, it is good to keep in mind the goal. Simeon lived his life and fulfilled his vocation so well that the Holy Spirit promised him that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Messiah. Simeon's reward is what awaits us all. Fulfillment of our vocation, our cooperation with, and in, the economy will result in our eternal reward - to see God and be happy with him forever.

#### **Fifth Joyful Mystery - The Finding in the Temple**

Vocation demands action. Jesus knew his vocation and went to work at it. However, vocation requires maturity, something he was lacking at this point. The time would come when Our Lord had to leave his mother and when she had to send forth her divine son. Undoubtedly, this was a difficult event for both mother and son, however necessary. Yet, without action, no vocation can be fulfilled, and if not fulfilled, there will be no joy, no growth, and no reward. As we pray this mystery, let us ask God to bless and prosper our actions that cooperate with his plans for us.

### **The Glorious Mysteries**

Praying the Joyful, Luminous, and Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, we learned about vocation as one's place in the economy of salvation, how to find that place, and how to unite one's specific vocation to that of the Lord. Now, let us pray together the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary, and as we do so, let us focus on the graces, the tools, if you will, God has given us to do His work.

#### **First Glorious Mystery – The Resurrection**

On the third day after Jesus was crucified, some women went to the place he was laid to anoint the body, when to their shock, they discovered the tomb open and empty. Their shock is quickly pushed aside, however, as they learn that the Lord is risen. This fact, this truth, is central to the Christian vocation. In rising from the dead, the Lord has broken the chains of sin and death that for so long, ruptured our relationship with God. As we pray this mystery, let us ask God to help us make the Resurrection the central point in our hearts so that whatever our specific vocation may be, we may proclaim by our words and actions “The Lord is risen!”

#### **Second Glorious Mystery – The Ascension**

After his resurrection, Jesus spent forty days with the apostles, teaching them to be heralds of the Gospel. After the forty days were over, the Lord ascended to heaven on a cloud, promising to send the Paraclete after him. Dumbstruck, the Eleven stared after him into the sky. Two angels appeared to them and told them that as Jesus left, he shall return. Strengthened by the angels' message, the Eleven, Mary, and the holy women devoted themselves to prayer. In the liturgy, we hear that “our desire to praise You is itself Your gift.” As we pray this mystery, let us thank Almighty God for the gift of prayer itself, for it is in prayer that we commune with the Most High.

#### **Third Glorious Mystery – The Descent of the Holy Spirit**

The Apostles and Mary are in the Upper Room when it is filled with a rushing wind and tongues of fire descend on their heads, anointing them with the Holy Spirit. Filled with its power, they go out into the streets and proclaim the Gospel in all languages. Indeed, the people exclaim “We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travellers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.” The same Spirit that made the Apostles able to do this is active in each of us by our Baptism and Confirmation. As we pray this mystery, let us ask God to renew in us the strength of the Holy Spirit so that we too may proclaim the Word with power.

#### **Fourth Glorious Mystery – The Assumption of Mary**

At the end of her life, Our Lady was taken body and soul, into heaven. This is a singular event. However, it does certainly affect the way we live out our vocations. In her Assumption, Mary was conformed more fully to her Son. This is meant for us as anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians. By giving us a public sign, God is making a promise that we too shall share her reward. As we pray this mystery, let us ask God to make us more like Mary, with our eyes fixed on the proper goal of our life, her son, Our Lord Jesus.

#### **Fifth Glorious Mystery – The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

In making Mary the Queen of Heaven and earth, God has made her a powerful intercessor for us before the heavenly throne. She has also been justly rewarded for her fidelity and love while on earth. She is for us both a model and a help. As we pray this mystery, let us thank God for the gift of so great a mother and ask Our Lady to lay our prayers at the feet of her son.

### **The Sorrowful Mysteries**

Looking at the mysteries of the Rosary through the prism of vocation, we learn about the economy, that is, God's plan of salvation, and about finding one's place within the economy. Regardless of one's specific vocation, however, there are certain constants that mark the vocation of every Christian. The primary one is, of course, proclamation of the Word. Yet, merely to proclaim the Word isn't enough. What we need to do is to unite ourselves with the suffering and death of Jesus. In doing so, we make our work in the world more efficacious and fruitful. Let us turn, then, to the Sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary, which deal with the suffering and death of Our Lord, and see how to unite our vocation to that of the Master.

#### **First Sorrowful Mystery - The Agony in the Garden**

After the Last Supper, where he gave the Church the gift of his very self, Jesus retired to the Garden of Gethsemane with Peter, James, and John. Our Lord was troubled and aware that challenges were on the way, and he wanted to spend a quiet moment with his Father. Prayer. It is an essential element to all vocations. Whatever our personal path might be, we are sure to meet challenges on the way. We must not allow whatever difficulties we face to tear our gaze from God. We have to be like Jesus and make the time to talk to God, to express to him our doubts, but also to ultimately accept His will and take comfort from His presence, strengthened for whatever lay ahead. As we pray this mystery, let us ask God to strengthen our brothers and sisters about to face a challenge as they carry out His will.

#### **Second Sorrowful Mystery - The Scourging at the Pillar**

In a stunningly craven political move, Pilate orders Jesus scourged, in the hope of placating a crowd who wanted nothing more than to see the legions march out of Judea, preferably at the point of Israelite swords. From time to time, as we go on about our lives, as we live out our vocations, we get the short end of the stick, or in the case of Our Lord, the hook end of the whip. When we meet setbacks or roadblocks on our vocational journey, we mustn't be like Jonah, cursing the dead plant, but like Jesus, who didn't open his mouth once. As we pray this mystery, let us ask God to give us the patience to deal with obstacles to our work with grace. But let us also unite our sufferings to his and remember, "by his stripes, we are healed."

### **Third Sorrowful Mystery - The Crowning with Thorns**

Before he comes into his kingdom, the King of the Jews is made fun of, spat upon, slapped, and crowned with thorns by soldiers of Caesar's legions. Upon the pains of the garden and at the pillar, a new torment is cast. At the Sermon on the Mount, Our Lord tells us that we are blessed when we are made fun of or persecuted, or even killed, on account of him. When our work in the Lord is derided or made fun of, or belittled, it is Our Lord himself, through us, who is crowned with a new garland. So, as this decade progresses let us remember that Jesus suffered humiliation and derision as he worked out his vocation. Are we greater than he, that we should be spared humiliation on his account?

### **Fourth Sorrowful Mystery - Jesus Carries His Cross**

Living out our vocations is not always easy. Consider Our Lord, bruised, whipped, beaten, and humiliated as he lugged the impossibly heavy cross out of Jerusalem, and up Calvary Hill. The cross is a torment, but it is also a necessary tool for salvation. Jesus tells us that we must take up our crosses and follow him. What are we waiting for? After all, in another passage, he tells us that his yoke is easy, his burden light. As we pray this mystery, let us resolve to once more take up our crosses, embracing them, and follow Jesus up Calvary to our salvation. The yoke is easy and the burden light because in his love, Jesus has already done the work.

### **Fifth Sorrowful Mystery - The Crucifixion**

Jesus loved the world so much, that he gave his very life for us. He saw through, to the end of his life, his vocational journey. He put up with all the setbacks, the stumbles, the beatings, the insults, all of it, so that he might restore man's relationship with God. And we, after we have carried our cross, and united all our sufferings with those of Christ, then we must take those parts of ourselves which impede our relationship with God and nail them to the cross, no matter how painful it may be, and so crucify ourselves, so that like Jesus, we too may rise to new life in God.

## **The Luminous Mysteries**

Vocation is finding one's place within God's plan as it unfolds in salvation history, or more simply put, the economy. The Luminous mysteries focus on the public ministry of Our Lord up to the Last Supper. From them, we can glean what we need to do once we find our place in the economy. Therefore, for this next half-hour or so, let us put ourselves in the company of the apostles as they receive their education from the Master.

### **First Luminous Mystery - The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan**

The scene on the banks of the Jordan was likely a busy one. John, knee-deep in the water, fed on a diet of honey and grasshoppers, wearing only a camel skin for clothing, and filled with a fiery zeal, cut an imposing figure, intensity rolling off him in waves. As John plunged people into the Jordan, Jesus arrives and asks for baptism. When Jesus emerges from the water, the Father Himself proclaims that this is His beloved Son, listen to him, and the Holy Spirit, moonlighting as a dove, descends upon him. The lesson for us here is two-fold. On the one hand, we have a very explicit command from the Father to listen to the Son. On the other, we have Jesus, who demands baptism before he begins his ministry. Jesus' desire for baptism tells us that we need to rely on the graces and gifts of our own baptism before we set out on our own vocation. As we pray this decade, let us ask God to make us more attentive to Jesus and to help us put His graces to good use.

## **Second Luminous Mystery - The Wedding at Cana**

The wedding at Cana is where Jesus manifests himself and works his first miracle. His performance of the miracle is, at least initially, involuntary. He tells his mother Mary that his time is not yet come. Nevertheless, she is persistent and gives the servants very sage advice, "Do whatever he tells you." We learn a great deal from this brief exchange. First is that we should rely on those who are more experienced in the spiritual life as we embark on our work within the economy. Mary's prodding of Jesus is basically spiritual direction. From time to time everyone needs an outsider to challenge or push us in order that we might grow. Mary's role as spiritual director can also be seen, although with a great deal of hindsight, in her admonition to the servants to "do whatever he tells you." Lastly, we can take from this mystery that Mary, as the mother of all Christians, should be looked to for help and advice, just as she was by that unknown wedding planner two millennia ago.

## **Third Luminous Mystery - The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God**

Throughout his three-year ministry, Our Lord proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God and the need for repentance. For all of us, regardless of what our particular vocation might be, the same imperative drives us. We need to make ourselves living examples of Jesus' love and message, proclaiming by our words and deeds both the need for repentance and the kingdom of God. However, we need to be and do more than proclaim repentance and the kingdom; we actually need to heed and live out the message. Proclaiming the kingdom is useless if we do not repent. As we pray this mystery, let us ask God for forgiveness of our sins and how we can change to avoid falling back into them, thus becoming more fitting heralds of the Gospel.

## **Fourth Luminous Mystery - The Transfiguration**

On the summit of Mount Tabor, Peter, James, and John glimpsed Jesus in glory, and heard the voice of God proclaimed that Jesus is his beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. The Transfiguration is both a confirmation that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God, and a foretaste of what is to come in the hereafter. As we pray this mystery, let us remember that the one whose work we do is the Lord, Him do we serve, and ask him to provide the grace necessary to persevere in his work so that we might be with him and the Father in heavenly glory forever.

## **Fifth Luminous Mystery - The Institution of the Eucharist**

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave the Church a great gift, one that would sustain her for the duration of her pilgrimage on earth. The Eucharist is the very source of our life. Through it, innumerable graces are poured upon us to do the Lord's work, to sustain us, to bring us to eternal life. It is by our feeding at the Lord's Table that we mark ourselves as members of his body and draw closer to him. The celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian worship. To live out our vocation requires that we eat the Lord's body and drink his blood. As we pray this mystery, let us thank God for giving this supreme gift to his Church and ask Him to help us appreciate it more and grow in devotion to it.

## Appendix 13

### *Extra Ideas*

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#### Suggested Goals of Vocation Committee

1. Make sure the young people of the parish know about vocation events hosted by the Diocese and/or other parishes and encourage them to attend.
2. Make sure that all young people of the parish grow in knowledge of religious vocations in the Church, and are asked to give feedback about their personal feelings about religious vocations.
3. Help parents to be more knowledgeable about vocations and discernment, and host an annual event to create an expectation that religious vocations come from the parish.

#### Suggested activities

4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade vocation day

Take confirmation classes to visit seminary/monastery/convent

Promote Vocation Events offered in our Diocese, such as:

✦ **Project Andrew** (Project Andrew is a terrific opportunity for young men, parents and other interested individuals to learn more about vocations, how to discern a vocation, and the Catholic priesthood.)

✦ **Venite et Videte** (Come and See) (grades 6-11)

✦ **DOVS** (Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocations Society) – contact Diocesan Vocation Office for more information

✦ **Crucifix/Chalice/Statue Program**

✦ **Support of those in the parish currently in seminary or religious formation**

✦ **Encourage visits to the Diocesan Web Site ([www.rcdony.org](http://www.rcdony.org))**

✦ **Celebrate Vocation Awareness Week**

✦ **Parish Vocation Night**

✦ **Prayers at mass for vocations.**



#### Possible Calendar

##### June

Vocation Committee meets to review vocation activity in the parish and to plan all vocation activities for the upcoming academic year. Committee collects all relevant information from Diocesan Vocation Office. New committee members are recruited if necessary. Updated chairperson information given to Vocation Office. Invite a religious sister and/or vocation director(s) to come visit the committee if she/he is able over the coming year.

Make sure that graduating high school seniors from the parish are connected to a campus ministry.

##### July

Vacation

## **August**

Committee makes plans with pastor/parish administrator to invite high school aged men to Project Andrew (early October) with the Bishop. Timeline for letters sent and appropriate follow-up is made. Assignments and arrangements for program made. Goal set for number of young men from the parish that should attend.

## **September**

Attend Diocesan Religious Jubilee Mass at our Cathedral

## **October**

Start planning with the Vocation Office to implement and execute lesson plans and feedback from our young people during *National Vocations Awareness Week*. Plan with pastor/parish administrator to launch Awareness Week with a homily. Contact Vocation Office to get appropriate materials. Assignments made to committee members as needed.

## **November**

Assignments executed for National Vocations Awareness Week and confirmation for participation by all.

## **December/January**

Invite promising young men who may be home on college break, to *Venite et Videte* (Come and See) events or overnight retreats possibly hosted by Vocation Office or parish.

## **February**

Gather data and summarize for review by pastor(s) and parish leader(s).

## **March**

Plan an event for Easter-tide. It could include a meal provided by Knights or Volunteers, a witness talk by priest, religious, deacon, married couple and a talk about how to discern a vocation well, and prayer. Identify names of those to be invited, including parents, and set goal(s) for the event. Send formal invitations and follow-up.

## **April**

Invite most promising young men and women to attend priestly ordination.

## **May**

Attend priesthood and diaconate ordinations.

## **June**

Plan for following year



## **Appendix 14**

### *Web Sites*

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#### **Diocese of Ogdensburg**

Busted Halo (Paulist)	<b>www.rcdony.org</b> <a href="http://www.bustedhalo.com">www.bustedhalo.com</a>
Catechism of the Catholic Church	<a href="http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm">www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm</a>
Catholic Information Center	<a href="http://www.catholic.net">www.catholic.net</a>
Catholics on Call	<a href="http://www.catholicsoncall.org">www.catholicsoncall.org</a>
Catholic Resources (Directories, etc.)	<a href="http://www.catholic-church.org/cid">www.catholic-church.org/cid</a>
Centering Prayer	<a href="http://www.centeringprayer.com">www.centeringprayer.com</a>
Giving Voice (Reflections by younger women religious)	<a href="http://www.giving-voice.org">www.giving-voice.org</a>
Good Ground Press	<a href="http://www.goodgroundpress.com">www.goodgroundpress.com</a>
Latino Hispanic Catholics Vocation Guide and OYE)	<a href="http://www.vocacioncatolica.com">www.vocacioncatolica.com</a> <a href="http://www.oyemagazine.org">www.oyemagazine.org</a>
Liturgical Readings (any year plus great links)	<a href="http://www.easterbrooks.com/personal/calendar">www.easterbrooks.com/personal/calendar</a>
Liturgy of the Hours	<a href="http://www.universalis.com">www.universalis.com</a>
My Catholic Voice	<a href="http://www.mycatholicvoice.com">www.mycatholicvoice.com</a>
National Conference for Diocesan Vocation Directors	<a href="http://www.ncdvd.org">www.ncdvd.org</a>
National Religious Vocation Conference	<a href="http://www.nrvn.net">www.nrvn.net</a>
Pray as you go (daily prayer for your mp3 player)	<a href="http://www.pray-as-you-go.org">www.pray-as-you-go.org</a>
Prepare the Word	<a href="http://www.PrepareTheWord.com">www.PrepareTheWord.com</a>
Priests of the Sacred Heart	<a href="http://www.scjvocation.org">www.scjvocation.org</a>
Prepare for Sunday Mass	<a href="http://www.liturgy.slu.edu">www.liturgy.slu.edu</a>
Religious Orders and Articles	<a href="http://www.visionguide.info">www.visionguide.info</a>
Sacred Space	<a href="http://www.jesuit.ie/prayer">www.jesuit.ie/prayer</a>
SerraUSA	<a href="http://www.serraus.org">www.serraus.org</a>
U.S. Catholic Publication	<a href="http://www.uscatholic.org">www.uscatholic.org</a>
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops	<a href="http://www.usccb.org">www.usccb.org</a>
Vocation Match (TrueQuest)	<a href="http://www.vocationmatch.com">www.vocationmatch.com</a>
Vocations and Prayer (Rogationist publication)	<a href="http://www.vocationsandprayer.org">www.vocationsandprayer.org</a>
Word Net	<a href="http://www.wordnet.tv">www.wordnet.tv</a>
Daily Reflections & Prayer - onlineministries.creighton.edu/Collaborative Ministry/daily.html	
Mary's Page -	<a href="http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/">http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/</a>
Lighthouse Catholic Media	<a href="http://www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org/">www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org/</a>
Mass Times Everywhere -	<a href="http://www.masstimes.org/dotNet/Default.aspx">www.masstimes.org/dotNet/Default.aspx</a>

## Appendix 15

### *Parish Vocation Projects To Try*

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1. Include Vocation Awareness components at each grade level of religious education. Each grade can do a special project - some children might interview clergy/religious and write a report. The reports can be put into resource booklets.
2. Have a sister speak at Masses on Vocation Sunday and visit the religious education classes to describe vocation and answer questions.
3. Sponsor a holy hour/Benediction for vocations, especially on Corpus Christi.
4. Have public citation of the diocesan vocation prayer at Masses on Sunday; e.g. after prayer of intercession; after Communion; after Mass.
5. Provide Eucharistic Adoration/Holy Hour on certain days, asking for prayers for vocations.
6. Send greeting cards to each of the seminarians and women in formation at the beginning of a new semester, holidays, exam times, closing of a semester, ordination, birthday, holidays, and so forth.
7. Send spiritual bouquets to the Holy Father, to priests, brothers and sisters or to seminarians on special anniversaries, or have them deposited as spiritual offerings in a basket for that purpose in the church.
8. Provide group holy hours in church; e.g. youth; parents; senior citizens.
9. Supply material for bulletin boards - pictures of the seminarians, the pastor or other vocation interest materials ordered from religious orders.
10. Institute the traveling Crucifix/Chalice/Statue Program, photo or painting of the Sacred Heart, or of a saint for family prayer in the home. Several churches have three items circulating throughout the parish at a time. Others do this activity two or three months in a year, not continuously, to make it a special event every time.
11. Handcrafted tote bags for transportation of statues with prayer materials, or for religious vocation literature are a great project for women of the parish. Where the prayer item is not presented ceremonially at Mass or after Mass, bags of vocation literature may be borrowed and returned to a designated place in the church.
12. Sponsor poster/coloring/essay contests with prizes and exhibition of results. E.g. can be done with Knights of Columbus, inter-parish, or inter-school.
13. Older students can present *Living Stations of the Cross*, organized by the Parish Vocation Committee.
14. Encourage interviews of pastor, priests, sisters, brothers, deacons for the school newspaper or parish bulletin...especially on how they discerned their 'call'.
15. Create a parish website with vocation information, or listing of sites where vocational topics can be explored.
16. Create a collage of photos of priests, brothers, sisters and deacons native to the parish.
17. Post seminarian pictures, brief write-ups, and photographs; change monthly.

18. Have the vocation prayer printed on refrigerator magnets and distribute to the parish.
19. Have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament by a designated Eucharistic Minister, and reposition when Benediction is not possible. Benediction by a priest or deacon when they are available.
20. Compile a Vocation Resource Book for reference and enrichment. Articles about priests or religious, the breath and depth of their call, lifestyle, and the types of ministry even obituaries, jubilee write-ups...anything that educates is appropriate.
21. Coordinate regional or cluster *Vocation Awareness* events, presenting area priests and religious as role models, speakers.
22. Insert the diocesan vocation prayer cards in the hymnals or missalettes
23. Do something creative! One parish hung a priest's cassock and a sister's habit in the church for prayer until someone from the parish decided to pursue a vocation. It worked!
24. Surface names of potential candidates and submit them to the pastor; follow-up by the Parish Vocation Committee, or the pastor, as he designates.
25. Schedule time for Eucharistic Adoration - First Friday, First Saturday, or some other time - to encourage prayer for vocations.
26. Provide prayer aids...leaflets, prayer cards...for personal prayer for vocations.
27. Promote the lives of the saints in various ways, e.g., in the bulletin, on the bulletin board, on posters, in a bibliography, have a sale-table for holy cards with depictions and prayers to the saints.
28. Start a vocation library! Begin by starting a scrapbook of pictures and articles relating to priesthood and religious life. Encourage others to contribute materials.
29. Sponsor presentations, especially by seminarians - in the classroom, at meetings, or from the pulpit. (can be arranged through the Diocesan Vocation Office)
30. Publicize and/or sponsor "*Come and See*" weekends for high school juniors and seniors; summer overnight retreats for interested teens and for adult men and women.
31. Organize a group trip to a seminary or motherhouse and pray for vocations on the way.
32. Attend the ordination of a diocesan priest. Attend a religious profession ceremony. Any religious will inform you if you ask
33. Sponsor a supper for seminarians - one or a few at-a-time, or all together. This is done with a group of high school students or adult men.
34. Invite a priest to supper to discuss vocations around the family dinner table.
35. Accept an invitation to accompany a religious sister for a visit of her motherhouse.
36. Volunteer your services at a fundraiser or festival hosted by a religious community.
37. Post the pictures from the back of the Knights of Columbus magazines, for perusal by parish youth.

38. Don't forget to promote vocations to young people in home schooling situations. Provide materials they can use and involve them in the parish or school projects.
39. Sponsor a Communion Breakfast with vocation speaker.
40. Feature seminarians and women in formation, in the parish bulletin or on the bulletin board.
41. Become involved with the parish youth ministry, and then encourage vocational interest.
42. Sponsor retreats, days of recollection, suppers, barbeques, or picnics for confirmation classes, with talks on vocations.
43. Find a way to have young adults hear personal "story of my vocation" talks by priests, brothers, and sisters.
44. Volunteer to help provide school presentations by various priests, brothers, and sisters representing several religious communities.
45. Plan a vocation prayer garden to teach the uniqueness of each vocation, using various shrubs, plants, trees and flowers as symbols - a conversation starter.
46. Form an Altar Server Society to encourage study of the vocation to priesthood and to encourage personal spirituality.
47. Periodically, give or send reports to the parish council and the parish-at-large of the activities and goals of parish vocation committees' monthly projects - for better understanding and participation.
48. Invite the Director(s) of Vocations to the parish for a weekend, for Masses and homily on vocations.
49. Invite the Director for Religious Life (or some other sister or brother) to your parish for a vocation presentation. (Every religious community has a vocation director and some have a local contact that could make this presentation.)
50. Offer babysitting service so parents can pray for vocations during holy hours.
51. Ask 31 parishioners to volunteer to pray the Rosary, or attend Mass, etc., on one of the 31 days of the month for vocations. One parish, where parishioners promise to say one decade of the Rosary each morning, so that 45 15-decade rosaries are continually being said throughout the parish for vocations, has adapted this.
52. Celebrate feasts of the saints, such as attending Mass on the Feast of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, of Lisieux, the Little Flower, the patroness of missionaries and of many vocations.
53. Celebrate feasts of the apostles, who were called by the first vocation director, Jesus.
54. Parish vocation committee members can promise their own daily prayer for an increase of vocations to our diocese. Prayers, works, sufferings and joys also can be offered to God for vocations.
55. Provide intercessory prayers for vocations for Prayers of the Faithful at Mass, at least for the weekend Masses. Many parishes always have one intention for vocations.
56. Pray for vocations at the daily Masses when possible.

57. Provide Bulletin Blurbs to parish bulletin editors (Keep a copy in your resource book. They will be helpful when you need fresh ideas for a project later.)
58. Celebrate the National Vocation Awareness Week, World Day of Prayer for Vocations and the World
59. Day for Consecrated Life in February. NCCV (National Coalition for Church Vocations) planning kits, which include homily helps and ideas for parish celebrations, are available. Mission Sunday in October is a great day to highlight the missionary vocations in the Church and in our diocese.
60. Celebrate the anniversaries of the Pope, the Bishop, the Pastor, the Priests and Religious in the parish, to create a teachable moment for promoting vocation awareness.
61. Include the topic of vocations in World Youth Day activities in October, suggesting that the parish ask the Lord of the Harvest to help young people to be generous in giving their lives in service to the Church. Include prayers for those working with the youth of the diocese.
62. Celebrate All Saints Day with a focus on the saints of our time, the foundresses and founders of religious orders, and all people who give witness to their faith in daily life. Ask them all in prayer to beg the Lord of the Harvest to send laborers to continue their good work on earth.
63. On All Souls Day, focus attention on prayer for deceased priests and religious, especially those who have served the people of God in our diocese. Publicize the month-by-month necrology for deceased priests and possibly also religious for specific prayer intentions. Ask these priests and religious to continue their work on earth.
64. Print and distribute a prayer calendar of seminarians in the parish a couple of months during the year. By October the men are settled into seminary for the year.
65. Pray, especially in the fall, for new recruits and in the spring for candidates and applicants who are in the process for admission to the seminary for the following year.
66. Publish a listing of all the seminarians, with names and seminary addresses. Encourage parishioners, Catholic schools, Religious Education and Home School classes to send them cards and letters showing support and prayer - without expecting a response from the seminarians, which keeps this activity supportive but not intrusive to the seminarians study time.
67. Some parishes feature one seminarian's name and address in the bulletin each week, to keep this activity continuous.
68. Celebrate the Feast of Christ the King by arranging with the Parish Vocations Committees to bless and commission new altar servers in the parish. Recognize the older servers, thanking them for their dedication and example.
69. Plan a prayer service using the theme of thanksgiving for Thanksgiving weekend. This is where we pray for all vocations the Lord has sent to our diocese, and from our diocese into the Church throughout the world.
70. Advent and Lent are excellent times for vocational activities of prayer and fasting.
71. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Dec. 8, can be a special day to honor our Lady, patroness of our country, and to ask her to intercede with her Son for new vocations for our diocese.

72. Pray a Litany for Vocations.  
(one can be found at: [www.invisiblemonastery.com/prayers/litany-for-vocations](http://www.invisiblemonastery.com/prayers/litany-for-vocations))
73. Pray the Litany of the parish patron(s) for vocations to our Diocese, which includes every title honoring the Trinity, Jesus, Mary and then every parish patron saint, and concludes with a prayer for vocations.
74. Encourage parents to promote religious vocations at home.
75. Let children see the example of parents who live a Christian life and who take the Gospel demands seriously and value Church Vocations.
76. Help children understand, by word and action, that religion is important and that parents build positive attitudes regarding a life of prayer and service to God and humanity.
77. Read stories to young children (make stories available for children to read) about persons who reached out in service to others. Discuss the stories.
78. Make a collage with children that illustrates 'call,' 'service,' 'healing,' 'prophecy,' and 'prayer.' Help the children understand that the work of Christ continues in the world today through people helping people.
79. Pray at the family table. Spontaneous and personal prayer helps set the scene for prayer around the table of the Lord.
80. Pray as a family for particular persons involved in priesthood and religious life. This helps children be aware of the esteem with which the Christian family regards vocations to religious life and priesthood.
81. Instill in children a desire to serve others
82. Pray daily as a family, at a time most convenient. Include intentions for those already living a vocation to Church ministry - that they may fulfill their Christian vocation in love and service to God; that those persons faced with a vocational choice consider their own God-given abilities, and decide a vocation in light of God's Will for them.
83. Speak always with respect for priests and religious, even/especially when differences of opinion arise. Be careful of the way criticism of the Church is handled. Be intolerant of humor and innuendo that devalues spirituality, religious life and priesthood.
84. Invite your parish priest, religious priest, brother or sister to your home - or at least let them know, in the presence of your children, that they are welcome in your home. Encourage them to visit with you and your children.
85. Be aware of current ideas regarding the formation, life, and role of priests and religious in the Church. Become familiar with their goals and the manner in which their role evolves into new ministries, especially education and social justice.
86. As a family pray for persons who are in the process of discernment.
87. As parents, pray the prayer that God will call one of your children to priesthood or religious life.
88. Encourage people 16 - 40 years to age (who exhibit the qualities and virtues you have admired in priests and religious who have been an influence in your life) to consider a religious or priestly called form God. Personal invitation can be the affirmation someone needs to contact a vocation director for further information and discernment.

89. Promote subscriptions to the diocesan newspaper, which may regularly feature vocation stories/articles. For information contact the Diocesan Vocation Office.
90. Read VISION Magazine for ideas for your own vocation awareness education. Write for free copies and give one to someone you think may have a religious vocation. VISION is the annual publication of the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC), which serves vocation directors of religious communities. VISION is also available on-line at: [www.vocationnetwork.org](http://www.vocationnetwork.org)
91. Write for a free copy of *A Guide to Religious Ministries*, published by the Catholic News Publishing Company, 210 North Avenue, New Rochelle, NY 10801; (924) 632-1220 or (800) 433-7771.
92. Visit a religious bookstore and familiarize yourself with what is available in books, CD's and DVD's on religious topics, lives of the saints, liturgy, and so forth.
93. Adopt a missionary. Many religious communities have some foreign mission outreach. Ask for a missionary to correspond with, and learn what his/her life is about and then share that with others who could begin to consider life as a missionary.
94. Adopt a retired priest or brother or sister. They will appreciate the mail you send them, and you can profit from their wisdom. Invite him/her to conversation with one or two of your prospects - the people you are personally inviting to consider religious life or priesthood.
95. Invite interested parishioners to stay a short while after weekend Masses so that a couple of Sisters/Brothers could speak about their Religious Communities. E.g. their foundress/founder; history; charism and ministries.
96. Provide information for people in parishes who wish to contribute their computer expertise, to establish a website or to provide vocation information available on the Internet, to people interested in pursuing a vocation. Offer help parishioners' wishing to access vocation information online.

## *Building a Culture of Vocations “Bulletin Inserts”*

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**IN TALKING WITH YOUR CHILDREN**, remember to raise the call to Church ministry. The process of answering God’s call begins in childhood. Throughout adolescence and adulthood, the attitudes assumed in childhood begin to influence the course of one’s life. A vocation or a talent will not grow to fruition unless it is nurtured in childhood and adolescence by a parent.

**CHILDREN OFTEN TALK** about what they want to be “when they grow up”: doctors, lawyers, athletes, nurses, movie stars, teachers, and carpenters. They may talk about these roles, but do they ever talk about being a priest, sister or brother? You are the hand of God — you can encourage your children to consider Church ministry.

**WHAT KINDS OF PEOPLE** become priests, sisters or brothers?

Are they people who don’t relate well with other people? No. They are people who love others — people who find real satisfaction chatting with a 93-year-old parishioner, holding the hand of a cancer patient, listening to the troubles of a streetwise teen. They are people with the courage to touch lives, hearts and souls in a high-tech, unchurched world. Are you that kind of person?

**ALL TOO OFTEN WE** forget to express appreciation to those in service-oriented jobs, including priests, sisters, brothers and deacons. We forget because we think, “It’s their job to help.” Priests and religious aren’t superhuman. They need genuine support from those they serve. Let them know how you feel.

**A STUDY COMMISSIONED** by the Knights of Columbus revealed that 75% of Catholic young people who had seriously considered religious life felt they were never encouraged to pursue that goal. Do you know someone who would make a good priest? Why not tell him so? Your encouragement may be all he needs.

**HOLINESS** is a challenge for all of us, whatever our specific vocations. We are called to be holy in all aspects of our lives. This is an ongoing process, often slowed by setbacks. When the saints were alive, they did not regard themselves as saints; rather, they knew they were sinners — and they strived to be saints. The process of becoming holy is, even for saints, filled with struggle. Know you are a sinner; strive to be a saint.

**CHRIST SPOKE** of the talents each one of us has, talents that must not be buried. Our calling is to take those talents, develop them fully, and then use them in establishing His kingdom on earth. Are you using your talents to fulfill your vocation to service? Take some time today to reflect on how you might use your special talents in the service of the Kingdom. **FAMILY LIFE** can build values integral to a strong vocation — whether to priesthood, religious life or marriage. Teaching your children to value commitment, service and prayer will help them make strong vocation decisions as adults and live out those vocations with success and fulfillment.

**A MISCONCEPTION** among some Catholics is that the priest has an ideal job: he works one day each week, Sunday. They forget that the other six days a week, the priest works long and hard behind the scenes: bringing communion to the sick and elderly, counseling troubled families, visiting school classes, preparing individuals for sacraments. Often the job is frustrating, exhausting and thankless, but always of vital importance. Take some time this week and express appreciation to your priests for the difficult work they do.



**THE LOVING ENVIRONMENT** of a family draws forth an individual's greatest talents and gifts. We've come to realize that creating an atmosphere in which children can hear the Lord's call is one of the most significant responsibilities resting on our shoulders as parents. Our own lives must reflect the presence of God, His Word, and the love He offers His people.

**PARENTS**, do you encourage your children to develop their talents and gifts? Do you encourage your children to think of Church ministry as a possible life choice?

**PRAYER** is a moving force in vocation development. Prayer is effective; prayer is powerful; prayer is essential. Not all are called to priesthood or religious life, but all are called to pray for vocations. "Lord, your Church is in need. Touch the hearts of many within our parish and diocese with the desire to serve you. Call forth from this community sisters, brothers, deacons, priests and lay leaders. Help us to live lives that will nurture childhood trust into adult commitment. May this parish be a source of hope and a source of ministers for your Church, your people and your world. Amen."

**JESUS COMMANDED US** to pray for vocations with his words, "Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt. 9:38). Take on prayer for vocations as your personal effort to increase the number of priests, sisters, brothers, and lay ministers.

**WHAT IS A SISTER?** A Sister lives in a religious community that follows a constantly renewed tradition, patterned on the life and teaching of the founder of the community. The work she generally does will depend upon the ministries of that community as influenced by the needs of the Church and its people — for example: teaching, social work, administration, nursing, peace and justice ministry, etc. If the lifestyle of a Sister sounds attractive to you contact the Diocesan Vocation Office or a Vocation Director of a religious community for more information.

**A VOCATION** must be nurtured for a lifetime, not just until ordination or the taking of vows. You can help nurture the vocations of priests, sisters and brothers by praying, listening, and expressing appreciation. A life of service needs support from those served. **HOW** will you work out your life response to God?

**CELIBACY** is a gift and a promise to love very deeply and to express that love for others without using those physical expressions proper to marriage. The lives of many men and women religious are rich and loving within the context of celibate love as are the lives of happily married couples.

**IN A WORLD** waging war on poverty, men and women religious choose to live as Jesus did — simply. Because they share expenses and try to keep their personal and communal needs simple, they can get along very well on very little.

**A STUDY** of Catholic young people in the United States and Canada showed that 75% feel they were never encouraged to pursue the religious life. Pray for more vocations.

**DID YOU KNOW...** that just because a young man goes to the Seminary doesn't automatically mean he will become a priest? Those young men are discerning whether they are indeed called into that particular kind of service to our LORD. They would appreciate your prayers for them!

**DID YOU KNOW...** we all have a "vocation"? The way we live our life is our vocation - Marriage, Priesthood, Religious life or the Single life! It is how YOU are meant to live and contribute to the Body of Christ! The important thing is to pray for discernment.

**DID YOU KNOW...** every member of the Church needs to consciously feel responsibility for promoting vocations, especially since God's voice may be drowned out by "other voices?" A wealth of vocation information is available at: [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/index.cfm), the vocation website of the U S Bishops.

**DID YOU KNOW...** "Nuns" are women religious who have professed solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and live a life of prayer and penance within cloistered communities? There is a difference between a "nun" and a "sister."

**DID YOU KNOW...** "Sisters" are women religious who also have taken traditional religious vows but are engaged in active ministries among the public? They usually live in a convent.  
**PARENTS...** don't be afraid to encourage service in your children. Mothers are often the main influence in a man's discernment to the priesthood.

**DID YOU KNOW..."**Brothers" live in Religious Communities? They take vows and promise to use their talents to serve God wherever the Community decides they are needed. Brothers are not ordained.

**WHEN PEOPLE** wish to destroy religion, they begin by attacking the priest, because when there is no longer any priest there is no sacrifice, and where there is no longer any sacrifice, there is no religion. (St. John Vianney)

**THE FIRST WORD OF JESUS** in the Gospel was "come"; the last word of Jesus was "go." (Ven. Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen)

**HOW WOULD YOU REACT** if your son said he wants to be a priest?

- a. I would ask him if he's gone mad, and I would remind him that we must take into consideration what others might think.
- b. I would ask him to give it considerable thought and to have a university degree first.
- c. It would give me one of the greatest joys of my life, and I would support him fully.

**"IF PRAYING ALIENATED YOU**, took you away from your real life, beware: it would not be true prayer," Pope Benedict XVI said. "On the contrary, dialogue with God is the guarantee of truth, of truthfulness with oneself and with others and, therefore, of liberty."

**FAITH AND PRAYER** do not resolve problems, but enable one to address them with a new light and strength, in a way fitting to man, and also more serenely and effectively. (Pope Benedict XVI) Pray to hear God's call.

**IN A WORLD** where human frailty is acutely felt, they (religious men and women) remind us of God and bring Christ's redemptive love to all they meet.

**"THE SECRET OF A VOCATION,"** Pope Benedict XVI told youth, "lies in the capacity and in the joy of distinguishing [God's] voice, of listening to and following His voice. But to do this, it is necessary to accustom our heart to recognize the Lord, to hear Him like a person who is near me and who loves me." Moments of "interior silence in the day-to-day routine" are essential, he said. "But once one has learned to hear this voice and to generously follow it, "one fears nothing, he or she knows and feels that God is with him or her, and that He is a Friend, Father, and Brother."

**DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE:** Do not be afraid of Christ. He takes nothing away, and He gives you everything. When we give ourselves to Him, we receive a hundredfold in return

## **PRAYER FOR MY VOCATION**

“Heavenly Father, You have a great and loving plan for our world and for me. I want to do my part in your plan. Help me to see the signs that You give me. Open my heart to respond to You. Grant me the courage to follow your call. Give me the strength to serve You and your people with generosity and love. Amen.”

**WE EACH HAVE A VOCATION** – the thing to do is to answer the call. “We each have something to give.” (Dorothy Day)

**ST. THOMAS MERTON** prayed: “My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going, I do not see the road ahead of me... But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.”

**IF YOU ARE MARRIED** or soon to be married, you need to realize that your marriage is your vocation! Your marriage must come before all things except God!

**WHAT IS A DEACON?** A permanent deacon is a man ordained—like bishop or priest—to serve as Christ Jesus who “came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The word deacon comes from the Greek word for service: diakonia.

**WHAT QUALIFIES** a man to be a Deacon? Prayer. Humility. Service. Grace. Suffering. Love. A willingness to be changed and to offer his life in unpaid sacrificial service to God, to the Church, to any and all in need of God’s mercy.

**HOW DOES** a man become a Deacon? Through a process of discernment and formation that takes about four or five years. If a man is married, his wife and family must also come to embrace the joys and demands of having a husband and father who is a deacon.

**LIFE** is not merely summarized by “what are you willing to die for”, ask yourself “what am I willing to LIVE for?”

**“IT IS REALLY GOD HIMSELF**, the ‘LORD of the harvest’, who chooses his laborers. His call is always undeserved and unexpected. We are called to cooperate with his providence, and to use the powerful tool that he has placed in our hands: prayer. Jesus said, “Pray the LORD of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest!”

**ALL THE MEMBERS** of the church are responsible for looking after vocations. “The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community, and they should discharge it principally by living full Christian lives.” (Vatican II) To have a full Christian life, listen to the Word of God, participate in the Eucharist, exercise charity and pray!

**WHATEVER STATE OF LIFE** God calls us to, we bring with us an assortment of experiences, interests and gifts – however small they seem to us. We are called to put our lives at the service of the LORD and our neighbor, wherever we find ourselves. Where and how is God calling you to spread His Good News – His Love?

**MISSIONS** - You can learn more about the Pontifical Mission Societies, including the Society for the Propagation for the Faith, at: [www.onefamilyinmission.org](http://www.onefamilyinmission.org).

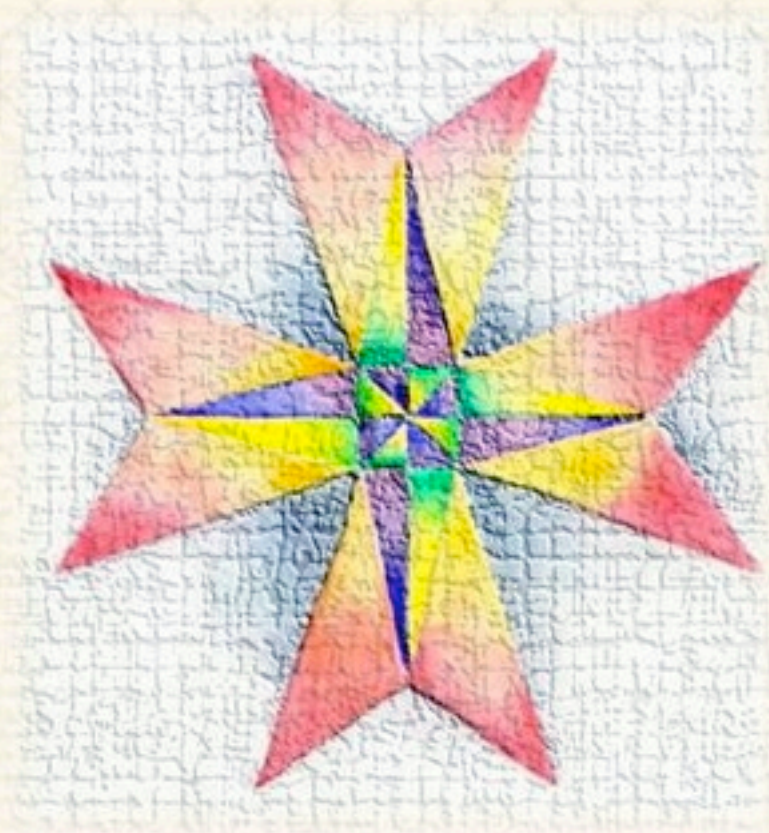
**VOCATION DIRECTORS**, whether of a diocese or religious order, are the interface between the congregations and the world. They also need your prayers and perhaps your help. Feel free to suggest a name to your pastor of someone you believe may be interested in pursuing a religious vocation.

**THE CHURCH INVITES** all of us to make a generous gift of our life through married life, intentional single life, priesthood or religious life. In what state can we flourish?

**THE VOCATION OF MARRIAGE** - When the Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a Christian vocation it is saying that the couple's relationship is more than simply their choice to enter a union, which is a social and legal institution. A great internet resource is:  
[www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org) – an initiative of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

**WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE PRIESTHOOD?** The answer is the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist! Through it the priest offers the most sublime of sacrifices, that of God the Son to God the Father, applying the merits of Calvary to our lives today.

# THE CALL TO HOLINESS



The following handouts come from: The Pastoral Center  
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This diocesan license covers the “12 Handouts for Holiness”, “Creating a Culture of Holiness in the Classroom”, and “How to Lead Faith-sharing.


It allows the parish vocation committee leader(s) to reproduce the articles for committee members only. Individual parishes would still be required to purchase a license to make copies for all of their parishioners.

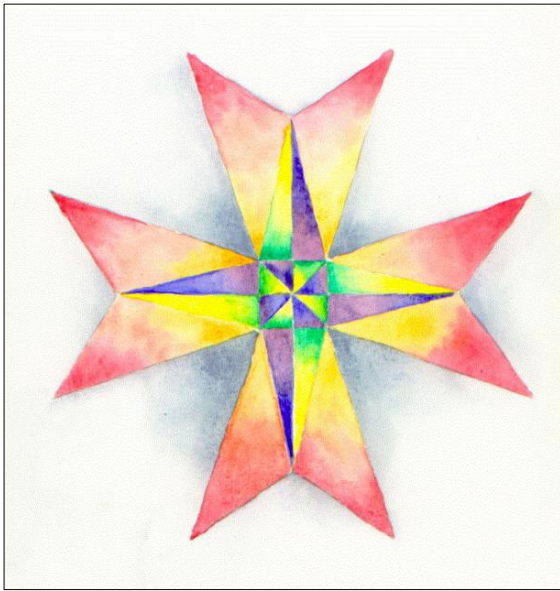
Contact: *The Pastoral Center*, noted above, for more information.



# ***THE CALL TO HOLINESS***

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## Meeting Christ in Catechesis: It's not in the textbook!

Bill Huebsch

Artwork by Mark Hakomaki

Every week, year in and year out, we parish directors and volunteer catechists sit down with our small classes of children or adults, regardless the age we teach, and try to pass on to them some of the Catholic Faith that we love so much. It happens all across the church. Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings, or sometimes both. It's a great and wonderful ministry - the ministry of catechesis.

Most of us use a textbook from a major publishing house. The titles all suggest the importance of the ministry we share: *Call to Faith, Faith and Life, Faith First, We Believe, Blest Are We, Finding God, Christ Jesus the Way, Christ Our Life*. The lessons in these texts are a solid way for us to present what our bishops have asked of us: a full and complete treatment of the faith in every grade level. We're more than happy to do it.

But here's a little test. In order for a child or an adult to grow in holiness from the catechesis we provide, what must be present in that child's or adult's heart *first*?

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC), our guide in this ministry, gives us a clear answer. And what must be present first cannot be found in any of those textbooks, as important as they are to our ministry.

What's missing, the GDC tells us, is *conversion to Jesus Christ*. Conversion precedes catechesis. And conversion is often not part of what we all do.

Oh, yes, we talk about Christ in our classes, and pray in our prayer corners, and try to help our students understand how Christ is in the Church. But knowing *about* Christ and actually *meeting* Christ are two very different things, according to the GDC (General Directory for Catechesis).



Conversion to Christ *precedes* catechesis. And once experienced, it's conversion that leads a person to undertake his or her lifelong journey to holiness, not facts or knowledge about Catholicism - which is mainly what the textbooks provide. A person who has not yet really met Jesus Christ and decided to follow Christ can sit in a classroom and study religion, but until there is conversion, that person won't be a dedicated follower of Christ.

In 1964, Father Ray Lucker (later Bishop Lucker, the Diocese of New Ulm, Minnesota) co-wrote an essay with Theodore Stone in which they expressed strong belief in what was emerging as the new catechesis.

[The historical development in catechesis] might give the impression that first comes instruction, then formation, and finally the personal meeting between God and the student. The reverse however is more correct. Communion with God ordinarily does not take place at the end of the religion lesson, but rather whenever God approaches through sacred signs (biblical, liturgical, witness, or doctrinal signs)...to transform one's mentality.

("Formation and Training of Lay Catechists" in *Pastoral Catechetics*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1964, p 239. Quoted in chapter 2 of *Dreams and Visions: Pastoral Planning for Lifelong Faith Formation*. New London, CT: Twenty- Third Publications, 2007).

This just makes good common sense. You could study about Islam, for example. You could know the prophets, the scriptures, the prayers, and the people - but that wouldn't make you a Muslim, would it? You could explore Judaism - its history and liturgies and leaders - but that would not make you a Jew. So it is with us. Even if you know all about the Church and Christ, if you do not give your heart to Christ, you are not a Christian, except nominally.

One of the difficulties (recognized by the *General Directory*) in our present method of providing religious education is that so few of those in our catechesis programs have experienced this conversion. As a result, their hearts are often not in the program! But even more difficult, many of us - the catechists - also have not experienced this conversion! We might agree to teach 4<sup>th</sup> grade this year, for example, but we're not always in it with our whole hearts. Like the kids, we may even dread the weekly classes a little. But as article 142 of the *GDC* puts it:

...there cannot be teachers of the faith other than those who are convinced and faithful disciples of Christ and his Church.

Here's what else the *GDC* says about it. There's a strong message contained in this:

Many who present themselves for catechesis truly require genuine conversion. Because of this, the Church usually desires that the first stage in the catechetical process be dedicated to ensuring conversion...Only by starting with conversion...can catechesis, strictly speaking, fulfill its proper task...

(The *GDC*, article)

**Baptism is no guarantee.** Unfortunately, baptism is no guarantee of conversion. It's no guarantee that a person has begun the journey to holiness. For some, the faith begins with great vigor, but they lose heart after a while. For others, their faith was never deep - always on the surface of their lives until something better or more interesting came along. And for still others, perhaps many others, baptism was just not taken very seriously to begin with! Or they were baptized as an infant, but raised in a home where holiness is not part of everyday life. Consequently, these have never come to know Jesus in their own lives.

Jesus spoke of holiness like this in the Gospel. The writers of the *GDC* saw in this the seeds for everything they wrote about the renewal of catechesis in our day and age:

A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold. Let anyone with ears to hear listen! (Mark 4:3-8, NRSV)

And here's the rub. Because the seed of faith is vulnerable to the changing soil of one's life (to borrow Jesus' metaphor a moment) the church must take great care to provide ongoing opportunities for conversion, followed by effective catechesis to nourish faith and help it blossom. There really is no other way for us to help people grow toward holiness.

It's these opportunities for conversion that we want to explore here for a moment.

**Conversion, anyone?** What is the best way to lead someone else to follow the Way of Christ? How do you help others experience lasting Christian conversion? How do you help *yourself* remain in a process of turning your own heart to Christ over and over again?

Placing learners in a classroom setting will not be enough in itself. One can use this setting to pass on the facts of the faith, or to help a learner know *about* the Bible, or *about* Christ. But to lead others to actually meet Christ, and be converted to follow the Way of Christ, requires more.

How does this sort of conversion happen? Well, the most profound way that we can help others is to provide opportunities for **faith sharing** within our programs, and throughout our parishes. This is the bedrock, the very first step,

in helping others come to experience Christ personally in their own lives and grow in their own holiness.

The Catechumenate, in its wisdom, knows this instinctively, which is why everyone who comes into the Catechumenate is first invited to “break open the Word” in a group setting. It's in those moments of **faith sharing**, of opening one's heart, that each can turn, little by little, to Christ. The renewal programs of the church, beyond the Catechumenate, also know this: TEC, Marriage Encounter, Cursillo, and all the others. During these retreats, it's in the **faith sharing** done within the group that folks find themselves turning their hearts to Christ.

So it must be in our catechesis programs. Each and every time we gather, every single week, we should begin by creating the environment in which **faith sharing** is possible. It's not difficult to lead. It can be done throughout the whole community. And it will change the spirit of your program in such a positive way that you'll soon wonder how you ever lived without it!

In the process of **faith sharing**, each person looks into the events and people of his or her life - and sees them anew as part of his or her faith. One then begins to see (slowly at first) that one must *die* to oneself in order to *rise* with happiness, and then *go forth* to love as a follower of Christ. Conversion of this sort is on-going throughout life: conversion moment followed by conversion moment. *Poco a poco*. Little by little. Over and over again. This is the pathway to holiness.

This is how we bring the Paschal Mystery of Christ into our classrooms. We invite people to share about how, in their own everyday lives, they experience dying and rising. We invite them to share about how they sense a call to reach out to others in love and faith. In that sharing, Christ is found.

Once we have shared our faith this way, the sacraments start to make sense. We come to understand how we must die in Christ through baptism and reconciliation. We find within ourselves a profound desire for communion with Christ and our mates. We experience healing and peace. And we experience the same excitement that those first apostles must have felt as we go forth now, confirmed in the faith, eager to tell others the good news!

All of this is done for Christ's sake, not our own. It is Christ who acts within us when we *open* ourselves to the mystery of faith. The opening is the key. As we share, we become more open. We experience a turning of our hearts, a conversion to Christ: in a word, holiness. And this is what *precedes* catechesis. In other words, only when one has truly met Christ like this, and allowed oneself to enter into Christ's death and resurrection, can one begin to

understand one's faith. Only then does religious education make any sense to him or her.

**In your Classroom or Parish Meetings**

Try this. As everyone is getting settled, and in place of any other opening prayer, re-read part of the Gospel from the previous Sunday Mass. Then invite each one in the room to share something from their past week that connects in some way to the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel. You can help them do that by posing a well-prepared question that leads them to see the Gospel in the context of their own lives. Join in this by sharing yourself, honestly and in plain words, about your own experiences.

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# The Lifelong Call to Holiness

Bill Huebsch



In the American Catholic Church today, we're having a vigorous conversation about how to shift religious education, in both parishes and schools, from being an enterprise focused exclusively on children, to being one focused on the whole community of faith. The call to holiness is universal; we know that. Vatican II declared it more than fifty years ago!

We also know that, without the parents in the picture, little we do with children to form them in faith will have a lasting effect. And unless catechesis is situated within the liturgical life of the church, learners may know *about* religion in a cognitive sense, but lack the affective knowledge that comes only from ritual. Furthermore, we know that catechesis is a lifelong matter. It doesn't stop after First Communion or confirmation. And we know that it must lead in the end to a lifestyle of faith, to *households of faith*.

We should be careful to follow the principles that underpin the process of organizing to address the lifelong call to holiness. What are those principles?

## ***Catechesis and Liturgy must be connected***

First and foremost, whatever text or approach you use for religion class must establish the essential link between catechesis and the Sunday Assembly for Mass, the liturgical year, and the whole life of the church. The liturgy is the font of the whole Christian life, including catechesis. But there is often a gap between these two activities. The absolute bedrock of whole community catechesis is (1)

that the community “breaks open the Word” proclaimed at Sunday Mass and (2) that the whole community comes to see itself as Eucharistic. Holiness for us rests on this. The self-giving love of Christ and his example on the cross are not meant to be an inspiring historical tale. They’re meant to lead us to see that this must be a story about us. We must die, too. We must incorporate self-giving love into our own spiritual lives. That is the pathway to holiness.

*Participation of the households must grow*

Second, everything we do as we pass on the faith in catechesis must be sent home! The participation of the households who form the community is essential. By this, I don’t mean merely that parents should be present when their children are formed in the faith (which they should, of course). I mean, much more radically, that households must be shaped as Christian homes. The key to this is for us to support marriage and family life more vigorously.

Toward this end, parishes must work toward “holiness households” where the members are capable of reflecting on their shared lives in such a way that they can decipher the presence of divine love. In their daily forgiveness, their daily willingness to “be the big one,” their daily ability to think of the vulnerable and needy, holiness emerges. Prayer must also be a part of this, but the prayer should include moments to pause and look back over the shoulder to see how God was acting in the people and events of each day.

This implies very strongly that the households of the parish must become the main focus of re-developed parish programs. The household is where faith is lived every day. Christian home-making becomes very important. The household is the context in which whatever we teach in religious education class becomes the stuff of real, everyday living. This means that the parish (and its staff) shifts from being “the center” of the church in our minds, to being instead a

“resource center *to* the church.” The households become the new center. This won’t be an easy shift, but it is an essential one.

***Conversion to Christ must precede catechesis***

Third, there is a great risk that pastors and teachers will become so consumed with getting all the facts covered, with teaching so much *about* religion, that the learner never actually *meets Christ*. But one is not saved by facts about religion. One can study Islam or Judaism, for example, and know their histories, sacred writings, and key figures, but that would not make one a Moslem or a Jew. Knowing *about* religion is not the same as experiencing the presence of the Risen Christ and turning one’s heart over to Christ by dying to ourselves in faith.

***Catechesis must be seen as lifelong***

Fourth, this means that we must provide for adult catechesis. This is a high goal in all of whole community catechesis. Providing for youth, young adult, and adult catechesis does not mean we should stop providing it for children. But it means we must stretch ourselves to think larger. Youth and adults must be brought into the learning circles of the parish in creative and attractive ways.

Holiness is really an adult reality; children experience only a foretaste of how to live a mature Christian faith. The call to holiness is lifelong, meaning that we are always on the journey. Early Christians referred to their faith as “The Way” because it put them on a course or way of life that led, eventually, to them becoming adults of mature faith. We want the same in our parishes.

***In sum: adult Christians of mature faith***

Cullen Schippe, a long-time Catholic publisher, has summed this up for everyone. In whole community catechesis, he says, the *new goal or outcome* is “adult Christians of mature faith,” following the Way of Christ, sharing supper

and Eucharist, working hard for justice and peace, and turning their hearts to Christ over and over again, throughout their lives. It's an entirely new framework within which the faith is shared and passed from one generation to the next. New wine, new wine skins.

Like any change in a framework, this *new thinking* is challenging for people who are working day in, day out in the present "school house" framework for religious education. It's very tough to work in one framework while building another. The house can get quite messy. But it can and must be done.

You might be wondering to yourself, "But what does this look like? What actually *happens*? What are the programs like? Who meets where and who does what?" These are the specifics spelled out as we learn more about how to do this. But more importantly - much of this detail will be worked out in the exciting environment of your own parish or school! Every parish and school will reinvent this for their local community. Let's go!

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# **The Lifelong Call to Holiness: Finally!**

## **A Practical Avenue to Adult Education**

Bill Huebsch



Everyone wants to have an extensive, working, popular adult education program in his or her parish. We develop course after course for adults. But people seem not to care. We feel frustrated, most of the time. And finally, we tell ourselves that even a few people attending is better than none. Adults, we tell ourselves and each other, just won't come to our

programs. Why not? Is their faith too weak? Are the offerings poor? Has everyone got too many other priorities? Doesn't anyone care?

The *General Directory for Catechesis* has made it clear that adult formation is the norm of all catechesis. It's job number one. The GDC is blunt about that: "Adult catechesis must be given priority" (article #258). The Vatican II declared that the call to holiness is universal and a key part of how we humans are made up.

So why isn't it working? And what can we do it make it work better?

The main reason it isn't working, believe it or not, is the framework within which we provide for *children's* programs. It's the American school house framework. It has some strengths for delivering facts about religion, but it has some serious problems when it comes to transformation, life long holiness, and the participation of the whole community.

In this school house framework, it's mainly **children** who are **enrolled** in an **optional** program of religious education which follows the **school year** in schedules, formats, and

holidays. In many places the children or their families **pay tuition** for this program. They meet in **classrooms**. In fact, in places where there is no Catholic school, parishes often prepare makeshift classroom spaces to resemble those in a school. The children are called **students** and their leaders are called, often, **teachers**. The term “CCD teacher” is still common, despite efforts to change it to “catechist.” The students use **textbooks** which resemble school house textbooks and the teaching method is mainly to present what is found in those textbooks. Parents are noticeably **absent**, just as in general curriculum schooling. The work is done by parish catechists.

Most importantly, after about eighth grade or so, or after receiving the sacrament of confirmation, the students believe that they have **graduated** from religious education. This sense of being graduated or finished is very strong. As a result, most post-confirmation or post-middle school religious education programs are mainly youth activity programs of one kind or another. Adult education is mainly left undone because most adults in the church believe they have graduated from religious education which is, after all, for kids.

Nearly every adult in the church believes that he or she has completed his or her catechesis. They’re done for life like they are with grammar school. Why go back to that?

But we all know that holiness is a lifelong journey. We do not come to the end of our need to grow in our ability to forgive, be generous, welcome the stranger, do justice, love tenderness, and walk humbly with our God.

Unless we change the framework within which we provide children’s programs, we will never change the thinking of adults about catechesis as a life-long journey of faith, to borrow an appropriate phrase from the Catechumenate. But if we do change this framework for the kids, then adults will come pouring into catechesis again.

The name, **whole community catechesis** or **the lifelong call to holiness** is drawn from article #254 of the GDC where it says that

The Christian community is the origin, locus, and goal of catechesis. Proclamation of the Gospel always begins with the Christian community and invites [people] to conversion and the following of Christ. It is the same community that welcomes those who wish to know the Lord better and permeate themselves with a new life. The Christian community accompanies catechumens and those being catechized, and with maternal solicitude makes them participate in her own experience of the faith and incorporates them into herself.

What does it look like?

### **Plank #1: A link to the whole community and Sunday Mass**

The first plank of this new framework is that in whole community catechesis, **the total parish** is involved in learning and sharing about the faith. Every Christian of every age in the parish is involved, not just children. **The Sunday Mass** is the font from which all this flows. It's the font from which the whole community draws the sweet water of faith-sharing and self-understanding as the Body of Christ and the People of God.

Whole community catechesis provides a framework within which such parish wide faith-sharing happens every single week, year in and year out. "How will you get people to actually do this?" you ask. The beauty of whole community catechesis is that it is made simple. It's in plain English. And it's delivered in small, bite-sized chunks. People will do it because it is sweet for them, because it fulfills a desire they have for the spiritual life, because it is designed to fit naturally into their everyday lives. Holiness was seen at Vatican II as the basic work of the church. So keeping it in the forefront of our parishes makes a lot of sense.

### **Plank #2: Christian households of faith and the parish as resource center**

The second plank of this new framework is that **the households of the parish become the main focus** of re-developed parish programs. The household is where faith is lived every day. So, in whole community catechesis, there is a strong focus on developing households. Christian home-making becomes very important. The household - along with the meals shared there - is the context in which what we teach in religious education class becomes the stuff of real, everyday living and everyday holiness.

### **Plank #3: A constitutive part of Christian life**

The third plank in the framework of whole community catechesis also involves a change from the present way of thinking. **Whole community catechesis is not an *optional* parish program** for which one enrolls and pays tuition to participate. Catholics don't "enroll" for Sunday Mass or "pay tuition" to participate there. Whole community catechesis starts with the premise that faith formation and growing in holiness is part and parcel of being Christian. It isn't optional. It's central, like being at Sunday Mass.

The slightly more complex term we use to describe this is constitutive. Catechesis or growing in one's holiness is constitutive, we would say, of the Christian life. One simply cannot say that he or she is a Christian unless he or she is also in a process of sharing faith. **Sharing one's faith is catechesis.** And sharing faith, or catechesis, is what makes a Christian a Christian.

**Plank #4: A movement within God's people and the vision of the leaders**

The fourth plank of whole community catechesis is that **it is more like a movement within the parish than a program**. In a sense, the church itself is really a movement more than it is a “membership organization.” It’s a movement of the Spirit of Jesus to the world. It’s a movement within our own hearts. Faith is constantly growing and changing. It’s constantly in movement. To become a Christian, in short, is to join a movement not a club. It’s an unending process of announcing the Good News and assisting folks to live by it.

So, too, with whole community catechesis. It is a renewal movement toward faith-sharing and instruction in the faith. This faith-sharing and instruction is unending and everywhere present in our lives. This is the pathway to holiness.

As such, working within the framework of whole community catechesis serves to tie together (1) all the formal instruction which the parish provides (homilies, children’s instructional programs, sacramental preparation, leadership training, preparation for various pastoral care and liturgical ministries, biblical study and spiritual growth opportunities) with (2) the informal sharing of faith which whole community catechesis implants into everything else, especially everyday household and parish life.

The single factor which makes renewal movements (such as TEC, Search, Marriage or Engaged Encounter, Cursillo, RENEW, AA, Al Anon, and others) work is that the people involved in these movements share their faith together. This gives them a feeling of movement, from one person to another, from one community to another. It’s the Spirit moving people where she wills.

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Flowing from the Sunday Assembly... **Catechesis & Liturgy: A Seamless Garment**

Bill Huebsch



In many parishes these days it feels like the worship and education departments are standing in warring camps. They compete for volunteers, for money in tight budgets, and for the limelight in parish announcements after Mass. Sometimes they fight over liturgical principles or catechetical norms. But in this picture something serious is missing. Liturgy and catechesis cannot be separated that cleanly. They depend upon one another. It falls upon us to “sew the seamless garment” of parish ministry and bring liturgy and catechesis back together.

The movement to support the lifelong call to holiness addresses this head on. It provides the vehicle within the parish to re-join liturgy and catechesis. In parishes where this is underway already, they would never go back to those “bad old days” where liturgy and catechesis were in competition.

The lifelong call to greater holiness suggests three steps to follow in making the new connection between liturgy and catechesis.

The **first step** is to establish a process for allowing the liturgy to become the font from which all catechesis flows within the parish. We simply cannot have effective catechesis unless those involved are also taking an active, conscious part in the Sunday liturgy. The restoration of the catechumenate has helped us see this vital connection. It is the church who is the teacher, and it is the role of the catechist to tease out the meaning of what the church says and does.

But likewise, without catechesis we will never shift from the liturgical practice of the 1950s (where most Catholics were present but were praying something other than the Mass) to the active, conscious participation which was the dream of Vatican II.

So you see? We need each other. Without liturgy we can’t have catechesis, and without catechesis we won’t have participatory liturgy.

The **second step** in bringing us together is to examine the “guest list” to see who is welcome and who is excluded from the Sunday Assembly. As we just implied, we can’t do much for a family or a child in an hour of catechesis each week if they’re not also engaged in the Sunday Assembly. But many people feel that they

are no longer welcome on Sunday morning, that the church does not love them. They feel excluded or, even worse, expelled from liturgy.

This is especially true for the divorced and remarried Catholics. But it's also true for others: for many who have made decisions in good conscience with which the church does not agree and who now pay the price by feeling outside the community celebration.

Can we offer a larger welcome to these? Who is more in need of gathering in the Sunday Assembly than those facing such tough decisions in their lives? If we wish to offer them the guidance of the church, perhaps it would be better to first invite them "home to the liturgy" and then sort out what needs to be later.

And the **third step** in bringing us together is to take certain elements of the catechumenate and implement them parish-wide. In this process, liturgists and catechists share precisely the same goals. The catechumenate has restored certain ancient practices of the church to use, and now using them parish-wide has a powerful effect. It provides for deep conversion to Christ, and for a natural link among three key elements: liturgy, catechesis, and lifestyle.

And what are these elements? Without elaborating *how* to do this, here is a short list.

- Breaking open the Word used weekly throughout the parish and in the homes as a way to make of the Liturgy of the Word a fountain flowing into our whole lives.
  - Parish-based retreats during which participants experience a deep conversion to Christ.
  - Wider use of sponsors in catechesis, allowing those with great faith to mentor and guide those who are new to the faith.
  - Bringing adults into the learning circles of each parish and helping them grow in holiness because we know that well-formed adults are more generous with their time and money and more willing to be active in parish life.
  - Some sort of systematic and comprehensive catechesis for adults, based in our *Catechism*, which does two things: builds and sustains the initial conversion to Christ, and elaborates that experience with the doctrine and teachings of the church.
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## **Changing Job Descriptions and Budgets to Help People Respond to the Lifelong Call to Holiness**

Bill Huebsch

*Mark Hakomaki*

### **Essential to Parish Life**

Parish pastoral staff workers have become essential to the mission of the church over the past forty years. They are an amazing group of people: dedicated, overworked, underpaid, and faithful to Christ. Many of them have advanced degrees. And they share with their pastors in the leadership and organization of parish life to such a degree that it's hard to imagine a church without them.

In many smaller parishes, this staff is completely unpaid! They are long-term, dedicated volunteers. Many of them are also well trained and prepared for their ministry. Diocesan and archdiocesan offices see the benefits of providing in-service and educational events for these folks, and most attend at some time or other.

### **The Emergence of Departments**

Over the decades in most parishes, especially larger urban locations, the staff has gradually moved and shifted into departments. These departments almost always include one for liturgy and worship. Another is for education and formation. A third is for pastoral care or work for justice and peace. A fourth is administration. There might be others beyond these four. Parish budgets are structured to take into account these departments, and department leaders often compete for volunteers,



money in the budget, and even for air time on Sundays during the announcements.

The need to help people respond to their lifelong call to holiness is changing this. And with this change comes a change also in what's in the budget, job descriptions, the use of parish facilities, and general parish priorities. Many parishes may even need to restate their mission to take into account the new goals.

### **What is Holiness?**

In a nutshell, holiness is a journey of faith for everyone in the parish. Parishes shift their focus, therefore, from forming mainly children to forming the whole community. It's not an educational program as such. It's also not solely a liturgical program. It's not a pastoral care or administrative program. *It's a total parish goal or mission.* It's a way of looking at parish life and seeing how we all relate to each other in these various departments of ours.

Growth in holiness begins by re-emphasizing our relationship to Christ, our daily "walk with Christ." Knowing and loving Christ leads us to deeper life in the church. When we have experienced conversion, we are generous with our money and time. We desire deeper community life. We want to know more about our faith.

### **Changing Times**

As the need to support this lifelong call to holiness arrives on the scene at the parish level, however, being "departmentalized" is not an asset. Parish staff people are under demand to work much more closely together, often sharing in the same programs. The RCIA Coordinator might work more closely with the DRE. And both of them might work very closely with whoever is looking after adult faith formation. The

worship and music leaders will be needed to help make catechesis a success. The faith formation that is part and parcel of growing in holiness really involves everyone in the parish, including the pastor. Catechesis must likewise learn to invite all their participants to Sunday Mass. After all, that moment each week is the source and summit of our lives.

And all this new activity, all these new adults coming into the learning circle of our parishes, will place a greater demand on those who provide pastoral care and other services. The pastoral care leaders might cooperate with all the others as we push open the doors to extend a hearty welcome to those who are away from active participation in the parish. Often, people make their way back to parish life because of an emergency or crisis in their lives; maybe they are away because they have fallen out of grace with the rules of the church.

The school leaders are also called upon to become more involved in parish life. School children are also part of the parish most of the time and their involvement in the life of the parish is part of their formation, too.

### **New Wine, New Wineskins**

What does this mean? Well, first of all it means we'll need staff meetings that echo the shape of this parish renewal. They should open with "breaking open the Word" and faith sharing, just as all other meetings in the parish do. The parish staff really has two goals. The first is to help folks meet Christ and experience Christ in their lives. Having done that, folks are then ready to (1) worship with greater awe, (2) study their faith a little, and (3) live with justice and care for one another. This is the pathway to holiness.

The second goal is to help develop within the parish “households of faith.” Our goal, in other words, is not merely good liturgy, or sound education, or outreach as a parish to the poor. Our goal is that the household live liturgically. That the household be laced with the faith. That the household members reach out to the poor. The goal is not the parish. It’s the households. Holiness must be lived at home where daily lives have embedded within them a summons to self-giving love. This summons and people’s response to it is what leads to holiness.

One of the newly emerging roles is that of a “lifelong formation coordinator” who helps build bridges among various ministries and who leads the way toward a parish-wide lifelong formation process.

In most parishes, this will require new job descriptions for others as well. It will require all of us who work there to cross those departmental boundaries and work closely with each other. It will require a budget that reflects our new priorities: *lifelong* formation in the faith, rather than merely children’s formation. Writing new job descriptions and changing budgets can be unsettling, but the payoff is immense! The payoff is an adult parish where people mature in their faith and reach out to change the world with justice and peace. Can anyone hear the Gospel echoing behind this?



## Common Sense

Wrestling with Issues that  
Matter to Adult Holiness

Bill Huebsch

*Mark Hakomaki*

I recently attended an adult education fair at a parish near my home. I was surprised by what I found. First, I found adults there! Lots of them. This surprised me because those who work in adult formation in the church today are always complaining that not enough people show up for our programs. The place was packed and people were chatting up a storm with each other.

But then I noticed the second thing that surprised me: the topics being offered to these adults for their selection were absolutely *ordinary*! The day began with a keynote address which was exciting, funny, and down-to-earth. It dealt with the difficulty of finding our spiritual way in modern times. It was not theological or doctrinal in the least (which I found refreshing in this age of back-to-doctrine educational programs).

After the keynote, six workshops were available. They were practical, helpful, and given by people who were plain-talking, honest, and downright common.

These workshops were all packed and I think it was because they were so ordinary. Here's the list:

**Everyday Prayer.** How do you hear the voice of God in the din of your life? How does the Spirit speak to you? Call you? How do you know what God wants you to do? How do you respond to the call to holiness which echoes in the depths of your heart?

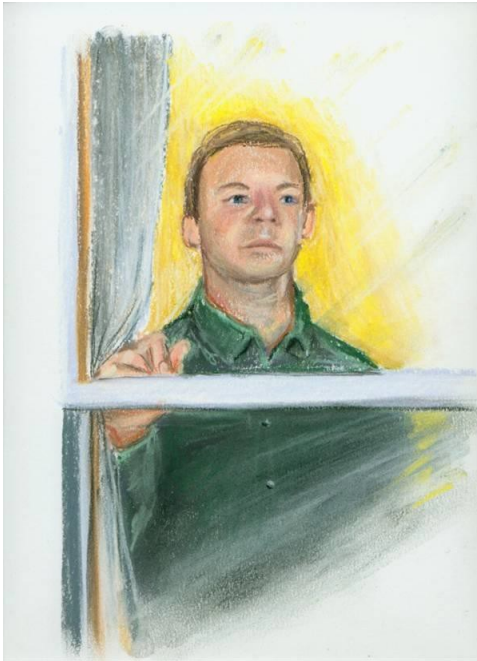
**Relationships.** Who are the people you most love? How do we offer one another love and affection as Jesus taught us to do? How do we organize everyday life to make this a priority? How do the people in your life lead you to greater holiness? How do they help you become more forgiving, kind, and compassionate?

**Money.** Where would you place yourself on the economic scale of the world? How can you organize your personal finances to reflect our faith? How can you apply the teachings of Jesus in your own economic situation? Does your money reflect your call to be holy?

**Sabbath.** With whom do you spend your Sundays? What are ways in which you can "keep holy the Sabbath" in today's demanding culture? What is one step you will take toward a more Sabbath-oriented lifestyle?

**Loving our enemies.** Who are the people most "outside" your world? Enemies, strangers, opponents? How can we love them? How do we approach this central tenet of the Gospels? Identify one person, or household, or group, that you will find a way to love openly and with charity.

**Chastity.** What is the greatest challenge to your chastity? What is chastity? How can we live according to it in the midst of a culture full of lust and lusty images? How can we help people love? Love is, after all, the pathway to holiness. This is what people seem to be looking for in their journeys of faith. If we give it to them, then maybe they will come to our programs.



*Mark Hakomaki*

## How Does God Speak to Us in Prayer?

Helping adults make prayer a part of their journey to holiness

Bill Huebsch

### Teaching about Prayer

We religious types tend to spend a lot of time trying to teach people about prayer. It's always one of the goals of a parish adult formation program. But while it's probably possible to teach the doctrine of the church by asking people to study texts that resemble a catechism, and it's probably possible to teach them about church history, or the content and meaning of the Scriptures, it is **never** possible to "teach" anyone about prayer.

Prayer is learned by osmosis. It gets under your skin and into your heart when you hang around people who pray. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, prayer enters your life as a force, like the light of the dawn. And then one day you realize that you've grown to be a prayerful woman or man. This is how holiness reaches into your heart: imperceptibly and gently.

But it can't be taught like science or history. You can't give a test on prayer. You can only mentor and guide people by your own example.

Prayer is often called a "dialogue" between God and us. But, in prayer, as Karl Rahner says, while we usually speak words toward God, whether oral or silent, God does not, ordinarily, speak words back to us. We don't normally hear voices in the tabernacle, visions in the night, or the skies opening and God speaking.

In what way, then, does God ordinarily speak to us in prayer?

The answer is both startling and comforting. God, we would say, "speaks" not many words to us, but rather a single word. The word divinely spoken is nothing less than the life of the one who prays. God is with us, continually. God is creating us, loving us, and revealing us to ourselves at all times. God is an insider. God is present and active in our lives, period.

Therefore, Rahner says, *we are the ones* who are spoken in prayer. We become a word of God. Amazing! Isn't it?

It follows then that to enter into our own lives as divine in their source and divine in their destiny is to enter into prayer. We are bound up with God in such a dramatic way that the intricacies of our lives are filled with divine energy. So hearing God is hearing our lives as they are drawn into God in the everydayness with which we live.

We aren't waiting for voices from heaven, or signs in the night. We hear God speaking within us and among us: in the inner voice of conscience which makes us sure and insistent. We hear God in the intuitions, imaginings, and ideas which seem to come from nowhere. We find God present in the liturgies of the church and in the very act of gathering with the Sunday Assembly.

### **In your adult education program**

To guide people into prayer, begin by asking them the same two daily questions, over and over again, letting them have time each day to answer in their own words. One the question is this: *What has happened in my life and the world today?* And secondly, *How was the hand of God in that or how did this lead me to greater holiness?*

Begin every parish meeting this way, every single meeting. Pause to ask, not “What is God like?” or “What is the doctrine of the Trinity all about?” but simply and insistently, “How is God acting in your life now?” How do you experience love, even if you live in a difficult home? How is your conscience being formed by what you know about the poor, the unwanted, and the strangers in your midst? This is THE prayerful question.

It’s not a formal education program with textbooks and outcomes and file folders all over your desk. But it’s a powerfully effective way to guide folks to identify the experience of God in their lives. Once they’ve done that, education, worship, and social action will follow. But without it, none of the rest makes any sense whatsoever.

So go ahead. Ask THE question. If we do this much, God will do the rest.





## **The Goal of Lifelong Faith Formation: Adult Christians of Mature Holiness**

**by Bill Huebsch**

*Artwork by Mark Hakomaki*

Well, who knew? It turns out that when we get serious about bringing adults

into the learning circles of our parishes, everything changes. The collections go up. Complaints go down. More people are involved. Fewer people are on the sidelines. The Sunday liturgy has more heart. Pastoral staff people are meeting new needs. And the whole parish is renewed!

Cullen Schippe, the Catholic scholar and publisher, told a group of leaders meeting in La Jolla, California, several years ago that the ultimate goal of all we're doing in catechesis is simple and straightforward, when you come right down to it. It's to help all Catholics become **adult Christians of mature holiness**.

With that big goal in mind, it's also important for us to remain mindful of the "vision" of lifelong faith formation. Wandering away from the vision may lead us into a minefield of obstacles that need not obstruct us. A helpful formula for remembering the vision is to think "process and sources."

### **Process**

First of all, the process of lifelong faith formation in a parish turns on two key experiences in the Christian life: **conversion to Christ**, and **learning how to live with self-giving love, how to die to oneself**. These two go hand in hand, of course. Sometimes the act of living in love produces deeper conversion. Other times, the conversion process leads to our ability to love selflessly. These two faith experiences, which all of us have in our Christian journeys all the time, are the groundwork or basis of all we're talking about in whole community catechesis.

For so many of our parishes, we've had only [a hint](#) of this process operating until now: we provide education classes. We're been intent on instructing people in the faith. Instruction seems so sure and foolproof. But we have not done what the papal documents and the *General Directory for Catechesis* tell us must come first: leading people to Christ or conversion. Leading people to respond to their call to holiness, a call embedded in the people, actions, and events of their daily lives and world.

### **Ideas**

For the conversion process, whole community catechesis suggests things such as parish-wide breaking open the Word (Question of the Week), parish-based retreats, an ongoing focus on the households of the parish as the place where faith is lived, and a much wider use of mystagogy on a weekly basis in the parish.

Adding formal catechesis to that, we suggest a style of catechetical gatherings in the parish in which adults feel welcome and comfortable (and this won't be a classroom!); a spiral scope and sequence aimed at keeping the whole parish on the same topic and themes; and use of the children's program to springboard into the adult community as a way of getting started.

So that's the "process half" of the vision of whole community catechesis. What are its sources?

### **Sources**

Whole community catechesis flows from two sources: Sunday Mass is first. The liturgy of Word and Eucharist is the first and primary source. Gathering for Eucharist isn't merely something we *do*. It isn't an activity that is equal to, say, gathering for a ball game. [Eucharist is \*who we are as Catholics\*](#). It's our identity: we become what we

receive. It's our name: we are called the Body of Christ. It's our mission: we are sent to be Christ to the world. The pathway to holiness is self-giving love, and that is found in the service we give to our spouses, children, neighbors, community, the vulnerable, and the poor.

You could fill our schools to the windows and our bank accounts to the bursting point. You could have a huge staff, everyone with a graduate degree, and all the volunteers for which you've ever dreamed. But if we didn't have the Word and the Eucharist, what would we be? You could burn down our buildings, empty our bank accounts, and martyr the staff (don't think people haven't suggested this!), but if we still had the Eucharist, we would be in Christ. We would be Catholic.

Source number two for whole community catechesis, of course, is *the daily dying and daily work of self-giving love*. Bringing our experiences of this together and sharing them is how we recognize the hand of God in them. When we pause to look back over our shoulders, we can see more clearly than when we are in the moment, as Dr. Michael Horan, PhD, of Loyola Marymount University in LA, reminds us.

Any formal catechesis must elaborate the actual experience of dying to ourselves. Nothing else will do! The bishops of the church have made plain to us that they want us to teach only what is handed down through them from the apostles. Catechesis is no time for us to express our "opinions" about the church or our faith. It isn't a time to teach only what we think is important, leaving out the rest. And it isn't a time to add elements on which we think the church should have more focus. But the Paschal Mystery of Christ and our own passion stories hold pride of place in this. They supersede the doctrine, dogma, and rubrics because they flow from the heart of God.

### **Adult catechesis ideas**

Children's catechesis is "old hat" to us Catholics. We've been doing it a long time. But we know that if we don't also address the adults, bringing them into the learning circles of our parishes, we can't succeed. No matter how good the children's program is, if the

kids go home to a household where the faith is not cherished or understood (at least a little), all our efforts will be like seed falling on rocky ground. Even if it does sprout into faith, the larger lessons learned in household life will eventually become the adult habits for most people.

So households really are the primary place of formation, whether we like it or not. By example and omission both, they are teaching the young members of the church. For this reason, gathering adult and young adult Catholics together to hold “conversations about faith” provides an excellent model and one that children will emulate as they grow older. As you implement a parish process to gather adults in small groups like this, you’ll find you’re feeding a real hunger and a strong desire to grow in faith. The desire for holiness is inborn; everyone has it. The call to this holiness is universal.

When we bring adults into the learning circle, we’re going to find that there is widespread misunderstanding about our faith. Many adults simply haven’t had, since primary school, any instruction outside of the liturgy and a cursory reading of the diocesan newspaper. Better understanding will lead to deeper love for the church. It will lead to deeper appreciation and desire to live the Christian life.

Combine adult instruction with opportunities within the parish that give rise to the possibility of conversion (such as the ones listed above), and you have a real powerhouse!

### **Signs of the Times**

We have learned over the years that it does not work very effectively to try to give adults catechesis for which they’re not asking. Parish after parish offers adult education topics, usually in a class setting at an evening gathering in the parish. Sixteen adults show up and take advantage of it! And it’s the same sixteen adults we see at all our offerings.

But how do we reach the *rest* of the parish?

One thing adults have made clear to us over the past thirty or forty years is that whatever we use to provide instruction, it has to be user-friendly. This means it must be in plain English or Spanish. It must be brief, yet complete. It must be lovely and beautiful to have and hold. And it must be affordable.

Adult Catholics are not in the habit of buying and reading good Catholic literature in book form. Adults of many Protestant churches are! Certain series of books have sold in the millions to Protestant adults in recent years. But not so with Catholics.

Catholic adults also seem unwilling to enter into those classrooms which their children use for elementary catechesis. We've been inviting them for years! They simply refuse to do it. I can understand this. In the first place, they don't really fit in the chairs! In the second place, they make their own children and the classroom catechist both uncomfortable.

But we can provide adults with small doses of instruction at moments in their lives when it's most important to them, and we can do this well and faithfully. This is the genius of the US Bishops' Pastoral Letter and the accompanying user guide, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. Let's make it happen!



## Holiness: It Ain't Just for Kids Anymore!

**Bill Huebsch**

*Hakomakih*

When was the last time you were in a religious ed class? For most of us, the answer is “When I was in grade school!”

Religious education back then often meant memorizing answers to questions in the faithful, old *Baltimore Catechism*. A bit later and they were calling it CCD. But whatever we did and whatever it was called, for most Catholics, religious education ended with the grade school years. We *graduated*, or thought we did.

So we might be a bit surprised to be hearing, from the pope, the bishops, and a whole host of pastors and lay leaders in our parishes, the idea that catechesis, as it's now being called, is meant to be *lifelong*.

### ***Catechesis?***

For many people, this is a new term. It's related to the word catechism, of course. Its meaning is important because it's the word the church is now using to talk about how we pass on the faith from one generation to the next – and within our own generation, how we pass faith around. It's actually a very helpful term and an ancient one in the church much more ancient than CCD. It comes from a Greek word which means, literally, “to give oral instruction” or “to teach by word of mouth.”

For many centuries, there were no fancy textbooks, and before copiers (remember that?) there were very few handouts. The faith was passed from generation to generation by parents telling faith stories to their kids, and by pastors telling faith stories to their congregations. It was all done by word of mouth. And, of course, it never ended. It went on throughout life, just as attending Mass on Sunday does.

Today we see the use of resources such as textbooks (or for adults, booklets) to be very valuable in helping us tell the story of Jesus Christ, the history of Christianity, the meaning of the Bible, and the teachings of the church. There is still a place, however, for an oral tradition in which parents talk with their children about these things, or in which grandparents talk with their grandchildren.

And of course, no matter what parents or the church tell their children, the kids are all learning mainly *by watching us*. Our example speaks louder than any words. If they see us be forgiving, they will value forgiveness. If they see us holding grudges, they will do likewise. What they see in us is what they learn about their faith. That's a sobering thought, isn't it? In other words, we ourselves must be holy and let people see how our journey to holiness affects our decisions, our ability to forgive others, our generosity with our money, and all other aspects of our lives.

So, in sum, catechesis is the process of passing our Christian faith from one person to the next, done today with both textbooks and word of mouth, but also by example and witness.

### *Lifelong?*

In his absolutely wonderful letter to the church about all this, called "On Catechesis in our Time," Pope John Paul II says that catechesis for adults is "the principal form of catechesis" (paragraph #43). Why? For all the reasons just mentioned above. Indeed, how can the adults of the church pass on their faith to the next generation, if they don't know it or aren't sure about it? How can they give example and witness to their faith if it's not explicitly part of their everyday life?

In the United States, the Catholic bishops took the bold step of publishing a pastoral plan for adult faith formation under the title “Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us.” In it, they echoed the pope’s teaching, saying that “adult faith formation...must be the *central task* in [our] catechetical enterprise” (paragraph #5, italics theirs).

They went on in this letter to lay out a practical, workable plan for parishes to follow in order to shift gears and bring adults into the learning circle of the community.

### *Shift gears?*

Most parishes have dynamite religious education programs for the children. Many have Catholic schools, confirmation programs, and a first reconciliation and first communion preparation process. But notice here that all these programs are aimed mainly at children, with parents watching from the sidelines for the most part.

Parents have even come to think of religious education as the job of the parish workers and volunteers. They think their job is to deliver their children, go home or go shopping for an hour, and return to pick them up after class. And many parents don’t make a connection between this religious education program and Sunday Mass. They don’t realize how important it is to attend Mass as a “household of faith.” Only about 16% are currently there on Sunday mornings.

So yes, it’s time to shift gears in the parish and move from a program centered mainly on children to one that includes the adults, *all* the adults -- whether or not they have children living in the house with them.

This probably will NOT mean “holding religious ed classes” for adults. Adults shy away from such classroom settings, and even if we did decide to do this – and the adults did decide to attend – where would we find the adequate space or teachers?



Instead, what would happen if we would begin offering adults brief lessons in the faith at moments when they are already engaged with us, and put these lessons into good, old-fashioned, “plain English” (o español común)? For example:

- When parents do have children in catechesis, it’s an ideal time for them to grow in their own faith. Why not gather them once a month or so while their kids are in class? So instead of going shopping for that hour, they join with other parents to learn how to speak about faith to their children. We call these **Learning Centers for Parents** and they are very effective. Simply holding an Advent or Lent activity night won’t cut it. Parents need more. They need something more systematic.
- Or when people come to us as catechumens or candidates (as we call those who are joining the church) or when Catholics who have been away from the church are making a return, why not offer them a systematic presentation of the faith in a user-friendly format and style? Offer them images of the faith, and ways to integrate faith into daily life.
- For those who serve on parish councils and leadership groups within the parish, or for those who volunteer for various liturgical or pastoral care ministries, why not provide them with brief lessons over the period of their ministry, helping them little by little to understand their faith more fully?
- All those wonderful and willing people who volunteer as catechists every year could be offered short lessons in the faith, beyond what their textbooks contain, to help them be more able to speak about these matters with their students.
- In parish youth ministry, confirmation, and other youth activities, how would it work to have ready a systematic and comprehensive – but thoroughly modern and contemporary – resource to help them review what they learned in grade school and make it their own as young adults? I think young people would gobble this up!

- There is a huge community of young adults who are out of high school, in college, possibly married already, but sometimes a little indifferent to the church. Let's connect with them via the internet, e-mail, and in other ways, and offer them a component system for religious formation that allows them to have brief glimpses of church teaching at those moments in their lives when they would connect with them best. This would also work for campus ministry, for young couples preparing for marriage, and for couples getting ready for the baptism of their child.
- For middle-aged and senior adults, what if we offered short lessons connected to other activities or even to study groups? These folks are often at a time in their lives when they have a little more time, and a little more concern for their faith.

### *New Wine Skins*

What happens when you enter into whole community and lifelong catechesis in a parish is quite remarkable. The parish itself takes on new life. More people come forward as volunteers. More parents are involved with their own kids. More money comes in the collection. More faith is shared at parish meetings. But the real payoff is found at the Sunday liturgy.

Sometimes if the liturgy seems a little lackluster, we think that what it needs is better music, or better lighting, or better preaching, or better *something*! What we've discovered as whole community catechesis is unfolding in parish after parish around the country is that what we actually needed was deeper faith in the hearts of the people and the pastor. That deeper faith in Christ, that love and energy, fills the church with life! It's the secret to a vibrant parish life. Whole community catechesis helps deliver this because it builds in a way for folks to meet and know Christ, for them to share Christ with others.



## Holiness is Job #1 for every Parish Council

**Bill Huebsch**

**“Important Business”** Not very long ago, I was working with a group of parish leaders, helping them prepare to shift gears and move toward creating a stronger culture of holiness within their parish. We were talking about the principles that underpin this reform. One of those principles is that for all parish ministries, Job #1 is helping folks come to meet Christ, to know Christ, and to walk with Christ in their daily lives. This was the topic of the evening.

As we started discussing how to build this into parish life, I suggested that maybe the parish council members themselves should be people deeply committed to Christ. “The core parish leaders should be the first to break open the Word,” I said, “and the first to make the in-parish retreats that are part of growing toward greater holiness.”

One woman objected. “I don’t have time for that,” she said. “We’ve got important business to take care of. We can’t be fussing around with all this other stuff.”

“Well,” I said, “it seems to me that if you want renewal for the parish, you should be the first to deepen your faith. You’re a parish leader, after all.”

“I just agreed to be on the parish council,” she told me. “I didn’t know all this business about being holy was going to be part of the deal!”

### **Not on the agenda**

And here we have the dilemma faced in so many parishes today. We Americans tend to be very well-organized people. When the pastors of the church told us to organize parish councils, we went to work with zeal. It didn't take us long to set up committees, agendas, and meeting schedules. We modeled most of this on how our local school board, corporate boards, and city governments are organized

Now as we continue to reform ourselves in the wake of Vatican II, making room for adults in the learning circle of the parish, connecting catechesis to Sunday Mass, aiming at households where real faith is cherished and lived, and adding a process that encourages holiness through conversion of the heart to Christ, we tend to want to "get organized." We tend to rush headlong into more classes, more curriculum, and more doctrine.

The trouble is that conversion involves spiritual realities. They resist tight schedules and organizational flow charts. Conversion is a lifelong *process*, not a program. There isn't a textbook. There isn't a schedule. And there certainly isn't a way to measure how far we've come.

So it doesn't get on the agenda. It's not part of the "important business" of the parish.

### **Basic to our faith**

And yet, it's basic to our faith. Vatican II made holiness the work of the church; chapter five of the Constitution on the Church sets this direction plainly. To know Christ, of course, is to know the church. One cannot claim to know Christ without at the same time realizing that he is the head of the body, which is the church. But it is possible to be part of the church without really knowing Christ. This is the heart of the challenge.

## **Holiness is first**

But what is holiness anyway? A great teacher of mine once said that we can never really *see* holiness. We can only point to signs of it in our lives. What we can see are the *signs of holiness* in one's life. And what are these signs?

- A supple sense of self. We go with the flow of life and are able to quickly and easily adapt as we perceive Christ unfolding within our lives opportunities to love.
- Flexibility with others. We respond to others based on the principle of love, rather than “throwing the book” at them when they fail. Our own experience of the mercy of God is offered to those around us.
- Endless generosity with our time. With our money. With our energy. We see needs and respond to them generously, aware that all we ourselves have is a gift and that sharing it with others only increases that gift, not decreases it. This is an insight of faith, not of reason.
- A warm sense of hospitality to others, even those we do not know well. We easily welcome them to the parish or to our neighborhoods, or to our own homes.
- A heart for the materially poor. One cannot really know Christ without loving those whom he loved most.
- An awareness of failure and sin in our own lives. Walking with Christ helps us *see*, and the clear insight points to our own times of being selfish or unilateral.
- A desire to grow in our faith.
- A real sense of being part of a community.
- The ability to hear our own inner voice, our conscience, calling us to love and to do good and avoid evil. This voice sounds in our hearts at the right moments, for we have in our hearts a law inscribed by God.
- A life of prayer. Not so much “saying your prayers” as “praying in all times and seasons.”
- The ultimate sign: a life of discipleship. This means following Christ to the cross: dying to ourselves and rising in Christ, over and over again throughout life.

Based on this, I think most of us are experiencing holiness already. We are now seeking ways to deepen this and make it more profound for both adults and children.

### **Getting organized**

And there are ways to get organized to do this! One of them is to use the Question of the Week, based on the Sunday readings, to break open the Word each week. These moments of being in touch with the Gospel and sharing it with others lead us deeper into the mystery of faith. The Holy Spirit works through this, drawing us nearer and nearer to God. We see the signs of conversion multiply when we do this.

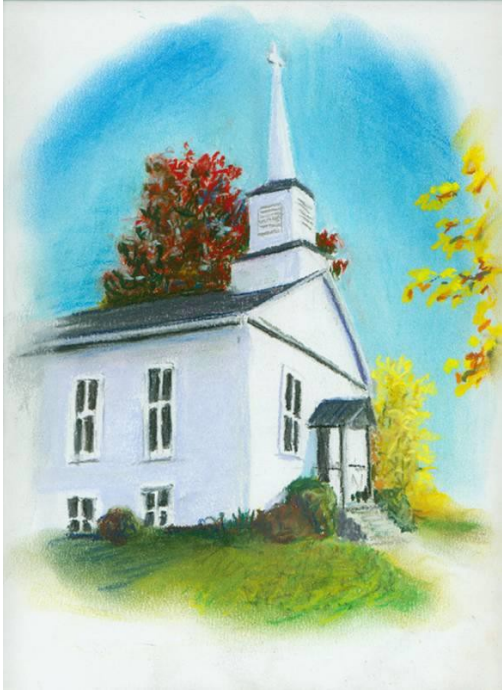
Every parish meeting should open with this short exercise, no matter how much “important business” you have to handle.

Another powerful means to help members of a parish deepen their holiness is through parish-based retreats. There is just no question that when we immerse ourselves in the dying and rising of Christ, we grow in our faith. We are touched by grace. We see with new insight. And we become stronger, more committed members of the church. Try the *Sanctus Retreat* which is available to download at [ThePastoralCenter.com](http://ThePastoralCenter.com). In these retreat notes, you will find talk outlines, schedules, handouts, prayer services, and even point-by-point to-do lists – everything you need to succeed at parish-based retreats!

The youth ministers of the church have always known this. For three or four decades, they have been helping young people grow in their faith, using methods such as these. The RCIA knows it. Catechumens begin their journey of faith with the Scriptures, by breaking open the Word every week and experiencing a retreat before the Easter Vigil. We all should do likewise.

### **Do try this at home**

And when your parish builds this into its process, adding it at every possible moment, you will see renewed enthusiasm, deeper commitment, more generous giving, reduced parish conflict, and a clearer focus on parish priorities.



## The Pillars of Lifelong Faith Formation

**Bill Huebsch**

*Mark Hakomaki*

### **Shifting Gears**

For many years now, we parish workers have been hearing talk about how the church is shifting gears from having mainly a children's religious education program, to having one that addresses everyone in the parish.

What will this mean for us? How will it affect our job descriptions and budgets? And how on earth will we ever get the adults of the parish to take part?

Throughout the US Church, we are planning for lifelong catechesis based on a plan published by the U.S. bishops entitled "Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us." Under this plan, we break the parish into smaller groups in order to reach out effectively and offer everyone something which addresses their own needs. And we take advantage of the many groups already meeting in the parish, rather than organizing a host of new ones.

There is, however, another topic of equal importance: the need to provide adults, young adults, and children with a presentation of the faith that is systematic and based in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

In all of the papal documents, and also in “Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us,” the bishops consistently call us to this goal. What they said in “Our Hearts Were Burning” is so important. I’m going to quote it here. This is from paragraphs 3, 4, and 5.

To grow in discipleship throughout life, all believers need and are called to build vibrant parish and diocesan communities of faith and service.

Such communities cannot exist without a strong, complete, and systematic catechesis for all its members. By "complete and systematic" we mean a catechesis that nurtures a profound, lifelong conversion of the whole person and sets forth a comprehensive, contemporary synthesis of the faith, as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This catechesis will help adults to experience the transforming power of grace and to grasp the integrity and beauty of the truths of faith in their harmonious unity and interconnection—a true symphony of faith.

Adult faith formation, by which people consciously grow in the life of Christ through experience, reflection, prayer, and study, must be the *central task* in [this] catechetical enterprise, becoming the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age (italics theirs).

Guided by these U.S. bishops, we can see certain principles for lifelong catechesis emerge that apply to the whole church.

**First**, the goal of lifelong catechesis is discipleship. Jane Regan, in her seminal book on all of this (*Toward an Adult Church* from Loyola Press, 2002), has said that the goal of all catechesis, even that which we offer to children, is discipleship.



This principle suggests that in every case, merely *understanding* doctrine won't be sufficient. It is also necessary to know what it means to live our faith in daily life as disciples of Christ.

**Second**, lifelong catechesis is rooted in parish life. There might be a tendency today to throw in the towel on adult catechesis as a parish process, saying to ourselves that the adults don't really want this, or that we don't have time for it, or that it just doesn't fit into the budget, or whatever. The call to holiness is lifelong and it is lived, in part, through association with a parish community. There the liturgy, devotions, and work for justice provide a regular rhythm or drum beat in our lives. That drum beat is key. We gradually begin to hear it with our inner ear, and it guides us when we most need it outside of parish life. The parish is the place in which we root lifelong catechesis, and if we don't we will miss the boat.

**Third**, and I don't know how the bishops could have made this more clear, what we offer in lifelong catechesis must be systematic. And what they mean by that is, to quote them again, "a catechesis that nurtures a profound, lifelong conversion of the whole person and sets forth a comprehensive, contemporary synthesis of the faith, as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*."

In other words, we must offer adults something substantial. When we do this, they are more likely to take part in it. Fluff doesn't fly very well. For example, if all you offer is an Advent or Lenten activity night now and then, there just isn't much there to sink one's teeth into. But if you offer a systematic approach, tailored to meet people's needs, adults are more likely to take part.

**Fourth**, what we offer in lifelong catechesis must connect to daily life. The *Catechism* itself starts out by explaining how real and profound is the inborn human hunger for God. Christ is the bread and water of life which satisfies this hunger. If people cannot come to understand this from what we offer them in lifelong catechesis, we have failed to do our jobs.

**Fifth**, lifelong catechesis has two results. One of them is transformation. Our lives are transformed when we encounter Christ. We experience forgiveness and we become forgiving. We experience mercy and we become merciful. We experience generosity and we become generous. We experience the Body of Christ and we become the Body of Christ. This is the pathway to holiness and everyone is called to follow it.

**Sixth**, the second result is lives of service and sacrifice. We understand what it means to enter into the death of the Lord and we understand that only by dying to ourselves can we live in the light of the resurrection. This powerful experience of the Paschal Mystery must be part and parcel of any lifelong catechesis. The bishops call this “the transforming power of grace” and they are right! It is transforming. It is powerful. And it is a free gift, a real grace, opened up for us by lifelong catechesis.

**Seventh**, this is essential work. It is not optional for us. The bishops even go so far as to call it “the central task” of our entire catechetical enterprise in the parish. Working together, we are now actively seeking ways to accomplish this.



For Pastors, Deacons, Youth Ministers, RCIA Teams,  
& Catechetical Leaders

## Making the Lifelong Call to Holiness Blend into Your Current Program

Bill Huebsch

### **Christ Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.**

The first and last point of reference of this catechesis will always be Jesus Christ himself, who is “the way, and the truth, and the life.” (CCC #1698) “For to me, to live is Christ.” (Phil 1:21) “Jesus Christ not only transmits the word of God, he is the Word of God. Catechesis is, therefore, completely tied to him.” (GDC #98)

**What this means:** It’s not an encounter with a textbook or even the catechism, but with a person and, through that person, with Christ (GDC #156). Holiness consists in giving ourselves over to this in such a way that we live as though we belong to Christ and as though everyone around us belongs to Christ. This leads us to self-giving love, which is to say, to the Paschal Mystery.

When God chose to come and live among us, God did not come as a theological system, or as a moral code, and certainly not as a textbook. God came as a person: Jesus Christ. You could open up the head of your “students” and pour the doctrine of the Trinity into them, but if they cannot see Christ around them, within them, then it would do no good.

And once we have met Christ, we must also turn our hearts to Christ (conversion). This turning of one’s heart precedes catechesis!

**Conversion, anyone?** One of the difficulties (recognized by the General Directory) in our present method of providing religious education is that so few of those in our catechesis programs have experienced this conversion. As a result, their hearts are often not in the program! But even more difficult, many of us - the catechists - also have not experienced this conversion! We might agree to teach 4th grade this year, for example, but we’re not always in it with our whole hearts. Like the kids, we may even dread the weekly classes a little. But as article 142 of the GDC puts it:

...there cannot be teachers of the faith other than those who are convinced and faithful disciples of Christ and his Church.

Pope Francis has referred continually to this reality. For him, only the changing of the heart will create change in the church – and this will lead to changes in society toward greater justice and good.



Here's what else the GDC says about it. There's a strong message contained in this:

Many who present themselves for catechesis truly require genuine conversion. Because of this, the Church usually desires that the first stage in the catechetical process be dedicated to ensuring conversion...Only by starting with conversion...can catechesis, strictly speaking, fulfill its proper task... (GDC, article 62)

### **To Teach as Jesus Did: Love the Poor**

How we treat the poor and rejected is the measuring stick by which we will be judged. For Jesus and the New Testament, the poor are not just one theme amongst many. The poor are the starting point where one begins to understand the Gospel as the Good News of liberation (blessed are you who are poor). The poor stand as the final criteria of salvation or damnation.

The question of the poor is so essential to the tradition of Jesus that when Paul went to verify his doctrine before the apostles in Jerusalem, these demanded of him the care of the poor (Galatians 2:10).

The theological tradition of the church has always correctly argued that where Christ is, there too is the church. Christ is in the poor; thus the church must also be in the poor. Not only in the poor who happen to be good workers, but also purely and completely in those people who are simply poor. By being poor, they have less life, and for this reason are the first recipients of this good news and the first who benefit from the liberating intervention of the God of Life. Again, Pope Francis has asked us all to bear this in mind and make it a center point in our ministry.

## **Fundamental starting point: Baptism**

Not all the sacraments hold the same position in the hierarchy of church teachings. Baptism and Eucharist clearly have primacy - they are the essential sacraments of the Christian life.

This leads us to a renewed ecclesiology: that we as the People of God are the church. But taking this seriously and teaching it is very difficult. We have not made that part and parcel of our catechesis - yet! We still teach “about” the church as though it is outside of ourselves and our daily lives.

*How can we celebrate baptism in such a way that the rites themselves teach? How can we raise the status of baptism? How can we help folks understand their baptismal promises as part of their everyday lives?*

## **A household-centered church!**

If the People of God are the church, then the role of the parish to be a resource center for them! This is a new framework for us. In the past, we have seen parishioners as a resource for the parish: their money, time, abilities were used to build up the life of the parish. This meant that people were often called to leave their homes precisely at those hours when household life is being shared most.

*How can the parish become a resource for household life?*

## **Fundamental skill: Prayer & Discernment**

We cannot so much teach someone to pray as mentor or coach them in listening to God who is already speaking in their very lives. It isn't so much a “raising of the mind and heart to God” as it is a falling back to our own very center. The Reign of God is within and prayer is a necessity for being fully human. We experience an inborn hunger for God. This is, by and large, something learned only at home.

## **Fundamental turning point of Vatican II: Grace!**

Grace is God communicating God's own Loving Self to us. It's experienced as a loving, divine energy (or power) which fills our bodies and our souls. It's free. It comes from God alone. It's offered to every human being. And it lets us be what we're made to be.

*God is present and active in our lives! What does this mean?*

Grace stirs within us, God acting in our lives. Coming to recognize that, understand it, and worship with awe in light of it will lead to lives of forgiveness, charity, generosity, and love.

## **Fundamental focus: Holiness**

Our focus should not be so much on the farmers (us) or the seed (the sharing of Faith) or even on the economy (the parish budgets) but on the Good Soil (those we touch). We have the task of helping people see the convergence of the sacred and the secular. We ourselves must be on the pathway to holiness, but we must also lead others to this pathway.

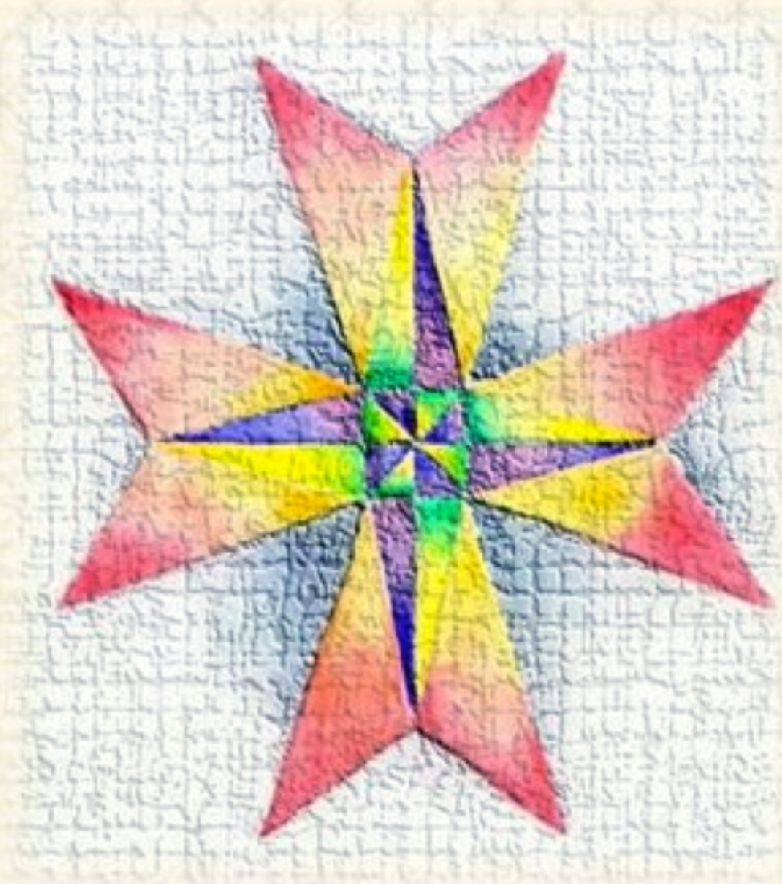
Faith does not begin up in the sky; it begins in everyday life. Embedded in a hundred daily human experiences of family, job, school, neighbors, the world, and our own conscience is a summons. This summons sounds within us and it becomes clearer when we orient ourselves around the teachings of Christ and the life of the church. We are called to forgive, to touch and heal, to walk with and comfort, to give away our money, to tend to the dying, to love and feed the poor, to protect the vulnerable, and to make ourselves the servants of all.

Every homily, every parish meeting, and every faith formation event should sound this call. We announce to all that God is still speaking, not from the skies but in the events of daily life. And we equip people to respond. In this way we weave the lifelong call to holiness into everything already happening within the parish. We create a "culture of holiness" in which people are led to the conscious practice of self-giving love. Holiness, indeed!





# ***PRAYER SERVICES***







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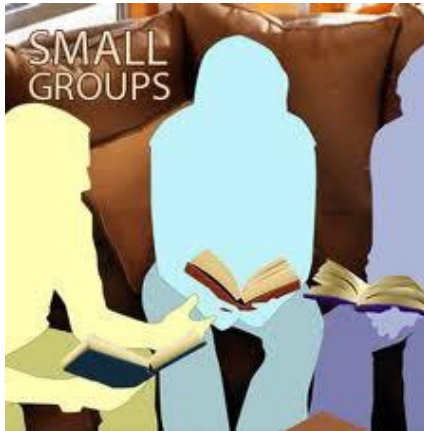
# How to Lead Faith Sharing

## with

### The Question of the Week & Breaking Open the Word

A whole week of reflection on Sunday's Readings:  
Parish-wide faith-sharing based on breaking open the Word!

Bill Huebsch



Holiness is an ever-developing attitude of faith on our part, driven by the work of the Spirit within us. We open the way for this Spirit-work when we share faith with each other. But many parishes – even those who “get all the work of ministry done” – never really assist their people to do such faith sharing.

## How to Lead Faith Sharing

### Principles

1. Sunday Mass is our source. Weekly faith sharing in our Catholic parishes should flow from the Sunday liturgy – the readings, the gathering together, and the experience of communion.
2. Keep it simple. When leading such faith sharing, keep it simple and easy for people to do. Do not make it into a theological discussion or speculative debate about doctrine or the Scripture.
3. Break open the Word. Borrow “breaking open the Word” from the RCIA process. In this, we are using an ancient practice of the church, as old as the church itself really. It’s the method that was used on that road to Emmaus. Breaking open the word has been restored to the church by Vatican II and subsequent renewal.
4. Make the Sunday readings more available. Provide everyone in the parish with access to the readings from each Sunday liturgy. Create some starter questions to help people peer into the text and apply it to their daily lives.
5. Teach people to share their faith. It is the doorway to the Sacred, the work of the Spirit in their lives, and the turning point which leads to holiness.

## The Method

Breaking open the Word is a two-question process.

The first question leads the person of faith to look into the text itself. Ask questions such as these to initiate step one of the process:

- ▶ What word or phrase struck me as I heard the reading?
- ▶ What idea or image came to mind?
- ▶ What story did I hear being told, in my own words?
- ▶ What really touched me in this reading?

The second question leads the person of faith to look into his or her life, through the lens of the reading. For this part of the process, it helps a great deal to provide a reflection question which gets people started reading and listening to the Scriptures more intently.

We often refer to this as the “question of the week.” This question flows from the Sunday readings. Follow these guidelines when developing this question:

- ▶ It should be a question that leads to “theological reflection” without being too theological itself.
- ▶ It should not be a “yes” or “no” question, but one that draws the user deeper into the Gospel and his or her own life.
- ▶ It should be a question that asks for a personal response. It’s not a discussion about the faith but a sharing of one’s own faith and belief.
- ▶ It should be a question that is age appropriate - but still has teeth!
- ▶ Excellent questions for your use can be found at our online Pastoral Center: <http://pastoralplanning.com/QuestionoftheWeek.html>.

Then in the week following this Sunday, this two-question process is used throughout the parish for faith-sharing at the beginning of each gathering:

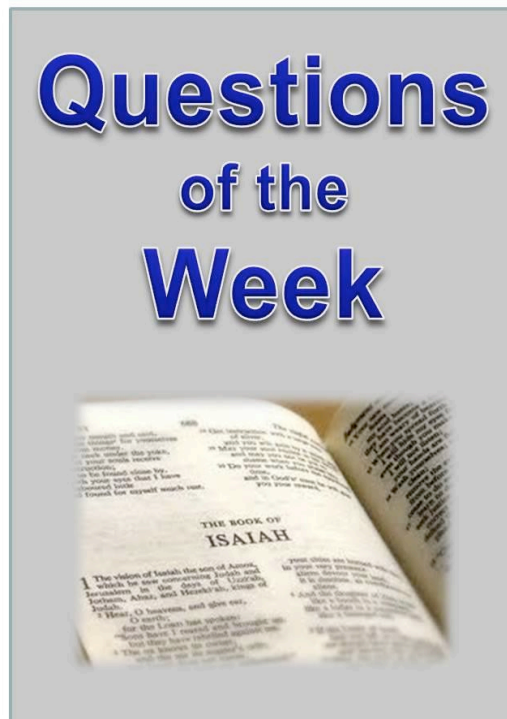
- when the staff gathers for its weekly meeting
- when the finance committee gets together on Tuesday night
- before every session of religious education during the week
- when the money counters do their work on Monday morning
- when the classes meet in school
- when families are driving home, having supper, or finding a few moments to talk.

Everyone who gathers in the parish shares faith flowing from the previous Sunday’s liturgy.

A handy form:

In the form below, cut and paste the dates and questions of the week into the form (get these from the Pastoral Center link above), photocopy or post the completed form to your web site, and use throughout the week. We recommend that you print this form on blue paper each week (because blue is rarely used for other documents). Make it a rule of parish life that “Nothing begins without the blue sheet.”

After a while, begin sending these weekly reflections home after Sunday Mass. When people have listened to the Liturgy of the Word at Mass, they often forget the readings rather quickly. But if you hand them this “blue sheet” on their way out the door, inviting them to take it home and share faith there, many will. It does not work very well merely to print the Question of the Week in the parish bulletin. It gets misplaced or discarded easily. It does not cost very much to offer the “blue sheet” to folks as they depart and it is the single most effective way to encourage them to take the Gospel home with them.



# Sharing Faith Together

## The Question of the Week Breaking Open the Word

Week of \_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
# \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday in \_\_\_\_\_ (Season of the year)

### 1. The Call to Prayer

**Leader:** My friends, let's pause to spend a few moments in prayer and conversation with each other. [Lead all in the Sign of the Cross] + In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### 2. The Word of God

**Leader:** May the Lord be in our hearts as we recall and re-listen to a reading from last Sunday's Liturgy of the Word.

[Re-read all or part of the one of the readings from the Sunday liturgy.]

### 3. The Two Faith Sharing Questions

**Leader:** As we consider this Sacred Scripture, I invite you to think about it in two dimensions. [You may wish to work in small groups if your number is large.]

- ☐ First, ask about the text itself, to draw attention to the Scripture.
  - What word or phrase in this text caught your ear?
  - What story did you hear, or what image did you get?
  - What touched you as you heard this reading?
- ☐ Second, when the first sharing is complete, ask about the people's lives.
  - Use this "Question of the Week" to help people get started sharing faith:
  - Here insert a Question specific to this week's readings

### 4. The Prayer. At the end of the sharing period, invite folks to pray in one of the following ways:

- ♦ The Lord's Prayer out loud together
- ♦ Spontaneous prayers
- ♦ A moment of silent prayer
- ♦ Listen to a recorded hymn

# Scripture Services for Vocation

## *FAMILY PRAYER SERVICE*

**Theme:** Many holy and courageous men and women established the Church in the United States and handed on a lively and dynamic faith to contemporary America. Now it is the task of today's Catholics to answer the call to pass on our faith to tomorrow's Church.

**Story:** Read or tell the story of a priest or religious who made a contribution to the building of the Church in America.

RESOURCE MATERIAL: Diocesan Office of Faith Formation

Suggested subjects thereof: Elizabeth Ann Seton, John Carroll, Junipero Serra, James Augustan Healy, James Cardinal Gibbons, Thomas Merton.

**Discussion:**

1. What contribution did this person make?
2. How has it affected our lives?
3. Why did this person decide to make the contribution he so she did?
4. What contributions can priest or religious make to the Church today?

**Story:** Read or tell the story of talents (Matthew 25:14-23). Parents should explain the necessity for each person to use his or her abilities for the building up of the Church. Some have particular talents needed in the priesthood or religious life.

Petitions: Response: "Lord, let us pass on your love.

1. For the universal Church, that the faith of its members becomes known to all through service to their fellow men. Let us pray...

2. For the Holy Father, the Bishops, and all Church leaders, that their lives of commitment may inspire others to become leaders in the Church. Let us pray...
3. For the Church in the United States, that we may grow ever richer in faith through the dedication of priests, religious, and laity to the Gospel. Let us pray...
4. For our own parish, our pastor, priests, religious men and women, and all our people, that we may grow together in faith and encourage each other to lives of service in the Church. Let us pray...
5. For ourselves, that we may recognize and answer God's call to whatever He asks us to do in the Church. Let us pray...

LET US PRAY (Father or Mother): Lord, fill our family and your Church with the light of Your spirit. Help us to become more perfect followers of the Gospel. Inspire our young men and women to service, and help us all to give more generously of our talents to the building up of the community of faith, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Song: (Optional)

# Vocation Prayer Service

## *MATRIMONY*

Gn 2:15-24  
Mt. 19:3-9  
1 Cor. 7:1-7  
Sir. 26:13-18

Proverbs. 31:10-14  
31:15-23  
31:24-31

### Introduction:

God our Father speaks to us through His living Word.

In this Scripture reading He teaches us about matrimony. Let us be attentive as He tells us that He formulated the law of matrimony in the Garden of Eden, He reaffirmed it through His Divine Son, and through St. Paul He gives advice to the married. In preparation for our reading let us recite Proverbs 31, Verses 10-14.

### 1st Reading:

The Word of God as recorded in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 2, Verses 15-24. In this reading God is telling us that He instituted matrimony in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve became "two in one flesh".

In grateful response to the Word we have received, let us recite Proverbs 31, Verses 15-23.

### 2nd Reading:

The Word of God as recorded in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter 19, Verses 3-9. In this reading God is telling us that Christ, His Son, reaffirmed the sacredness of the matrimonial bond.

### 3rd Reading:

The Word of God as recorded in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 7, Verses 1-7. In this reading God, through St. Paul, gives advice to the married.

In grateful response to the Word we have received, let us recite Sirach 26, Verses 13-18.



Conclusion:

Let us express our deep thanks to God for the sacrament of matrimony by reciting this prayer:

*Almighty and everlasting God, by Your power you created Adam and Eve, our first parents, and joined them in a holy union; sanctify, we pray, the hearts and bodies of those who are married, and unite them, by the grace of the sacrament of matrimony, in love and loyal affection. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen*

# Vocation Prayer Service

## *GOD'S CALL*

Leader: God chose us first. This is the simple and profound truth which must be the foundation of all our efforts to come to a decision about the role we are to play in the unfolding process of God's plan of salvation. From all eternity God has called us forth to be his chosen, faithful, holy people. It is this choice of his which fills us with the power to carry out his will in our regard.

Our choice, then, of a state of life, or of the means whereby we may open ourselves more fully to his grace in our present state, is in reality a response to the choice that Christ makes of us. We seek a life of greater holiness and service in the Mystical Body, which is the Church. Let us, therefore, begin with an earnest prayer that we may know the way that the Lord has chosen for us.

All: *Lord, what will you have me do?*

Leader: You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.

All: Lord, what will you have me do?

Leader: Let us listen to Jeremiah the prophet who tells us how God chose him for his holy mission to the people of Israel.

Reader: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Leader: Just as God, our Lord called Jeremiah to be his prophet, he addresses a personal call in his Church to each one of us. Let us pray that God will be with us to direct our choice.

(Pause for personal prayer)

Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

Response: To these and all following petitions respond:

*I can do all things in him who strengthens me.*

Leader: I, the Lord your God, teach you what is for your good and lead you on the way you should go. (Response)

Leader: No one can come to me unless the Father who sends me draws him. (Response)

Leader: Many are called, but few are chosen. (Response)

Leader: To you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God. (Response)

Leader: Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (Response)

Leader: Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Response)

Leader: For you are a people sacred to the Lord, your God; He has chosen you for all nations on the face of the earth to be a people peculiarly His own. (Response)

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Leader: Let us listen to St. Paul's description of the loving plan of salvation which God has for men. The reading is from the letter to the Ephesians.

Reader: Ephesians 1:3-14.

Leader: Let us pray, thanking our Father who has been pleased to elect us, and begging him for the grace to decide and to choose what He has chosen. (Pause for personal prayer)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has chosen us before the foundation of the world!

Response: To these and all following petitions respond:  
*Blessed be our God and Father!*

Leader: He has chosen us to be holy and without blemish in union with His Son. (Response)

Leader: We were chosen in His Son who is the Head of the Church. We are one with His Son for we are members of His Body. (Response)

(Pause for reflection)

He has chosen some as apostles, some as prophets, some to one task, and others to another. He calls all of us to a work of ministry in the Body of His Son.

Response: To these and all the following petitions:  
*We will choose what He has chosen.*

Leader: He has chosen some to be bishops and priests in His Church.  
(Response)

Leader: He has chosen some to be husbands and wives, some to be monks and religious in His Church. (Response)

Leader: He has chosen some to study and some to work with their hands for the building of the Body of Christ. (Response)

Leader: But all these things are the work of one and the same Spirit, who allots to everyone according as He wills. (Response)

Leader: Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ who has called us to life in the Church! He has chosen us to be brothers in His Son. (response)

All: We will choose what He has chosen. We will live as His brothers in the Church.

Leader: God our Father has chosen us in His Son. But He has called Christ our Head, and all of us in Him, to a way of the Cross. Let us listen to St. Matthew as he tells us of Jesus' prayer of election.

Reader: Matthew 26:36-46.

## HOMILY

Leader: Let us pray to the Father, begging for the grace to drink the cup which He offers us.

(Pause for personal prayer)

With Christ our Brother we hear the call.  
To these and all the following petitions respond:  
*Father, Your will be done!*

Leader: Make us bold with the courage of Moses, the leader of Your holy people. (response)

Leader: Enlighten us with the wisdom of Samuel, ruler and judge over Israel. (response)

Leader: Give us the spirit of discernment and decision to that we may work in Your service with the authority of the great King David. (response)

Leader: Make us alive, as you did Isaiah the prophet, with a sense of Your Holy Presence. (response)

Leader: Give us, as you gave John the Baptist, a love for poverty and self-effacement in our labors for the spread of your Kingdom. (response)

Leader: Make us greathearted, like Paul, so that we may be all things to all men, in Christ Jesus. (response)

Leader: Shape us, transform us, even as you made the Virgin Mary the perfect instrument in Your hands. (response)

Leader: Let us pray, giving thanks to the Lord for having chosen us to a special role and vocation in His Church.

(Pause for personal prayer)

O God, our Lord, You have chosen us before the foundation of the world and blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Grant, we pray You, that having been made into new people by the mystery of our redemption, we may respond fully to the gift of our holy election and restore all people, all things and ourselves to You; through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen! Lord, what will You have me do?

Leader: You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.

All: Lord, what will You have me do?

# Vocation Prayer Service

## *CALL TO SERVE*

THEME: We gather to pray for the young men and women whom God is calling to serve our community as a religious or as a priest. We ask Our Father to send the Spirit to strengthen and enlighten young people that they may answer the call of the Father. Let us greet our celebrant in song as we call upon Our Father to help all of us choose that state in life in which we can best do His divine will.

*ENTRANCE SONG:* Choose an appropriate song

Celebrant: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
R. Amen

Celebrant: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: And also with you.

*OPENING PRAYER:*

Celebrant: Let us pray (silent reflection)

Father, we ask you to enlighten us with your Spirit, that we may know your will concerning us. Fill us with a sincere desire to do your will so we may say "yes" to what you ask of us. Father, we also ask you to inspire those around us that they too may accept your will. Lord, we come to you because you are the eternal truth; grant that we may all submit ourselves to you without question. We ask these things of you, most loving Father, in the name of Your Son and our Brother, in unity with Your Spirit.

People: Amen.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS:** (Before and after the response to the readings, everyone should pause briefly in silent reflection on the Word of God.)

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3: 1-10 Revelation to Samuel.

Response: "Out of the Depths I Cry to You, O Lord." (Ps. 129)

Second Reading: Philippians 3: 8-14 - The goal (Christ) to be attained in a race to be run. Or: Hebrews 5: 1-10 - "You are a priest forever."

Response: "My Shepherd Is the Lord" -- (Ps. 23) (recited or sung)

Gospel Acclamation: (sing) ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA

Gospel: Matthew 12:46-50 - Jesus and His Family.  
Or: John 15: 9 -17 - A Disciple's Love.

HOMILY: (Followed by reflection)

MEDITATION: "Prayer of Saint Francis" – (Prayed or Sung) (or other suitable song)

BLESSING: (Celebrant takes the Bible and blesses the people, saying:)

*Go now and spread the Word you have heard, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

People: Thanks be to God.

FINAL PROCLAMATION: Genesis 12: 1-4 - Abram's Call and Migration.  
(The final short reading from Scripture is read by someone other than those directly involved in the service. It is to be read standing off to one side.)

CLOSING SONG:



# Vocation Prayer Service

*I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME, YOU ARE MINE*  
(ELEMENTARY LEVEL)

Vocation means call. God calls each of us. God's call is personal, it comes in the daily events of life, it may cost us loneliness and sacrifices, but God our loving Father is always with us. If we respond there will be a change in our lives.

Opening Song:

Reader: Jeremiah 18:1-6

(God is not at a loss; if I don't turn out at first, He can make me into another vessel.)

All: Lord, I pray, mend, shape and fashion me into a vessel for your work.

Reader: The second reading is from the Gospel according to St. Luke.

"As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem they came to a village where a woman named Martha welcomed them into her home. Her sister Mary sat on the floor LISTENING to Jesus as He talked. But Martha was the jittery type and was worrying over the big dinner she was preparing.

She came to Jesus and said, "Sir, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." But the Lord said to her, "Martha, dear friend, you are so upset over all these details! There is really only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it - and I won't take it away from her."

All: Lord, I pray, help me to be still, to sit at your feet and listen to your Word.

Homily: (This time may be used for a homily or informal discussion.)

Leader: Let us pray to the Lord for all men and women who have listened to His word and stay ready to be formed by his hands.

For the peace and salvation of the world, that all priests and sisters may be messengers and servants of the peace of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Jesus, our brother, hear us.

Leader: For all who believe in Jesus, that they may listen with love to the quiet voice of God who calls all people to be holy, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Jesus, our brother, hear us.

Leader: For those who follow the call to religious life, that the law of love may shine out in them, and that like the first disciples of Jesus they may be one in heart and in mind, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Jesus, our brother, hear us.

Leader: For all priests, sisters, brothers, deacons, seminarians, married couples and single people, that each person may increase the holiness of the Church and spread the Kingdom of God, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Jesus, our brother, hear us.

Leader: For all Christians who have received the call to follow Jesus, that they may have the courage and perseverance to respond in openness and generosity, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Jesus, our brother, hear us.

Leader: For the needs of the Church everywhere, that missionaries and those in difficult ministries may have the strength to continue spreading the Good News to all parts of the world, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Jesus, our brother, hear us.

Jesus, Lord of the harvest, help us to respond generously to the voice of your Spirit Give to your Church priests, brothers, sisters, deacon, faithful single persons and married couples to draw people to God and God to people, to bring good news to the poor, to announce freedom to captives, and to obtain new sight for the blind. Amen.

Closing Song:

# Vocation Prayer Service

## SPEAK, LORD, I AM LISTENING (FOR HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE)

Participants may walk into chapel/room. The first person will carry the Christ candle. All other lights will be off. The Christ Candle is placed in front of the Tabernacle or in a prominent place.

Procession Song: "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" (or other suitable entrance song)

All: I am listening Lord, Here I am. Speak, Lord! I am the Light of the world. Let me hear you so that I may let my light shine for others to see.

(Each person goes to the altar to light his/her candle from the Christ Candle.)

Incense is a symbol of the sweet fragrance of Christ living within each of us. As we listen, we are also asked to spread His fragrance everywhere. The group is incensed with the thurible.

Reader: 2 Cor. 2:14-17

All: Blessed be God our Father. You filled an empty world with the presence of your Son. Blessed be Christ, Messiah. You filled us with your Love. Blessed be your Spirit, who penetrates the crevices and corners of our lives. We are yours - help us to reveal your presence to the world.

Reader: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Homily (optional)

Leader: Let us pray to the Father, asking for the grace to listen to the call within which he offers.

(pause for personal prayer)

With Christ our Brother we hear the call. Make us strong with the faith of our father Abraham. With him we answer:  
*Father, your will be done in us.*

All: Father, your will be done in us.

Leader: Make us bold with the courage of Moses, the leader of your holy people.

All: Father, your will be done in us.

Leader: Enlighten us with the wisdom of Samuel, ruler and judge over Israel.

All: Father, your will be done in us.

Leader: Give the spirit of discernment and decision so that we may work in your service with the authority of the great king David.

All: Father, your will be done in us.

Leader: Make us alive, as you did Isaiah the prophet, with a sense of your holy presence.

All: Father, your will be done in us.

Leader: Give us, as you gave to John the Baptist, love for poverty and selflessness in our labors for the spread of your kingdom.

All: Father, your will be done in us.

Leader: Shape us, transform us, even as you made the Virgin Mary the perfect instrument in your hands.

Leader: Let us pray,

All: O God our Lord, you have chosen us before the foundation of the world and blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Grant we pray, that having been made into new persons by the mystery of our redemption, we

may listen and respond fully to the gift of your love and restore all of your children, all creation to you; we ask this through Jesus, your Son.  
Amen.

Closing Song: "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" or other

# Vocation Prayer Service

## *THE GIFT OF VOCATION*

(FOR ADULTS)

Leader: Glory be to Him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory be to Him in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for all time, forever and ever! R. Amen

Reader: To be born is to receive a gift. To be born is to be given a promise. Christianity believes that the life-giving God whom we worship is a gift-giving God whose gift is life. Human life has its origins in Life itself. And life allows life to happen as a gift. All of a sudden, one is born, alive; he is; and although he did not request or expect life, everything in him craves life, clings to life, fights for life, keeps life. It is as though there is a universal awareness, at least in the beginning, that to be born is to be gifted and that gift of birth must be preserved.

"Dawn Without Darkness"  
Anthony Padovano

(Silent Reflection)

All: You are the chosen race, the King's priest, the holy nation, God's own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called you from darkness into his own marvelous light. Glory be to the Father, ...

1. I sing of your light, O Lord, and my hands ache to clap for you.
2. A cry breaks from me, praise wells up to my lips; and before me whose being glows the smile of your tenderness, like fire leaping upward and sparks cracking all about.
3. And here is my entire life--voicing its joy at dawn. And now the cry of my joy rises to my lips and overflows like torrents.
4. I bless you, Lord, for you, the Inaccessible are here in our very midst.
5. And you, the ungraspable, reach out your heart to us. You are my God and my song, and my whole world is bursting with you.

Reader: Ephesians 1:3-10

(Silent Reflection)

All: Lord, I will always sing of your constant love; at all times I will proclaim your faithfulness.

1. I know that your love will last forever, that your faithfulness is as permanent as the sky.
2. Happy are the people who worship you with songs, who live in the light of your kindness.

All: Glory be to the Father....

Reader:

The moment of call is dramatic, subtle, brief, and as simple as when Jesus passed and John stared hard at him and said, "Look, there is the Lamb of God. Hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus." They followed Jesus and he knew that they were following; he did not have to hear their footsteps. He turned around to them and asked the beautiful question, the beautiful question, 'Aha'!"

Touching the deepest core of their hearts, the ripple of his passing by drew them after him and they could only utter the simple question, "Where do you live?" He did not ask them, "Why do you ask?" "Come," he gently replied, "Come and see." So they went and saw and stayed with him the rest of their lives! Jesus answered their question with an imperative, a call. When Jesus calls it is not with words. As with the rich young man of Mark's Gospel, "Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him." Having experienced this loving glance of Jesus one is no longer free to be otherwise than his.

"Disciples and Other Strangers"  
Edward Farrell, SJ

Leader: Let us pray, thanking our Father who has been pleased to bless us, and begging him for the grace to be open to his gifts of love to us.

Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has chosen us before the foundation of the world!

All: Blessed be our God and Father!

Leader: He has chosen us to be holy and without blemish in union with his Son.

All: Blessed be our God and Father!

Leader: We were chosen in his Son who is the Head of the Church. We are one with his Son for we are members of his Body.

All: Blessed be our God and Father!

All: Our Father, we thank you for the gift of creation and the love you have shown us in its richness. We thank you for the gift of life and the more abundant life you call forth in us. We thank you for sharing with us the fullness of your love in Jesus Christ, your Son, and for calling us to share in his mission of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, healing the sick and lonely, working to bring justice, peace, and love to all - and in doing all of this, showing us your great love and how we should love each other.

Father, touch the hearts and minds of many young men and women today, that they may give themselves in generous service to your Son, Jesus Christ, as dedicated and holy priests, deacons, brothers, and sisters. We ask this through Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Closing Hymn:



# Vocation Prayer Service – #1

**Opening Hymn:** Spirit of the Living God (or other suitable hymn to the Holy Spirit)

**Opening Prayer:**

Lord, with the gift of courage we can do all manner of things in service of you. You desire we listen to the voice of your Son and so discover the truth about you. He is the gate that you have opened that we may enter in and out and be saved. Help young men and women discover in priesthood and consecrated life His voice and share the fullness of life you promise. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

**Scripture Reading:** John 10:6-10

**Reflection:**

We all know that the voice of truth is often unheard. At best it is treated as naivety and foolish-ness. Yet it is the gentle voice of truth that penetrates the heart and reaches the soul.

There's an unusual story of an old man who ran through the streets of a city crying out "Power, greed and corruption. Power, greed and corruption" and for a time people were riveted on this single-minded, open-hearted person. But then eventually everyone went back to work, some only slightly hearing his suggestion, others clearly were annoyed. However, his cries in the street continued. One day a child stepped in front of the wailing figure. "Elder," said the child, "don't you realize that no one is listening to you?" "Of course I do, my child," the Elder said. "Then why do you shout?" the child inquired as if in disbelief. "If nothing is changing around you, your efforts are useless". "Ah, dear child, these efforts are never useless," the Elder said. "You see, I do not shout only in order to change the people, I shout so that they cannot change me."

**QUIET PRAYER.** (suitable reflective music may be included here)

**A Decade of the Rosary** from the Mysteries of Light would be suitable here

Gateway to the Father, You desired that all be saved and pass through You into the fullness of life with the Father. Thank you for so great a gift. Though in weakness I do not fully realize the future You have planned, speak again to my heart and mind that in listening to You I may follow wherever You may call me. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Gate to the Father. Amen.

PAUSE

Gateway to the Father, no one can be like the thief or robber and steal from You, Your originality. Therefore help us to offer You as a real model for our young people. Help us show our young children Your uniqueness and so teach them to learn of their own uniqueness. May our teenagers discover joy in finding You, the new gateway to life and love with the Father. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Gate to the Father. Amen

PAUSE

Gateway to the Father, guide those called to family life or lives as priests and religious to share your life with us. May their lives and actions reveal Your face to our communities and youth. Give them courage in the message they bear to us about You. Help them not to be afraid but be authentic witnesses of hope, and come to recognize more and more how strong is the attraction in young people to the values of the Spirit. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Gate to the Father. Amen

**Prayers of the Faithful:**      Response: *Hear our prayer.*

**Celebrant:**      God of Truth, Your Son is our Gateway to you. You have opened our ears to hear your call through Jesus your Son. Listen now to the prayers of your people gathered here in your name: (Pause) We pray:

1.      We remember our Pope, our bishops, and all who share in the leadership ministry of the Church: May Pope (N), (N), our Bishop, and all the Bishops of the world, continue to serve our Church with courage. May they speak the truth and so inflame the hearts of men and women to more readily welcome Christ's demanding message, stamped as it is with the mystery of the Cross. (Pause) We pray:

2. We remember those who lead the nations of the world: May they never be disturbed by falseness or mislead by untruth. May they work to avoid all who come only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. Instead let them put out into the deep in order to find unity, peace and service of each other and build a world that values 'life in all its fullness'. (Pause) We pray:

3. We remember those who are parents and teachers:  
May these who are entrusted by God to guide young people on the path to holiness be an example of generous fidelity to Christ. We pray they help our young to discern their path and to become true friends of Christ  
(Pause) We pray:

4. We remember those women and men who are, at present, serving You as priests and religious: may they witness to Christ, our gateway to the Father, helping us, the people of God, to come in and go out and find pasture. May our priests be true gatekeepers, filled with joy and salvation, eager to share their treasure with us all.  
(Pause) We pray:

5. We remember those who are currently searching for their vocation in life: may they listen to the voice of the Father speaking in Jesus today. May Mary the Mother of God who said, "Do whatever he tells you", inspire them to trust their future to Him with confidence and without hesitation. (Pause)  
We pray:

6. We remember those whom You are inviting to the vocations of family life, of Consecrated life and ordained ministry: fill them with the Holy Spirit and give them fortitude and prudence, so that they may be able to discover the full truth about themselves and their own vocation. (Pause) We pray:

7. We remember those who have died (..... names):  
may they rest in peace entering through the new gateway of the Father.  
(Pause) We pray:

8. We pause to remember our own special needs : (Pause) We pray:

**Celebrant:** Father, we ask that You will hear all our prayers: those we have spoken, and those deep in our hearts. We pray You will carry every prayer of this community to the Father, who calls every baptized Christian to listen to Your voice and so enter into peace.

**All:** Amen.

**ALL: Our Father....**

**Final Prayer:**

Jesus our Savior, sent by the Father to reveal His merciful love, give to Your Church the gift of young people who are ready to put out into the deep, to be signs among their brothers and sisters of Your presence which renews and saves. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

**Final Hymn:** (a suitable hymn)

# Vocations Prayer Service - #2

Don Bosco Vocation Office  
315 Self Place,  
South Orange, NJ - 07079

**Gathering Song:**        *Open My Eyes* (or other suitable hymn)

1. Open my eyes, Lord. Help me to see your face.  
   Open my eyes, Lord. Help me to see.
2. Open my ears, Lord. Help me to hear your voice.  
   Open my ears, Lord. Help me to hear.
3. Open my heart, Lord. Help me to love like you.  
   Open my heart, Lord. Help me to love.
4. I live within you; deep in your heart, O Love.  
   I live within you. Rest now in me.

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** O God, teach us to cherish the gifts that surround us. Increase our faith in You and bring our trust to its promised fulfillment in the joy of Your kingdom. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

**All:**        Amen.

**Reading:** Luke 19:1-10

At that time, Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall Give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

The Word of the Lord.

**All:**        Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Response:** All join in singing an appropriate response.

## **Silent Reflection**

### **The Lord's Prayer (adaptation)**

**Leader:** Our God who is in Heaven and in all of us here on earth;  
**All:** the hungry, the oppressed, the excluded, holy is your name

**Leader:** May Your reign come and your will be done;  
**All:** in our choice to struggle with the complexities of this world  
and to confront greed and the desire for power in ourselves, in  
our nation and in the global community.

**Leader:** Give us this day our daily bread;  
**All:** bread that we are called to share, bread that you have given  
us abundantly and that we must distribute fairly, ensuring  
security for all.

**Leader:** Forgive us our trespasses;  
**All:** times we have turned away from the struggles of other people  
and countries, times we have thought only of our own security.

**Leader:** Lead us not into temptation;  
**All:** the temptation to close our minds, ears, and eyes to the unfair  
global systems that create larger and larger gaps between the  
rich and the poor; the temptation to think it is too difficult to  
bring about more just alternatives.

**Leader:** Deliver us from all evil;  
**All:** the evil of a world where violence happens in Your name.  
Where wealth for a few is more important than economic rights  
for all, where gates and barriers between people are so hard to  
bring down.

**Leader:** May your reign come, for Yours is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory forever and ever.  
**All:** Amen.

## **Closing Blessing:**

The left half of the room and the right side of the room, turn and face each other, extend an arm in blessing, and together bless one another, saying:

*To the extent that you have been hungry,*

*Bring to today God's hunger for justice.*

*To the extent that you have been thirsty,*

*Bring to today God's thirst to comfort the afflicted  
and make a home for the alienated.*

*To the extent that you have known love,*

*Bring to today the Love that infuses and fortifies your  
hunger and thirst.*

*Bring to today the Creator's vision, the dreams of Jesus and the  
Spirit of Christ to build the reign of God on Earth. Amen.*

**Song:** *We Are Called* (or other suitable hymn)

Come! Live in the light!

Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord

We are called to be light for the kingdom,

To live in the freedom of the city of God!

*Chorus:*

*We are called to act with justice,*

*We are called to love tenderly,*

*We are called to serve one another,*

*To walk humbly with God.*

Come! Open your heart!

Show your mercy to all those in fear

We are called to be hope for the hopeless

So all hatred and blindness will be no more! (*Chorus*)

Sing! Sing a new song!

Sing of that great day when all will be one!

God will reign, and we'll walk with each other

As sisters and brothers – united in love! (*Chorus*)

# Vocation Prayer Service - #3

(Before the service place a few articles like a spoon, a strip of band aid, a straw, a pepper and salt shaker, a mirror, a pen, a napkin etc. on the table at the front)

**Opening Song** - (Choose an appropriate hymn)

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** We gather together to pray for grace to understand and discern God's will in our lives.

**L:** That we may find joy in sacrificing personal gain for the service of others in a Church vocation.

**R:** That we who wish to follow Christ may respond generously to God's grace and enter into His service as priests and religious.

**All:** And that our hearts may be open to follow the Good News, to walk not in fear but in total trust of the Lord. Amen.

## Reading 1: The Hog and the Hen

A Hog and a Hen sharing the barnyard heard about a church's program to feed the hungry so they sat down and discussed how they could help. The hen said. I've got it...we'll provide bacon and eggs for the church to feed the hungry. The hog thought about the suggestion and said... there's only one thing wrong with your bacon and eggs idea. For you, it only requires a contribution, but from me, it will mean total commitment!

**Reflective Song:** *Open My Eyes Lord* (or other suitable hymn)

1. Open my eyes Lord, Help me to see your face.  
Open my eyes Lord, help me to see.
2. Open my ears Lord, Help me to hear your voice.  
Open my ears Lord, help me to hear.
3. Open my heart Lord, help me to love like you.  
Open my heart Lord, help me love.



## **Gospel Reading: Luke 14:25-33**

A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to Luke

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, "If anyone comes to Me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers should laugh at him and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.' Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king, advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

### **Shared Reflection:**

- What item on the table, can symbolize where you are at, at this moment in being a disciple of God?
- What area or issue of commitment do you feel personally you can make or are making in being a disciple of Jesus?
- Take a few moments to think and reflect on this and the readings, then we invite you to take the item off the table and share with the group why you picked and what you were thinking.

**Petitions:** Response: *Lord, hear us!*

For all young men and women who are making lifetime choices at this time, that they will include service to the People of God as a priest, brother or Consecrated Religious among their other options, we pray to the LORD...

Please add any other intentions you wish to pray for....

**Lord's Prayer**

**Closing Song** (Choose an appropriate hymn)

# Vocation Prayer Service - Crucifix

Preparation:

- ❖ Have the children make simple, individual crosses from palm leaves, ice-cream sticks or twigs bound together with yarn.
- ❖ Prepare a prayer table or mat.
- ❖ Invite the children to bring their crosses and gather around the prayer table.

**Meditation:**

**Leader:**

- Today we are going to talk with Jesus about the meaning of the cross.
- Sit tall and straight with your legs crossed.
- Place your cross on the floor in front of you.
- Rest your hands loosely in your lap.
- Close your eyes and tell your body to relax
- Breathe deeply and slowly in and out...in and out...in and out.
- Let all the stillness go out of you.
- Feel comfortable and relaxed.

**Ponder a while:**

Place your cross on the floor in front of you. Now look carefully at the crucifix on the table/mat.

When we see a crucifix, we remember how Jesus suffered on the cross, how he suffered because he wanted to save us from sin and make it possible for us to enter heaven.

Now close your eyes and picture Jesus sitting beside you as your friend who is waiting for you. See him dressed in a long white garment. Listen to him as He tells you that He loves you. He wants you to be happy to follow him. Hear Jesus tell you that the journey of life can sometimes be very difficult but you can grow and become strong during these difficult times. Right now Jesus reminds you how he is always close to you to help you through the trials and disappointments of life.

Hear him talking to you that He needs help to save souls, that he needs you and me to serve Him, that He needs you and me to be His body, His hands and his feet. Listen carefully to His voice whispering to you, "Are you ready to be mine?"

Remember that Jesus suffered and died for us to free us from sin and make it possible for us to go to heaven. Now, it is your turn to lend a helping hand to my brother/sister who is still on the crossroads of their lives. Are you ready to follow Him?

Conclude With:

Thank Jesus for dying on the cross for us and for being our close friend.

# Vocation Prayer Service – The Cup of Life

*“Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply.”*

Henri J. M. Nouwen

## **Introduction:**

### **Leader:**

Today I invite each of you to reflect on your relationship with God, to celebrate the beauty of this presence within you, to be grateful for the marvelous life flowing through your spirit. Be attentive to the One who dwells within you.

Each of us is a temple of the Holy One. Each of us carries a spiritual power in us that can cause even the tiniest of faith-seeds to grow. It is vital that we protect and nurture this relationship so that it thrives. The cup of our spiritual life must be cared for and replenished as it pours its contents away in loving service.

## **Breathprayer**

Breathing in: .....“I am....

Breathing out: .....a child of God”

## **Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-7**

I have called you by name, You are mine..... You are precious in my sight, and honored and I love you.....

## **Reflection:**

Hold the cup in your hands; notice its style, shape, color, and size. Be conscious of yourself as a cup held in God’s hands. Accept your uniqueness and your goodness. Thank God for creating you as you are.

## **PAUSE: \*(silence)**

### **Leader:**

*The more you become aware of God’s Presence in your life, the more you will thirst to know that Sacred One at an even deeper and deeper level. Like the cup that has more and more space to be filled, so you will feel that your capacity to be united with God keeps expanding. The more you know how loved you are by God, the more you will thirst for Him alone. When you think of new Life, you think of a life with God that is healthy and vibrant.*

*The root and foundation of this life is relationship, a bond that is deep and strong. This relationship will feed and nourish your inner self.*

**After two or three minutes of quiet prayer, the Leader prays:**

**Prayer:**

I turn to you, Divine Creator, and I thank you for the person I am. I am a cup of life. I have love and goodness within me. Help me to hear your voice in my soul today and to smile in gratitude when I think of my own uniqueness. Help me to know and believe that I am yours. Your gift of love enables me to commit myself to the unending process of spiritual transformation. May I always remain in your love and be able to give you to others. This prayer I make through Christ our Lord. Amen!

# Vocation Prayer Service - #4

**In the name of the Father.....**

## **Opening Prayer:**

(Soft Instrumental music in the background)

Lord Jesus, you have said, “the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few”, so we earnestly pray you, Lord of the harvest, to send more laborers into your vineyard. Inspire the hearts of young women and men to hearken to your loving invitation, “Come follow me”. (Pause)

## **Leader:**

As Christians, we have been called in a special way to labor with our brother Jesus Christ to build the kingdom of God by proclaiming the Good News, by sharing God’s unconditional love with others, and by working for justice wherever injustice is found.

We pray that the Holy Spirit enlighten our minds and hearts, that we may remember, with great gratitude, the graces that have stirred our hearts to service and recall those people in our lives who have inspired and continue to inspire us to carry on God’s great work.

## **Reader: A reading from the Acts of the Apostles Acts 3:1-10**

“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple area for the three o’clock hour of prayer. And a man crippled from birth was carried and placed at the gate of the temple called, ‘the Beautiful Gate’, every day to beg for alms from the people who entered the temple.

When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. But Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” He paid attention to them, expecting to receive something from them. Peter said, “I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, (rise and) walk.”

Then Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong. He leaped up, stood, and walked around, and went into the temple with them, walking and jumping and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the one who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple,

and they were filled with amazement and astonishment at what had happened to him. The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Leader:**

Let us take a moment to recall with amazement and astonishment the work that God has done and continues to do in our lives. Allow God to inspire us with His Word.

**Pause (Silence)**

**Leader:**

“I have neither silver nor gold but what I do have I give you, in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk.”

The beggar heard these words, loud and clear. Waking him up from his deep slumber of sickness. He was in a receptive state of mind and those words struck hard, like arrows they pierced his heart. He went home rejuvenated, filled with energy, jumping with joy to praise Him.

**Pause: (Silence)**

**Leader:**

Sometimes even a few words uttered by ordinary people can fall on the right soil of the heart and become a great inspiration and cause great transformation in a person. It touches the inner being unknowingly and generates a fountain of miracles.

We all have been entrusted with the responsibility of inspiring others, in cooperation with God’s grace, to embrace lives of Christian service and in a special way to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Let us reflect silently for a while praying intensely to inspire the hearts of young girls and boys to follow Christ.

Let us call to mind those times when we have not been sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit in helping to promote and encourage vocations. Let us pray for the grace to be open and generous and to seek new ways to encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

**Pause**

## **Our Father**

### **Concluding Prayer:**

God our Father, though we are sinners, you have called us to be his disciples and to engage in the crucial struggle of our time, the struggle for faith, justice and love.

Bring to completion the work you began through Your Son Jesus and so many of his followers. Set aflame the hearts of others to join us in our mission, especially the hearts of women and men. May we always encourage the People of God to listen to the promptings of the Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



# Vocation Prayer Service for Discerning Vocation

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**Leader:** Jesus promised that whenever we gather in his name, He is in our midst. With this in mind, we begin with the Sign of the Cross

**All:** In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Leader:** We gather to learn about discernment as it relates to discovering our vocation. We know that there many ways to serve God and that God has a plan for each one of us. By opening our minds and our hearts, we can hear and heed His call. Let us listen to how Matthew describes the call of the disciples.

**Reader:** Matthew 4: 18 – 22

**Reflection:** In this reading Jesus call fisherman. He tells them He will make them fishers of men. He is telling them that they are being called to go above and beyond the normal. They were chosen from among the ordinary to be extra-ordinary.

## *Questions for Discussion:*

How do you think God calls us today?

How do you need to prepare yourself to listen for God's call?

## *Personal Reflection:*

Did you know...that a fish was used as an early symbol of Christianity, especially during the time of Christian persecution? When a Christian met a stranger in the road, the Christian sometimes drew one arc of the simple fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good company. Current bumper stickers and business cards use the fish to hearken back to this practice. The symbol is still used today to show that the bearer is a practicing Christian.

(Distribute cutouts of a fish). On this fish, write about a time when you felt God was sending you a message. When you are finished, fold it up and put it in your pocket or shoe to remind yourself of your role as a disciple of Jesus.

**Prayers of Petition:** Our response is: *“Lord, hear our prayer.”*

**Leader:** For open hearts and minds so that we can hear what God is calling us to. We pray to the Lord.

**All:** Lord, Hear Our Prayer

**Leader:** For greater discernment so that we can distinguish worldly calls from God’s call. We pray to the Lord.

**All:** Lord, Hear Our Prayer

**Leader:** For courage to follow God’s call when we hear it. We pray to the Lord.

**All:** Lord, Hear Our Prayer

**Leader:** St. Alphonsus Marie Liguori, Patron Saint of Vocations

**All:** Pray for Us

**Closing Prayer:** Together

God, I know You love me and have great plans for me. Sometimes I am scared about making a decision about my future. Be with me and guide me so that I may understand your plan as it is revealed to me.

Grant me patience while I discover all that You have in store for me. Help me to learn about my choices and to seek advice from those you have placed in my life so that I can open my heart to how I can best love and serve You. Amen.

# VOCATION SCRIPTURE PRAYER SERVICE

*(Edited from some notes of Fr. Jerry Drinane, s.j.)*

## **Introductory Hymn and Prayer.**

### **Short Input**

We have gathered to day to pray for an urgent need in the Church, namely for Priestly and Religious Vocations, namely, for more Priests, Sisters and Brothers. God works through us, ordinary people, whom He calls to serve Him, like instruments, to give the world the message of salvation and His life-giving sacraments.

Today, more than in the past, much good is not done, because of the lack of priests, sisters and brothers solely dedicated to spread the good news and to build up the Kingdom of God on earth.

Remembering the words of Jesus, "The harvest is great, but the Laborers are few", we shall "pray the Lord of the harvest, to send laborers into His harvest field".

### **First Reading:**

*Introduction to the reading.*

Abraham, the father of all who believe in one God, is a model of faith for all. He did not hesitate to leave his family and his country to carry the will of God. He did not hesitate to offer his only son, Isaac, at God's command. He became the figure of Christ, who in order to do His Father's will and save us, died on the cross for all.

Let us listen to the account of Abraham's vocation.

***(Reading: Genesis 12:1-9.)***

### **Prayer in silence:**

We have been reminded of Abraham's great faith. Now let us pray in silence, and ask our Lord Jesus to give us a faith and a generosity like the ones of Abraham. *(Allow time for silent prayer)*

### **Common Prayer: Invocations.**

*Pause for a few seconds after each invocation, before the participants give their response.*

Father in Heaven, increase our faith, so that like Abraham, we may have the courage to listen to You, and give You a generous and an unconditional response.

Response: *O Lord, increase our faith.*

- Heavenly Father, that we may gladly and joyously do your holy will, every moment of our lives, we pray,

*O Lord, increase our faith.*

- Heavenly Father, that all men and women - young and old - may choose their vocation in life in keeping with Your will, we pray,

*O Lord, increase our faith.*

- That many of us present here, may feel called to the priestly and religious life, we pray,

*O Lord, increase our faith.*

- That all priests, sisters and religious brothers may be examples of a holy and Christ-like life, we pray,

*O Lord, increase our faith.*

- That all married people may follow the example of the Holy Family and offer their sons and daughters to build Your kingdom on earth, we pray,

*O Lord, increase our faith.*

**Let us pray:** O God, you who chose Abraham, and made him an example of faith and generosity, give us the grace to follow you with perfect faith and be generous enough to stake our entire lives in carrying out your holy will. Through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

### **Second Reading:**

*Introduction to the reading.*

To continue His work of building God's Kingdom earth, Jesus called simple people like fishermen and craftsmen. Let us listen to the account of the call of the first Apostles.

**(Reading: Matthew 4:18-23.)**

### **Prayer in Silence.**

Let us pray alone and in silence, to Our Lord Jesus, that we may respond quickly and lovingly to His call as the First Disciples did. *(Time for silent prayer)*

### **Common Prayer: Invocations.**

*Pause for a few seconds after each invocation, before the participants give their response: "O Lord, increase our faith."*

- We ask, you, Lord Jesus, present among us, to give to our world in today's difficult times, faithful devoted Priests, Sisters and Brothers to carry on your work of salvation among all countries and peoples, we pray,

*O Lord, increase our faith.*

- That He may choose many of us present here, to be His faithful disciples and apostles – Priests, sisters and Brothers, we pray,

*O Lord, increase our faith.*

- That our Bishops, Priests, and Religious be faithful to their vocation until the end of their lives, we pray,

*O Lord, increase our faith.*

***(You may add any petitions of your own.)***

**Let us pray:**

Jesus, you chose Disciples, and sent them out into the wide world to proclaim the Good News of your Father's love and of His salvation for all. Ever since, You continued to call numerous persons to proclaim Your Gospel of love everywhere.

Lord, inspire many generous men and women to listen to Your invitation, that, with courage and zeal, they may continue Your work of loving salvation as priests, sisters, brothers and lay apostles.

May they, by a life of selfless service and dedication, lead all peoples on earth to the fullness of truth, justice and love.

Amen.

**Conclude with Benediction** (when possible)

# Eucharistic Holy Hour

*(All kneel as the celebrant incenses the Blessed Sacrament)*

## **PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS** *(BY POPE JOHN PAUL II):*

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, bless all our parishes with numerous priests, deacons, men and women in religious life, consecrated laity and missionaries, according to the needs of the entire world, which You love and wish to save. Assist our pastors and all who live a consecrated life. Guide the steps of those who have responded generously to Your call and are preparing to receive Holy Orders or to profess vows. Look with love on young people and call them to follow You. Help them to understand that in You alone can they attain complete fulfillment. To this end we call on the powerful intercession of Mary, mother and model of all vocations. We beseech you to sustain our faith that the Father will grant what you command us to ask. Amen.

## **READINGS & REFLECTION**

### **SILENT REFLECTION & PRAYER**

*This holy hour of Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations is a time for us to come together in front of Jesus truly present in the Eucharist to ask Him to bless His Church with many holy vocations. We join together in prayer at this time with our diocesan patron, Our Blessed Mother, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, asking her to intercede for us. We pray in a special way for more vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life and that those the Lord is calling will have the courage to respond, especially among our families and friends.*

### **ROSARY FOR VOCATIONS:**

*If you wish to pray the rosary in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we recommend using the **Luminous Mysteries** and to reflect on them as "**Mysteries of Vocation**," imploring the Immaculate Heart of Mary for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated religious life within the Church.*

(1) As St. John the Baptist **Baptizes the Lord**, the presence of the Father, who is well pleased, and the power of the Holy Spirit who compels Jesus into His mission, all hold veins of truth for meditating on vocation. This mystery reinforces the essential significance of the mission of every Christian as his most personal of all gifts. Hearts closed to the call of the

Lord will not know their mission, nor will they reach their fulfillment as persons made in God's image. Vocation, mission and personhood are inseparably linked in the image of Christ sent by the Father.

(2) The ***Mystery of the Wedding Feast at Cana*** draws our attention to the need for obedience to the voice of God. Once His call is heard action is required. Our Blessed Mother clearly says to "Do whatever He tells you."

(3) Faithful obedience to the Lord's call establishes the Christian firmly in union with Jesus in the ***Proclamation of the Kingdom***. This mystery can be prayed with the desire for the knowledge of the charism through which the person is to fall in love with Christ and for the apostolate in which one is to serve.

(4) The ***Mystery of the Transfiguration*** increases our confidence in the reality of Christ, who is calling many to a vocation of priesthood or the consecrated religious life. He is divine, He is glorified, He is triumphant and trust runs deeply through the soul of anyone who may hesitate in fear at the knowledge of their vocation. Jesus comes and touches Peter, James and John after the glorious vision and says, "Do not be afraid". It is Jesus Who calls. He strengthens that call. He challenges us in the call. He sustains us with love through the call.

(5) Jesus promises to be with us always and remains divinely present in the soul of every baptized person. He calls us as persons, body and soul, to be given as gift to another. That is love, to be totally given to another. In the ***Mystery of the Eucharist***, Jesus is both Giver and Gift. He is for us a boundless well from which to drink in the truth of His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. He gives the example of humble service and selfless gift. Through the Eucharist He quickens and perfects our own attraction to love others as He loves us.

### **INTERCESSORY PRAYERS:**

Lord Jesus Christ, model of all perfection, You not only unceasingly urge souls to strive toward this lofty goal, but also move them by the power of Your grace to follow You in this exalted path. Grant that many may hear and willingly obey Your loving inspiration and embrace their vocation to priesthood or consecrated religious life.

Grant that there may never be lacking devoted men to take Your place at the altar proclaiming Your Gospel and offering Your Body and Blood for the salvation of the world.

Our Response:

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Grant that there may never be lacking, devoted servants of Your own to take Your place day and night at the side of the orphan, at the bed of the sick, near the old and infirmed. We pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Grant that in classrooms and universities the voice of those who teach may be the echo of Your own, pointing out the way to heaven and the duties incumbent on each and all. We pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Grant that no land, however distant or inhospitable, may be deprived of the Gospel message that invites all people to enter Your kingdom. We pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Grant that in every part of the world those called to a life of contemplation and penance may offer reparation for the sins of their lives and the heroism of their virtue, may make ever present on earth that perfect model of life which You came to reveal to us. We pray to the Lord.

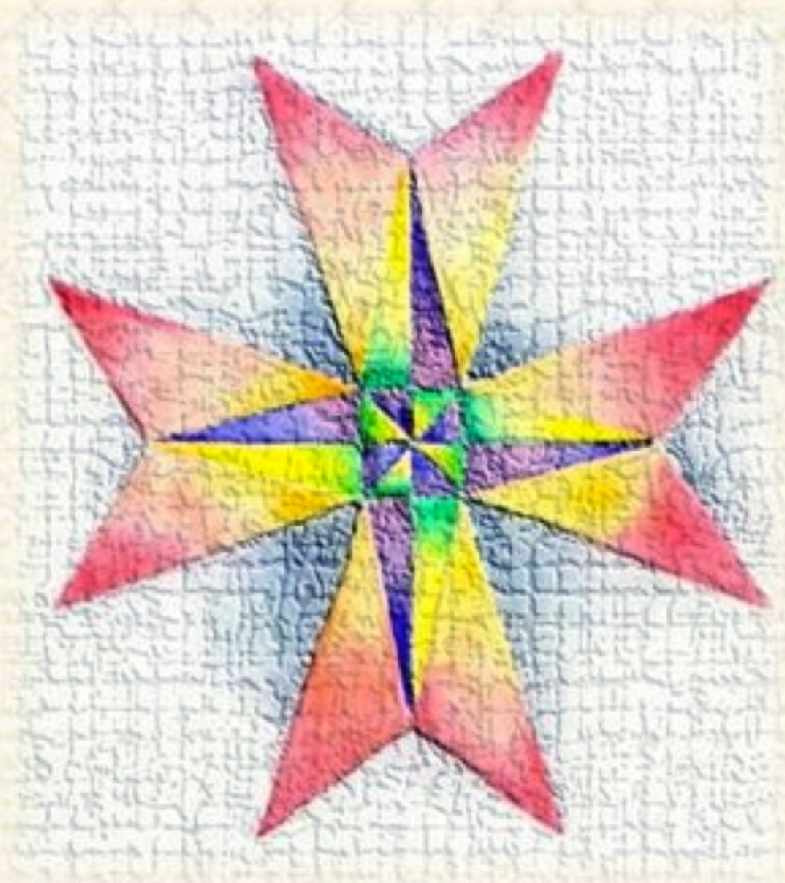
**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

O Lord, enlighten many generous hearts with the ardent rays of Your Holy Spirit and by the powerful intercession of Your most loving mother, Mary, enkindle and sustain the fervor of Your love in these hearts so they may offer themselves in service to You as a priest, deacon or consecrated religious. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Conclude with Benediction** (when possible)



# ***CURRICULUM RESOURCES***





# How to create a culture of holiness within your classroom

## Introduction

We teachers and catechists sometimes tend to shun the word “holiness.” We may believe that only saints and people of extreme faith are really holy. Or we may believe that holiness requires a heroic effort of Catholic piety. Or we may even believe that holiness doesn’t have much to do with teaching religion.



The Second Vatican Council, meeting in Rome from 1962 to 1965, reminded us forcefully that **we are all called to holiness.**

We are all called to follow the footsteps of Jesus and practice self-giving, self-emptying love. Throughout his life, Christ taught us what this would mean: be the big one, forgive seventy times seven times, love your enemies, do good to those who harm you, turn the other cheek, and give away the material things you hold most dear.

Holiness isn’t merely about saying your prayers and showing up for Mass. You can do those things but remain far away from the heart of the Lord. Holiness is a lifestyle, and yes, **we can teach this to our students.** We can show it to them by how we live and we can help them build this holiness lifestyle into their own lives.

Here’s how to get started:

### 1. Prayer

Before you even start teaching, while you’re preparing your notes for class, let your heart move toward Christ. Be quiet for a moment, and just let yourself be connected to the heart of Jesus. Become the “earthen vessel” through whom he will touch your students with love. Open yourself to following the pathway that will be set before you with your students. The gestures, words, and sacred moments needed for your teaching will all be given to you.



### 2. Let your students tell their stories

We learn how to be holy by looking back over our shoulders at what has happened in our lives. By glancing backward like that, we can more plainly see the hand of God working. The call to holiness is embedded in a hundred moments of daily life when we have the chance to choose either self-giving love or selfishness. What are those moments and how do they connect to the doctrine, tradition, custom, or church teaching that is in your lesson?



### 3. Make faith real

It is easy to get the impression that Christian or Catholic faith exists up in the sky, beyond us somehow, and all we do is stand here and look up at it. But in fact, faith lives in the very fabric of everyday life. It's part of how we go through each day. Help your students make this connection. Christ is immediately present with us, standing beside us as friend and companion, in the faces and hands and feet of those with whom we share life. Affirm the gifts and contributions of your learners. Help them see that they are created and good.

### 4. Be a role model

Kids know a phony when they see one. What you teach them has to be evident in your own life. Your love for them is first of course, but your kindness, mercy, and compassion on all of creation, on all people of the earth, and on the poor and vulnerable – that's what they will see. Do you notice how Pope Francis treats others? He withholds judgment, speaks with kindness, laughs and smiles easily, and sees himself as a humble pilgrim on the journey of faith. Let that be your example.



### 5. Drumbeats

Help your students become aware that being part of the parish is important. Parish life is designed to provide a drumbeat and set a cadence in our lives. Help your students hear this drumbeat. How is the drumbeat sounded? Weekly Sunday Mass. It's vital. In it, the drumbeat is sounded through the readings, singing, praying, communion, and dismissal. We can hear that drumbeat in our inner ear, and we march by it all week long. Its cadence becomes the cadence of our lives. And if we don't have that, we will march to some other drummer: materialism, television, or even hate and prejudice.

### 6. Remember the role that parents must play

The home lives of your students are more important than what happens in your classroom. We all know this. We can reach out to the parents in a meaningful way to make sure they help their son or daughter along the pathway to holiness. One of the best ways to do this is to send a weekly email home in which you give one simple thought about the lessons you are teaching along with one quote from Scripture. We suggest you use the Catholic edition of The Message® as your Bible. It's written in contemporary English and is powerful to read and pray with.

Here's an example: Suppose your lesson is about why it's important to be active in the church. (We chose this example at random.) It is obviously essential that the parents reinforce what you teach and model the value of being part of the parish. In the end, they will be the real teachers of their child. To help them, tell them what you're teaching by way of a simple email. You might write something like this:

Dear parents,

In religion class right now your child is learning how important it is to be part of the church. To be in the parish community and attend Sunday Mass helps us live as true followers of Jesus. When we learn, pray, and work together we all grow in happiness and holiness. Ever since the earliest Christians, gathering together has been part of our Christian life. The more you can affirm this and make it part of your household, the better your child will learn it.

Here's what the Bible says about being in the church. This is from *Acts of the Apostles* which tells about how the first Christians lived:

**That day about three thousand took [Peter] at his word, were baptized, and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.**

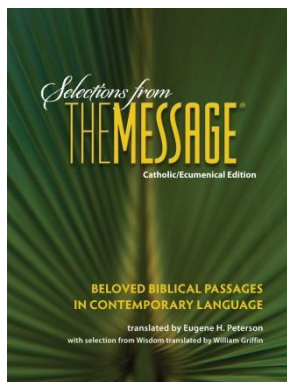
**Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.**

**They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.** (Acts 2:41-47 – from *The Message*).

Thank you for providing your child with a home in which the Catholic faith is important and valued. By working together – me as the teacher and you as the parent – we can offer your child the wonderful gift of faith!

With all my good wishes,  
Wanda, the catechist

## Footnote



We really like this Bible! For so many people, reading the Bible is difficult. They want to read it and they try, but they get bogged down in the language. This is a faithful translation from Greek and Hebrew, and is the Catholic edition, but it uses contemporary English. Reading it is a pleasure. Most people find they can't put it down! [To see more, go here on our website.](#)

# What Are the Vocations in Life?

Every single Christian is called by virtue of our Baptism. Every one of us has a 'vocation' or special mission from the Lord according to our particular state of life.

As we pray for and teach about vocations, we want to encourage people to reflect on the dignity of **Marriage** and the beauty of living together in a Christian family.

**Single life** has its special place and circumstances and is also an avenue of grace, an opportunity for service. And of course, we want to encourage more people to take seriously the possibility that God is calling them to the **Priesthood, Brother, or Deacon** and/or **Religious life**. The important thing for all of us is a commitment to serve and to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed.

Teachers in Religious Education Programs and Catholic Schools are encouraged to use the Vocation lessons in their religion textbooks. They contain Vocation lessons at every grade/age level.

In addition, the high school series: *"Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ"*, published by Credo (<http://www.credoseries.com/>), contains detailed lessons on the vocations of life. The course is structured around married life, single life, priestly life and consecrated life. Students learn what it means to live life for the benefit of others and the value in considering a vocation in service to the Christian community.

Scope and Sequence Chart:

[http://www.credoseries.com/downloads/Credo\\_scope\\_flier\\_for\\_book\\_9.pdf](http://www.credoseries.com/downloads/Credo_scope_flier_for_book_9.pdf)

Many Vocation Lesson Plans can be found on the Internet. A few suggestions follow.

## 1. Lessons and Activities For Vocational Awareness from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Lesson Plans from Pre-K – High School

<http://detroitpriest.com/docs/PastoralPlan/V%20-%20Lessons%20and%20Activities%20for%20Vocations.pdf>

## 2. Lessons and Activities For Vocational Awareness

<http://usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/educators-and-youth-leaders/lesson-plans/lesson-plans-for-national-vocation-awareness-week-grades-k-8.cfm>

<http://detroitpriest.com/docs/PastoralPlan/V%20-%20Lessons%20and%20Activities%20for%20Vocations.pdf>

# ***Group Discussion on Life Choices***

## **❖ Marriage**

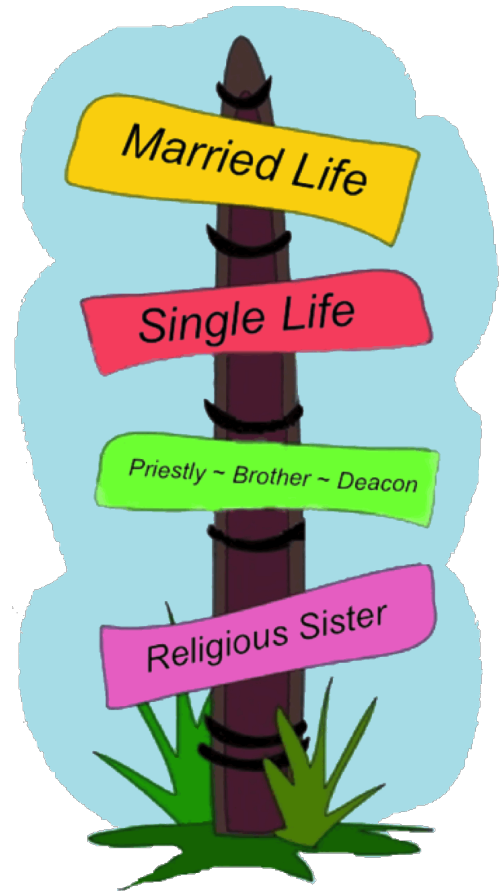
1. If you were to marry, what for you would be the best part of being married? Why?
2. What would you find the hardest? Why?
3. What factors would you consider most important in deciding whether or not to marry and/or deciding what person to marry?
4. Do you want to get married? Why or why not?

## **❖ Single Life**

1. If you remain single, what would you like most about being single? Why?
2. What would you find hardest? Why?
3. What do you think would be important factors which would lead someone to decide upon the single life?
4. Do you want to remain single? Why or why not?

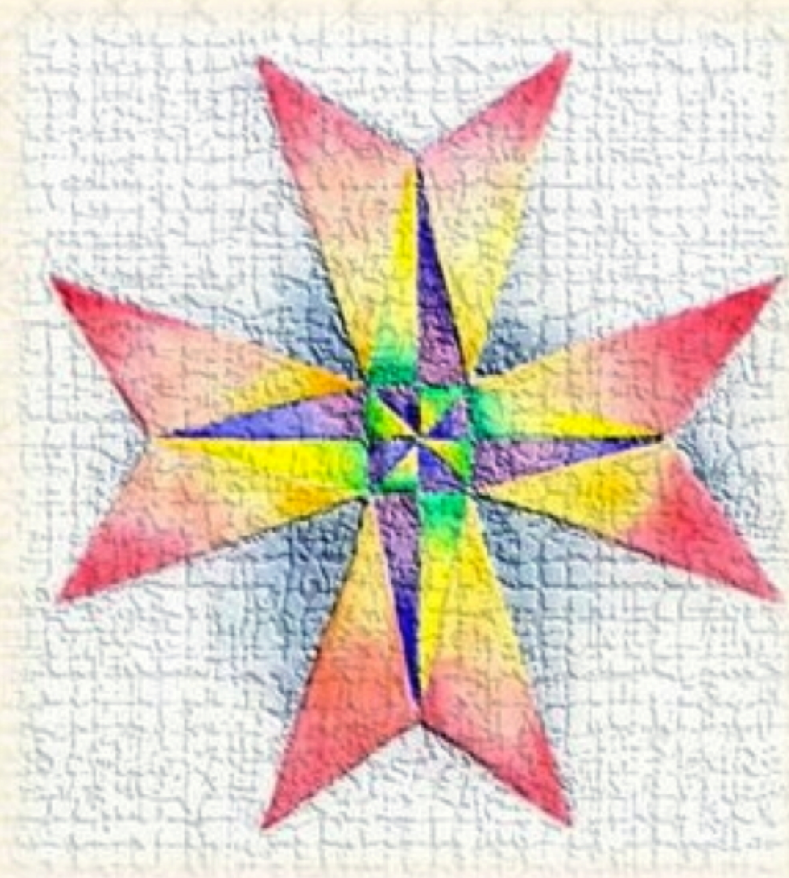
## **❖ Religious Life/Priesthood/Deaconate**

1. If you became a religious sister or brother or priest, what would you find best about this state in life? Why?
2. What would you find hardest? Why?
3. What do you think are the reasons men and women choose religious life today?
4. What do you think is the main reason why relatively few seem to do so?
5. Would you want to become a religious sister, brother, or priest? Why would it be the right or wrong choice for you?





***VOCATION THEMES***  
***FROM***  
***LECTIONARY READINGS***







## ***Lectionary Readings***

### ***Vocational Themes***

To be used for Liturgical celebrations and by  
Priests and Deacons for homily preparation for Sunday Liturgies

#### **ADVENT SEASON:**

##### ***First Sunday of Advent***

A. Is. 2:1-5 Rom 13, 11-14, Mt 24, 37-44.

The homily could be centered around: "Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways and we may walk in his paths."

B. Is. 63, 16-17, 19; 64, 2-7.

"Yet, O Lord, you are our father, we are the clay and you are the potter: we are all the work of your hands."

1 Cor. 1, 3-9 "God is faithful, and it was he who called you to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Mk 13, 33-37 "Do not let him come suddenly and catch you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all. Be on guard!"

C. Responsorial Psalm

"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul."

##### ***Second Sunday of Advent***

A. Mt. 3, 1-12.

The theme of the story of John the Baptist could be used.

B. Mt. 1, 1-8.

The theme of the story of John the Baptist could be used.

C. Bar 5, 1-9

"For God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice that come from him."

God is leading us in the same way that he is leading Israel of old.

##### ***Third Sunday of Advent***

A. Jas 5, 7-10. Read for patient endurance in a vocation.

B. Is 61, 1-2, 10 -11.

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me, He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication by our God."

C. Phil 4, 4-7. The homily can be centered on the second reading.

A Rom 1, 1-7

"Through him we have been favored with apostleship, that we may spread his name and bring to obedient faith all the Gentiles, among whom are you who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ."

B. Lk 1, 26-38

Talk on Mary's response to God's invitation to her and to her response to God.

C. Lk 1, 39-45.

Mary responded to God in haste. Blessed is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled.

## **CHRISTMAS SEASON:**

### Second Sunday After Christmas

A, B, C. Sir 24, 1-4, 8-12.

"Then the Creator of all gave me his command and he who formed me chose the spot for my tent."

Paul to the Ephesians: God chose us in him before the world began to be holy and blameless in his sight, to be full of love; he likewise predestined us through Christ Jesus to be his adopted sons.

Epiphany A, B, C.

As the wise men came out of their way so too we must go out of our way for God.

### Baptism of the Lord

A, B, C Baptism gives us a new life. A result of baptism is that we must open our hearts to the Father's will for us.

## **LENTEN SEASON:**

### First Sunday of Lent

A. Mt. 4, 4 Gospel Verse

"Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

B. Allowing the Holy spirit to guide and direct our lives.

C. Lk 4, 1-13

Jesus allowing the Holy Spirit to direct his life.

### Second Sunday of Lent

- A. Gn 12, 1-4 "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you."
- B. Gn 22, 1-2.9.10-13, 15-18.  
God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "Abraham!" "Ready!", he replied.
- C. Lk 9, 28-36 Then from the cloud came a voice which said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to Him."

### Third Sunday of Lent

- A. Ps 95 Psalm: "If today you hear his voice harden not your hearts."
- B. Ps 19 Psalm: "Lord, you have the words of everlasting life."
- C. Ex 3 When the Lord saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called to him from the bush, Moses, Moses! He answered, "Here I am."

### Fourth Sunday of Lent

- A. The Lord calling David is an excellent example of a call from God and man's response.
- B. The Lord called the prophets from of old in their ordinary life.
- C. 2 Cor. 5 Paul's Letter to the Corinthians  
This makes us ambassadors for Christ, God as it were appealing through us.

### Fifth Sunday of Lent

- A. Rom 8 Paul's letter to the Romans  
..You are in the spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you.
- B. Jn 12, 26 Gospel verse: If you serve me, follow me, says the Lord; where I am, my servant will also be.
- C. Ps 126 The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

### Palm Sunday

A B C Your attitude must be Christ's. ...He took the form of a slave.

## **EASTER SEASON:**

### Second Sunday of Easter

- A. B. C. Jn 20 John's Gospel  
"As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you bind them bound, they are held bound."

### Third Sunday of Easter

A. As the disciples' hearts burned with fire in the presence of the Lord, so our hearts should burn when he calls upon us to serve him.

B. Same as A.

C. Acts 5, 27-32. 40-41

We are witnesses to Christ and are so led by the Holy Spirit.

### Fourth Sunday of Easter

A. 1 Pt 2 It was for this you were called, since Christ suffered for you in just this way and left you an example, to have you follow in his footsteps.

B. Jn 10 Gospel according to John.  
"I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me."

C. Jn 10 My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me.

### Fifth Sunday of Easter

A. Act 6 Notion of service as the apostles selected the deacons.

B. 1 Jn 3 From the second reading: The call to live in the faith and the call to love one another.

C. Act 14 Paul's missionary journey is our missionary journey.

### Sixth Sunday of Easter

A. Acts 8 The mission of the Apostles is our mission.

B. Jn 15 John's Gospel "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him."

### Seventh Sunday of Easter

A. Jn 17 John's Gospel  
"These men you gave me were yours. They have kept your word. Now they realize that all you gave me comes from you."

B. Acts 1 Call of Matthias

C. Jn 17 Gospel John: "I do not pray for my disciples alone. I pray also for those who believe in me through their word."

## Pentecost

A, B, C. Acts 2

Sending of the Holy Spirit to the Apostle is the same Spirit which calls us to serve him.

## **SEASONS OF THE YEAR:**

### Second Sunday of the Year

A. A-Isaiah 49

Now the Lord has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb. I will make you a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

B. 1st Bk of Samuel 1Sm 3

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

C. 1Cor 12 Paul to the Corinthians

Different gifts but the same spirit.

### Third Sunday of the Year

A. Mt 4 Matthew's Gospel

"Come after me and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers.

B. Mk 1 Mark

"Come after me; I will make you fishers of men." They immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers.

C. 1Cor 12 Corinthians

You, then, are the body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it.

#### Fourth Sunday of the Year

A. Corinthians 1 Cor 1

Brothers, you are among those called. God chose those whom the world considers absurd to shame the wise He singled out the weak of this world to shame the strong. He choose the world's lowborn and despised, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who were something; so that mankind can do no boasting before God.

B. 1Cor 7 The unmarried person is concerned with the affairs of the Lord.

C. Jer 1, Lk 4, 21 Jeremiah & Gospel according to Luke

I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

Luke - Also Jesus' message is for everyone.

#### Fifth Sunday of the Year

A. Is 58 Isaiah - service to one another.

Matthew – “You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.”

B. 1Cor 9 Paul's letter to the Corinthians

In fact, I do all that I do for the sake of the gospel in the hope of having a share in its blessings.

C. Lk 5 A reading from Luke's Gospel

“Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men. With that they brought their boats to land, left everything and became his followers.”

#### Sixth Sunday of the Year

A. Ps 119 From the Responsorial Psalm:

Instruct me, O Lord in the way of your statutes, that I may exactly observe them. Give me discernment, that I may observe your law and keep it with all my heart.

B. 1Cor 10 Corinthians

Imitate me as I imitate Christ.

C. Jer 17, 5-8 Jeremiah

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord.

Luke - Beatitudes are set as goals of one who hopes to lead a Christian life.

#### Seventh Sunday of the Year

A. 1Cor 3 Corinthians

“Are you not aware that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

Mt 5:38 Sons of the heavenly Father act in a particular way

B. 2Cor 1 Corinthians - God is the one who firmly establishes us along with you in Christ; it is he who anointed us and has sealed us, thereby depositing the first payment, the Spirit in our hearts.

C. Lk 6, 27 To you who hear me, I say, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you."

### Eighth Sunday of the Year

A. Ps 62 Responsorial Psalm

Only in God is my soul at rest. From him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be disturbed at all.

Matthew: You cannot give yourself to God and money.

Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides.

B. Hosea 2, 16-17. 21-22.

I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart.

C. Luke 6, 39-45.

A good man produces goodness from the good in his heart; an evil man produces evil out of his store of evil. Each man speaks from his heart's abundance.

### Ninth Sunday of the Year

A. Mt 7.

"Anyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on rock."

B. 2Cor 4 "Let light shine out of darkness is the one who has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ."

C. 1Cor 12 Corinthians

You, then, are the body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it.

### Tenth Sunday of the Year

A. Mt 9 "As Jesus moved about, he saw a man named Matthew at his post where taxes were collected. He said to him, 'Follow Me.' Matthew got up and followed him."

B. Mark 3 "Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me."

C. Galatians 1 But the time came when he who had set me apart before I was born and called me by his favor chose to reveal his Son through me, that I might spread among the Gentiles the good tidings concerning him.



### Eleventh Sunday of the Year

A. Responsorial Psalm Ps 100

Sing joyfully to the Lord all you lands, serve the Lord with gladness, come before him with joyful song.

Mt - Summoning of the twelve along with their mission.

B. 2 Corinthians 5

We walk by faith, not by sight.

C. Galatians 2, 16 "The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me."

### Twelfth Sunday of the Year

A. Mt 10 As for you, every hair of your head has been counted; so do not be afraid of anything. You are worth more than an entire flock of sparrows. Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.

B. 2 Corinthians 5

He died for all so that those who live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sakes died and was raised up.

C. 3 Galatians or Lk 9

"Each one of you is a son of God because of your faith in Christ Jesus."

"Whoever wishes to be my followers must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps. Whoever would save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

### Thirteenth Sunday of the Year

A. Mt 10 He who will not take up his cross and come after me is not worthy of me.

B. 2 Corinthians 8 Your abundance should supply their want.

C. Luke 9 "Come after me."

### Fourteenth Sunday of the Year

A. Romans 8 You are in the spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Matthew 11 – "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your soul will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light."

B. Vocation of Ezekiel Ez 2.

C. Lk 10 Vocation and instructions of the further 72.

### Fifteenth Sunday of the Year

- A. Mt 13 But what was sown on good soil is the man who hears the message and takes it in. He it is who bears a yield of a hundred, or sixty or thirty-fold.
- B. Mark 6 - He called the Twelve and began to send them out.
- C. Luke 10 "Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the man who fell in with the robbers?" The answer came, "The one who treated him with compassion". Jesus said to him, "Then go and do the same."

### Sixteenth Sunday of the Year

- A. Romans 8 The Spirit too helps us in our weakness, . . . He who searches hearts knows what the Spirit means, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints as God himself wills.
- B. Mk 6 Come by yourselves to an out of the way place and rest a little.
- C. Lk 10 Servants of the Lord were Martha and Mary.

### Seventeenth Sunday of the Year

- A. Isaiah 55 "Come to me heedfully, listen that you may have life."
- B. Eph 4 Put on the new man that has been created in God's image.  
Jn 6, 24 He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me shall never thirst.

### Nineteenth Sunday of the Year

- A. Matthew 14 "Come!" he said to Peter.
- B. Eph 4 Be imitators of God as his dear children. Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you.
- C. Luke 12 Be ready.

### Twentieth Sunday of the Year

- A. Romans 11 God's gifts are irrevocable.
- B. Ephesians 5 Be watchful that you may know the will of God.
- C. Hebrews 12 Let us bear patiently the struggle placed upon us.

### Twenty-first Sunday of the Year

- A. Mt 16 The strong faith of Peter enabled him to understand what he was about. He also realized the mission of Jesus.
- B. Jn 6 "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced that you are God's holy one."
- C. Responsorial Psalm Ps 11  
"Go out to all the world and tell the Good News."

### Twenty-second Sunday of the Year

- A. Mt 16 Jesus then said to his disciples: "If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and begin to follow in my footsteps. Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."
- B. Jas 1 "Humbly welcome the word that has taken root in you, with its power to save you act on this word. If all you do is listen to it, you are deceiving yourselves."
- C. Sir 3 "My son, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts." In other words humbly accept the will of God in your heart."

### Twenty-third Sunday of the Year

- A. Ps 95 "If today you hear his voice, harder not your hearts."
- B. Jas 2 "Listen, dear brothers. Did not God choose those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom he promised to those who love him?"
- C. Lk 14 "Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

### Twenty-fourth Sunday of the Year

- A. Rom 14 While we live we are responsible to the Lord, and when we die we die as his servants. Both in life and death we are the Lord's.
- B. Mk 8 "If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps. Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."
- C. 1Tm "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, that he has made me his servant and judged me faithful."

### Twenty-fifth Sunday of the Year

- A. Is. 55 "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near. . . . For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord."
- B. Mk 9 "If anyone wishes to rank first, he must remain the last one of all and the servant of all."
- C. Lk 16 "No servant can serve two masters. You cannot give yourself to God and money."

### Twenty-sixth Sunday of the Year

- A. Phil 2 "Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate and it was thus that he humbled himself obediently accepting even death, death on a cross."
- B. Nm 11 "Taking some of the Spirit that was on him, he bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied."
- C. Do not let life pass by without seeking to do the will of God.

### Twenty-seventh Sunday of the Year

- A. Phil 4 "Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude. Then God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus."
- B. Heb 2 "He who consecrates and those who are consecrated have one and the same Father. Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them brothers."
- C. 2 Tm 1 "The Spirit God has given us is no cowardly spirit, but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise."

### Twenty-eighth Sunday of the Year

- A. Phil 4 In him who is the source of my strength, I have strength for everything.
- B. Mk 10 Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that come and follow me.
- C. All of us should be grateful to God for the gifts He has given us. All of us are His creatures and we must respond to Him.

### Twenty-ninth Sunday of the Year

- A. Mt 22 “Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but give to God what is God's.”
- B. Mk 10 Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all.
- C. 2 Tm “I charge you to preach the word, to stay with this task whether convenient or inconvenient - correcting, reproving, appealing - constantly teaching and never losing patience.”

### Thirtieth Sunday of the Year

- A. 1Thes 1 Turn from your ways to serve God.
- B. Mk 10 “Rabboni,” the blind man said, “I want to see.”
- C. Sir 35 He who serves God willingly is heard; his petition reaches the heavens.

### Thirty-first Sunday of the Year

- A. Mt 23 The greatest among you will be the one who serves the rest. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, but whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.
- B. The need for loving God and our willingness to serve him is an important aspect of Christian life.
- C. 2 Thes 1 We pray for you always that our God may make you worthy of his call, and fulfill by his power every honest intention and work of faith.

### Thirty-second Sunday of the Year

- A. Ps 63 My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.
- B. Mk 12 As the poor widow contributed to the treasury from her needed daily wage so too, we must give ourselves to God in a total and complete way.
- C. 2 Thes 2 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and may God our Father who loved us and in his mercy gave us eternal consolation and hope, console your hearts and strengthen them for every good work and word.

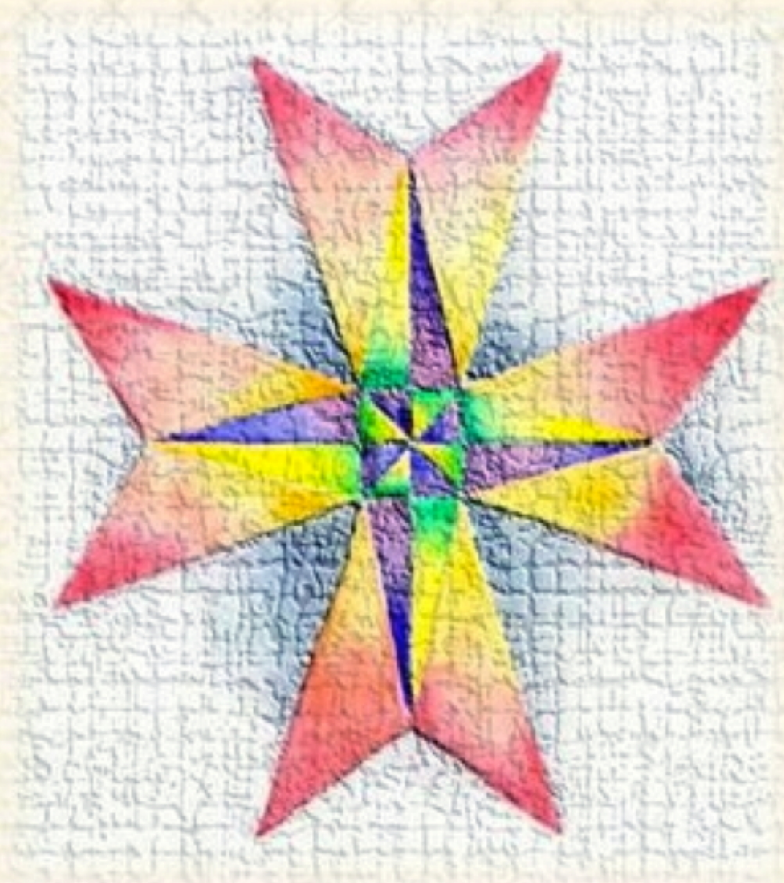
Thirty-third Sunday of the Year

- A. 1Thes 5 Not all of you are children of light and of the day. We belong neither to darkness nor to night; therefore let us not be asleep like the rest, but awake and sober!
- B. Ps 16 “You will show me the path to life fullness of joys in your presence, the delights of your right hand forever.”
- C. Lk 21 “By patient endurance you will save your lives.”

Thirty-fourth Sunday of the Year

- A. Mt 25 “I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me.”
- B. Jn 18 “Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice.”
- C. Col. Give thanks to the Father for having made you worthy to share the lot of the saints in light.

# ***FAMILY RESOURCES***







## ***Family Life and Vocations***

Our family is the most important influence in our lives. Family shapes who we are, how we interact with others and what we hold as important in our lives. Because of this, vocations are intimately tied to our families. The values of the priesthood, the diaconate, and religious life are rarely found in our world today. Self-sacrifice, humility, service, chastity, and forgiveness are only rarely promoted by our society and yet these lay at the heart of Church vocations (and a Christian life). If our families and parishes are not encouraging these values and these vocations, how can we expect our young people to choose them? Here we hope to assist parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters in encouraging a member of their family to consider how God might be at work in their lives, and if God might be calling them to offer their lives in service to the Church. If we all decide that it should be someone else's son, someone else's daughter, who will be left? Take the time to pray not just that your child might be "successful", but that they might find the true joy that comes from following the path God has placed before them.

*"Familiaris Consortio"* (by Pope John Paul II) offers an overview of Catholic social teachings on a variety of issues including salvation, the role of the family, the principle of common good, the rights of workers, morality and the economy, hope for peace, and a Christian's role in civic society.

In speaking of the importance of the family, it describes the family as the "vital cell of society." The Church sees in the family "the first natural society, with underived rights that are proper to it, and places it at the center of social life. (No. 211) For each individual the family is the cradle of life and love where they are born and grow. (No. 212). Marriage is the foundation of the family. It is a partnership established by God and endowed with its own laws. (No. 215)

The document continues to address: love and the family; themes related to life; and nurturing children.

Families play an important role in vocations. Parents, the first teachers of their children, encourage their children to explore all careers or professions including the possibility of a religious vocation. Thus families can be considered a "seedbed of vocations".

How can your family become "vocation-friendly"? The enclosed brochure offers suggestions meant to give a jump-start to fostering a culture of vocations within the family circle.

### **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- ❖ Make prayer for vocations part of your family life.
- ❖ Be an example of faith for your child: frequent the Sacraments, live a life of Christian values, be open to God in your own life.
- ❖ Volunteer as a family for a service project each month.
- ❖ Hold up good examples of priests, deacons, and religious sisters and brothers for your child.
- ❖ Invite a priest, sister, or seminarian to your home for dinner. Each one has a unique vocation story to tell.
- ❖ Encourage them not simply to seek "worldly success", but rather to seek fulfillment and happiness in their life.
- ❖ Instill the value of service and sacrifice for others in them.
- ❖ As a family, write a letter to your pastor, thanking him for the ways he serves the parish. What are the things you appreciate about his ministry?

## Some practical suggestions for the Parish

How do parishes create a prayerful and supportive culture for vocation discernment? Above all else, parishioners need to be aware of how important it is to have young adults contemplating the call to religious life within the church. They should make a point to talk about vocations to priesthood and religious life in encouraging terms and invite young people in the parish to seriously consider this unique form of Christian witness. Having men and women in the parish seriously discerning a vocation is a special moment in the life of the parish. You can show support in the following ways:

1. Host a day of prayer where participants commit to pray for vocations. Pass out vocation prayer cards that families can say within their homes, driving to work, or whenever they have a free moment.
2. Host an hour of Adoration for the intentions of young people discerning a call from God.
3. Host a meal with the families of those who are considering entering a religious community. Have the young people share a few thoughts on the importance of being aware that others are praying for them.
4. Host an evening of prayer in the church with members who are in formation. Have them lead the prayer, and offer a chance for people to meet afterward so that those in formation can appreciate the support they are receiving and parishioners can put a face with the names of the people they are praying for.
5. Host an evening with the members of the families in the parish who have a child in formation within a religious community. Give other parishioners an opportunity to express their support. Have a time for prayer for the families and for those in formation.
6. Make available resources on discernment and prayer for families and individuals to have in the back of the church or at the parish center.
7. Form a prayer group that meets regularly to carry the intentions for vocations.
8. Consider hosting a “Family Vocation Day” in the parish.  
The following websites may be helpful:

<http://www.familyvocations.com/fv/>

<http://www.vocationnetwork.org/articles/show/530>

“For Your Marriage” <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/the-vocation-of-marriage/>



### **A PRAYER FOR PARENTS**

Heavenly Father, every child is your gift.

My child is your gift to me and you have a special plan for their life.

Help me to be open to how you will move in their life.

Help me to encourage them to make use of the gifts and talents for your glory and honor.

Help me to trust you and them that they may choose their path with wisdom and freedom.

And if dear Lord, you should call my child to a life of service in the Church, help me to walk with them in faith and love.

May whatever you call them to, fill their lives with the joy and peace that can only be found in you.

Amen.

## **Suggestions to promote vocations in your Family**

1. Speak of Christ in the home: Speak often of Christ in terms that endear your children to him. Let his name be part of the family vocabulary.
2. Pray for your children's vocation: Pray for your children and for whatever vocation God is calling them to, and teach them to do the same. The greatest and deepest wish of every parent for a child is that he or she discovers and does God's will for his or her life. This is your child's greatest guarantee of happiness, and your major concern. Prayer is necessary, since there will always be the tempting mirage of an easier way shimmering invitingly on the horizon for your child.
3. Pray as spouses for your children: Find a prayer that you can say as husband and wife asking the Lord to consecrate your family to him and to the Mission he has for you. Some couples compose their own prayer and pray it regularly. If a couple can pray together the witness of united prayer speaks untold volumes to the children.
4. Pray with your children: Nighttime prayer is a natural time to teach prayer to children and to develop in them this important habit. When you pray the meal prayers, use a variety of prayers and prayer forms including spontaneous prayers from the heart. Teach them how to bring their concerns and needs to Jesus in prayer. They will learn only what you model for them.
5. Teach Bible Stories: Especially when the children are young introduce them to the hundreds of stories in the Bible. Begin with a children's Bible and give them Bibles through the years that correspond to their understanding of the Faith.
6. Teach the Lives of the Saints: Help your children grow, according to their age, in their relationship with God and knowledge of their faith. The lives of the saints are a great source of inspiration for children—and adults.
7. Teach Devotion to Mary: Many families pray a decade or the whole Rosary as part of their prayers at home. Teach your children how the Rosary is like a photo album of the life of Jesus, Mary, and the Apostles. By meditating on the Mysteries we come to reflect on the Mysteries of Jesus' Life and Mission and how he calls us to an ever-deeper discipleship and mission with him in community with others.
8. Bless your children: A custom we had as children was to have our dad bless each of us children at night with holy water. He would make the sign of the Cross on our forehead with the words "*God Bless you!*" and then he would say our names. This ritual went on for many years. You will find this a wonderful way of integrating parental love and affection with spirituality. It would also be good to have a holy water font somewhere in the house where the children can bless themselves and be reminded of their baptism and commitment to Jesus.
9. Speak to your children openly about God's Call for them in their lives: Remind your children often that God has created them in his image and likeness. He loves them so much as his son or daughter. As our Creator he designed each of us for a purpose. Invite them to pray about God's Call for their career—what they are to do with their life as well as their state in life—whether God is calling them to Marriage, Single Life, Priesthood, or Consecrated Life. Teach them how to allow the Lord to make the Call in our lives.
10. Enthroned your family and home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. By having a picture or statue of the Sacred Heart in your home you witness your faith to those who come to visit, but more than that you are reminded as a family that Jesus is the center of your family. It is common for families to have pictures of family members displayed in their homes. The same should be true about our spiritual family. Place a crucifix in the rooms. Have several statues of the Blessed Mother and the saints throughout the house.

11. Teach your children to love the Mass: I cannot remember a time in which my parents purposely missed Mass. This witness impressed upon me how essential it is to come every Sunday to receive Jesus who said, *“Unless you eat my body and drink my blood, you have no life in you.”* Even if you are on vacation, especially when you are on vacation, take your children to Mass. Dorothy Day, who served the poor in this country for forty-five years used to say that at Mass during the Consecration it was as if the Lord was saying to her, *“This is My Body broken for you. Will you let your body be broken for Me and for others today?”* At the Consecration of the wine it was as if he said, *“This is My Blood poured out for you. Will your blood be poured out for Me and for others today?”* If we understood the Mass from this perspective, would we ever miss? Or could we ever say it is boring?

12. Adoration for Vocations: I was advised when I entered seminary that I would find my vocation in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Mother Teresa taught her sisters to pray before the Blessed Sacrament three hours a day so that, once filled with Christ’s presence, they would be instruments of his presence to others. Find time to make Holy Hours and to encourage your children to make visits and to spend time before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament

13. Teach your children the importance of conversion through regular Confession: If a person cannot apologize, it will be very difficult to grow in friendship or intimacy with others. Similarly, if we do not learn how to reconcile ourselves with God through the Sacrament of Penance (Confession), there is a level of intimacy with the Lord which we will not attain. Model for your children the need for this Sacrament by your own practice.

14. Pay special attention to your children’s use of the media: It is especially important to monitor your children’s access to the internet. Give them reasons for limitations and teach them responsible use of this medium and all media. For as good as the Internet can be, it can often lead young people astray. Internet pornography tragically is becoming epidemic among people of all ages. Spiritually, it divides their hearts and they cannot grow in prayer or friendship with the Lord thus making it impossible to discern one’s vocation in life.

15. Camps and Retreats: As your children get into middle school, introduce them to camps and retreats. Young people need more and more integration of faith with experience within a faith community. In our Diocese we have Camp Guggenheim as well as many other retreats and rallies for every age group. These experiences help the young people to move beyond the family and parish experience of Church and to grow in their awareness that we are a universal Catholic Church.

16. Enable participation in outreach, service, or missionary work: This participation is very important for young people. It is here that they will see how much Christ and the Church call them to move beyond themselves to serve the needs of others. They will begin to understand how much they have received and how much they are being called upon to give in return. This can include visiting the elderly in nursing homes or helping aged relatives or neighbors. Later this can include mission trips to soup kitchens or other missions.

17. Don’t push, but don’t be silent: Do not push priesthood or consecrated life on your children, but don’t be silent either. Answer questions and at times, bring them up yourself and raise possibilities, but do so always with a sense of freedom and love. Talk openly and support the possibility of your child choosing to be a priest or sister. Look for opportunities for your children to visit a seminary or convent. They can only learn to love that which they know.

18. Write a letter or card to each of your children at least once a year at a special occasion in which you share with them your unconditional love and also share something of your faith and your prayer that they continue to listen to and follow God’s call for them in their life.

19. Speak positively about bishops, priests, deacons and consecrated persons: Your respect for those in the Church will witness to your children the need to respect those dedicated to God's service and to the spiritual mission of the Church. We live in an era of anti-authority. Showing respect to those whom God has given to guide us in the Church will go a long way to teach your children how to respect your own parental authority, as well as to teach them how to place themselves under the mission of God in their lives.

20. Have a well-rounded concept of the education of your children: Do not neglect the formation of character, self-discipline, human virtues, perseverance, and physical health. You are creating the fertile ground for God to act. Besides faith, you will want your children to have the strength of character to be able to do what might be difficult, to overcome peer pressure, and to be faithful to what is right.

21. Develop the minds and the sense of beauty and joy in your children: This includes, but is not limited to, the knowledge of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Help children develop their critical sense, awareness of objective truth, and appreciation for music and the arts.

Christ asks you to be a holy parent, not necessarily a perfect parent. Seek to sanctify your spouse and children by your loving and nurturing—God will do the rest. Trials will inevitably occur within your family. You preach your most powerful sermons during times of difficulty. The saints have said that a holy family is a struggling family. When the Apostles were in the midst of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus told them not to be afraid. If we have Jesus in our boat—home life—he will get us through. Your witness of trust in those times will speak a thousand words.

## ***Family Vocation Day – Suggested Schedule***

**Message for the founder:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGTdSmN1K4c>

9:00 AM – Arrival and Registration (Church Hall)

9:30 AM – Prayer, Introductions, Outline of Day

9:45 AM – Vocation Talks to: (Separate into specific groups)

Young Adults,

Adults/Parents

Activities and Games for the Children

**Group 1:** Parents/Adults

1. Men

2. Women

**Group 2:**

1. Young Adults (Teens and College Age Students)

A. Young Men

B. Young Women

**Group 3:**

1. Children Ages 5-12 (5 & 6; 7 & 8; 9 – 12)

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass:

12:00 PM – Lunch with Priests and Religious Brothers and Sisters (provided)

12:45 PM – Talent Show Sing Along or other group entertainment

Question and Answer Session:

All are welcome to ask questions to the Religious and Priests

1:30 PM

– Vocation Talks to the Young Adults, Spiritual Conferences to Adults/Parents and Activities and Games for the Children (Separate into three groups)

Group 1: Parents/Adults (Husbands & Wives)

Group 2: Young Adults (Teens and College Age Students)

Group 3: Children Ages 5-12 (Ages 5-8: Ages 9-12)

2:30 PM – Family Holy Hour for Life

- Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
- Homily
- Confessions (will be heard all throughout Adoration)
- Meditative Silence
- Eucharistic Hymns sung by the Choir
- Vocation Rosary
- Benediction

3:30 PM – Dismissal

– Booths will be open for the Diocese, Religious Communities and Family Vocation Ministries

Family Vocation Day Sample brochure may be found:

<http://www.familyvocations.com/fv/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/FVDbrochure-final.pdf>



"Let us pray...there be greater attention to vocations..."

*"Christian husbands and wives are cooperators in grace and witnesses of faith for each other, their children, and all others in their household. They are the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them by word and example for the Christian and apostolic life. They prudently help them in the choice of their vocation and carefully promote any sacred vocation which they may discern in them."* (11)

*—Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican II document on the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*

## Benefits of Hosting a Family Vocation Day

Hosting a Family Vocation Day can help Catholic communities in many ways:

- May be used as a retreat for Confirmation and religious education
- Exposes dioceses and religious communities to potential vocation candidates
- Allows the priest of a parish to share his vocation story and to communicate more to his parishioners in a social setting
- Strengthens the bond of parishioners and aids in the networking of families
- Catechizes the faithful concerning topics such as the Eucharist, Confession, and the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Provides an opportunity for seminarians and religious to gain experience and evangelize
- Great precursor to a parish mission
- Increases the vitality of a parish community as a whole

## A Brief Outline of a Family Vocation Day

Begin with Prayer, Introductions, and Outline of the Day

Vocation Reflections and Spiritual Conferences are given to three groups: Parents, Young Adults, and Children. Groups will be separated in designated areas (the Church, Parish Hall, Classrooms, etc.)

Family Socializing with Priests, Religious and Seminarians.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass followed by a Eucharistic Thanksgiving, and Prayer to our Lady.

Lunch and Entertainment with the Priests, Religious, and Seminarians (Booths representing the Diocese and Religious communities will be open).

Vocation Talks and Spiritual Conferences to separate groups resume.

Family Holy Hour for Life (Eucharistic Adoration):

- Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
  - Eternity
  - Meditative Silence with Confessions Available
  - Rosary and Eucharistic Prayers (while Confessions are being heard)
  - Litany to St. Joseph
  - Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament and Dismissal
- After Dismissal, the booths will remain open for the Diocese and Religious communities that are present, and also for Family Vocation Ministry inquiries and registrations.

*Schedule is subject to change depending on the number of participants, parish space, and time.*

## Beyond Priestly and Religious Vocations

Although the primary purpose is to expose and catechize the faithful regarding priestly and religious vocations, other catechetical teachings are explicated at our Vocation Days. The universal call to holiness is the core message preached during our Vocation Days. Parents are asked to persevere faithfully in the sacred covenant of matrimony and are asked also to be supportive, if they believe their children are called to a priestly or religious vocation. Children are told they can be saints at an early age from Priests and Religious who communicate the Gospel in a fun, loving way. Young Adults encounter the joy radiated through faithful Priests and Religious. These young adults are given the opportunity to know the happiness received by God through *self-gifted love in doing God's will.*

## Fidelity and Loyalty to the Church

Family Vocation Ministries invites religious communities and diocesan priests who are faithful to Christ and the Catholic Church. All speakers are loyal to our Holy Father, the Pope, obedient to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, and are joyfully motivated to serve Christ and His people.

## Contact Us

If you are interested in our Family Vocation Day apostolate, or if you would like more information about our ministry, please contact us.

Family Vocation Ministries  
7375 Day Creek Blvd., Ste. 103-223  
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91739  
(800) 818-0584  
[info@familyvocations.org](mailto:info@familyvocations.org) / [www.familyvocations.org](http://www.familyvocations.org)



To familiarize and expose families to Priests and Consecrated Religious, Family Vocation Ministries organizes and sponsors

# Family Vocation Days





# "...the family...becomes the primary...seedbed of vocations to a life of consecration to the kingdom of God."

## Our Purpose

The objective of our Family Vocation Days is two-fold: first, to pray, to familiarize, and to catechize the faithful in the topic of religious vocations to the Priesthood and the Consecrated Life; secondly, to help families answer the universal call to holiness.

One of the primary reasons regarding the shortage of vocations to the Priesthood and the Consecrated Life is the lack of catechesis about and exposure to Priests and Consecrated Religious. Our Family Vocation Days are designed to educate families in the specificity of these vocations set apart by the Catholic Church. Families will be given opportunities to meet, listen to, socialize, eat with, and have fun with Priests and Consecrated Religious.

## What to Expect at a Family Vocation Day?

- **Centered on the Holy Eucharist:** All Vocation Days will include the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and an hour of Eucharistic Adoration.
- **The Sacrament of Reconciliation:** During the Eucharistic Holy Hour confessions will be heard. All are welcome to experience the mercy of God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- **Two of the Church's greatest gifts are utilized:** Families will hear vocation stories from both Priests and Consecrated Religious. Each religious, priest, or seminarian will share their divine calling and implement an element of Catholic doctrine/sacrament/devotion/sacrament that helped them receive their call.
- **Pro-Life:** A Family Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration will be offered before the Blessed Sacrament for the end of abortion, euthanasia, and the contraception mentality. Reparations are asked to be made for those promoting a culture of death.

➤ **To Jesus through Mary!** Vocation Days will also include the recitation of the most Holy Rosary, the "Holy Trance" (an ancient prayer to our lady), and will usually be held on Saturdays – the day traditionally dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

➤ **St. Joseph, our Patron:** All Vocation Days will be under the patronage of St. Joseph. The Litany of St. Joseph will be prayed, seeking his help and protection.

➤ **For the Families and with the Families:** Attendees will have the opportunity to meet, socialize and eat with the Priests, Religious, and Seminarians and also to participate in an activity with them ( talent show, question and answer session, etc.).

Broods will be available for the Priests, Seminarians, and Religious to represent their diocese and/or religious communities. This will also provide an opportunity for families to learn more about a variety of vocations.

## Powerful Evangelization: Witnesses of Love

Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical on evangelization in the Modern World, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, said, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." In our Family Vocation Days, the lay are exemplified by faithful witnesses, namely Priests and Consecrated Religious. Their lives are powerful testimonies of Christ and His Gospel, and will help others realize the important message of Christ.

Some of the topics that will be shared by Priests and Consecrated Religious during our Vocation Days include: the joy God grants to those serving as a priest and/or a religious, the difference between the diocesan priesthood and the religious priesthood, and the evangelical counsels (the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience).

## We Work For You!

Family Vocation Ministries serves the Church both in an active and a contemplative approach.

The active aspect of our ministry is to sponsor and coordinate Family Vocation Days.

Our goal is to make our Family Vocation Days FREE. We do not want any obstacles hindering each family's ability to learn more about vocations and experience the excitement of our Vocation Days.

The following are the expenses funded by the ministry, which includes the cost of (but not limited to):

- The Family Vocation Day speakers: Priest, Religious, and Seminarians
- Flyers and Posters: Designed, Printed, and Distributed
- Digital Recordings of the Vocation Talks and Spiritual Conferences
- Registration for Family Vocation Days via the Internet or postal mail
- Lunch for participants, if not provided by the host parish
- Entertainment during lunch (presented primarily by priest and religious)
- Catholic Materials for the Family: A Magnificat® (daily Mass readings and prayers), Rosaries, Scapulars, Catechetical CDs, Catholic Pamphlets (on the Eucharist, Adoration, Confession, The Rosary, etc.).

The contemplative aspect of our ministry is to pray daily for an increase of vocations and specifically for our Family Vocation Days. By doing this, the Priest, Consecrated Religious, and families who participate in our Vocation Days are aided spiritually by many prayers and sacrifices, and thus help to bear fruit in our apostolate.

To aid us in this part of our ministry, local monasteries and convents will be charitably asked to pray for our Vocation Days.

## Why Promote Vocations to Families?

As the Second Vatican Council document, *Lumen Gentium*, states, the family is "the domestic church." The family, the vital cell of society, instills Christian virtue in men and women to serve Christ and the Church. It is primarily from the family, the true "seedbed of vocations," we hope and pray many vocations develop for the Church.

Many popes, saints and church documents have expressed the importance of families in promoting vocations.

*"Let us not forget that Christian marriage is a vocation to holiness in the full sense of the word, and that the example of holy parents is the first condition favorable for the flowering of priestly and religious vocations."*

— Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Prayer for Vocations, May 1, 2006

*"The family must educate the children for life in such a way that each one may fully perform his or her role according to the vocation received from God. Indeed, the family that is open to transcendent values, that serves its brothers and sisters with joy, that fulfills its duties with generous fidelity, and is aware of its daily sharing in the mystery of the glorious Cross of Christ, becomes the primary and most excellent seedbed of vocations to a life of consecration to the kingdom of God." (53)*

— *Familiaris Consortio*, Apostolic Exhortation by Pope John Paul II

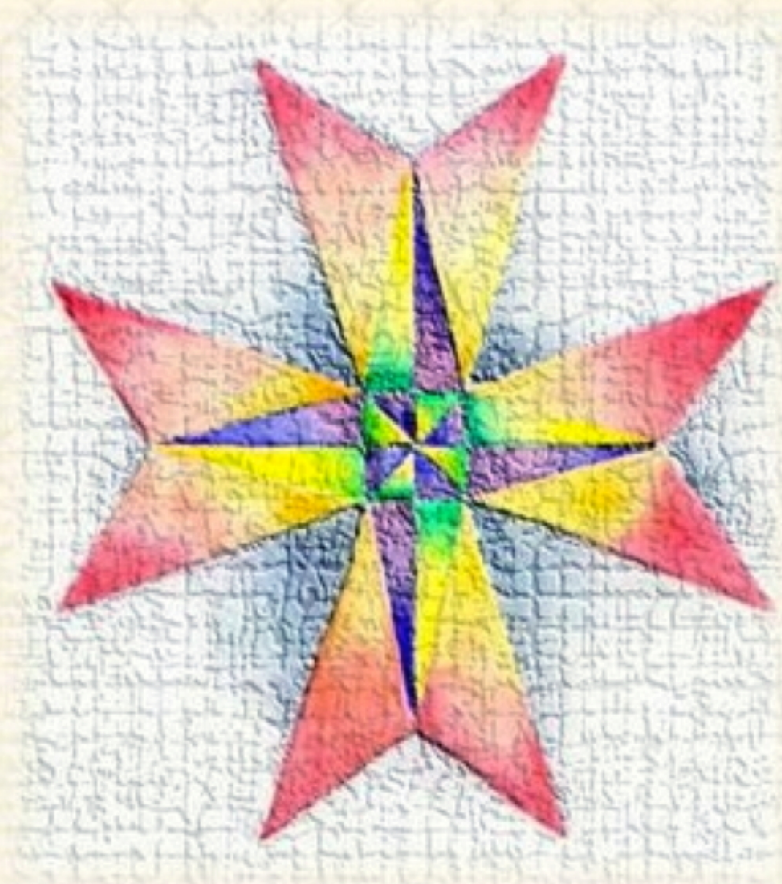
*"I would like to speak into the ear of so many men and women, giving up one's children to the service of God is not a sacrifice: it is an honor and a joy."*

— St. Bernardine Sison, Founder of Opus Dei





***DIOCESAN  
VOCATION OFFICE  
RESOURCES***





# Diocesan Vocation Office -Vocations Resources-

(Updated November 19, 2014)

## Videos:

*These are the highlights, but see [myvocation.net](http://myvocation.net) for many more.*

Interviews with Bishop LaValley and Fr. Bryan Stitt—Search for “Ogdensburg Vocations” on Youtube. Or click: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oebJucD1GUg> and here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4k9XPvI5hrQ>

Vocations 101-- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihnzFH2L818#t=19>

Fishers of Men--This has been the standard bearer of Priesthood Videos since it came out in 2006  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqtOvt7d490](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqtOvt7d490)

A Day in the Life of a Catholic Priest--A great example of what a local diocese can do (from Phoenix)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSK9WmNNXQk&feature=youtu.be> There has been talk that Ogdensburg should look into this.

Light of Love—from Imagine Sisters: <http://lightoflovefilm.com/>

## Websites

Diocese of Ogdensburg— <http://www.rcdony.org/vocations.html>

Imagine Sisters-- <http://imaginesisters.org/>

Institute for Religious Life-- <http://religiouslife.com/>

## Curriculum

Vocation Lessons—Online curriculum supplement for schools, parishes, and youth ministry (Vianney Vocations) [www.vocationlessons.com](http://www.vocationlessons.com)

## Books

General Discernment:

*Have I Been with You?* Personal Prayer for Young Disciples (A Pamphlet from NCDVD available from the Vocations Office.)

*What does God Want?* Fr. Michael Scanlan

Is Jesus Calling you to be a Catholic Priest?

Discernment in the Heart of the Church.

Lend your Voice to Christ

On Marriage:

*Three to Get Married*—Fulton Sheen

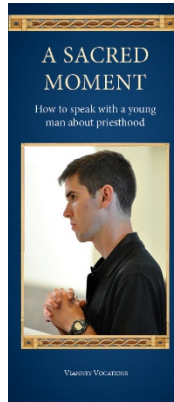
On Priesthood:

To Save a Thousand Souls, Fr. Brett Brannen—a practical guide for the priesthood of discernment, the application process, and seminary life

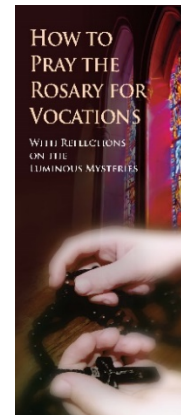
## Informational Pamphlets



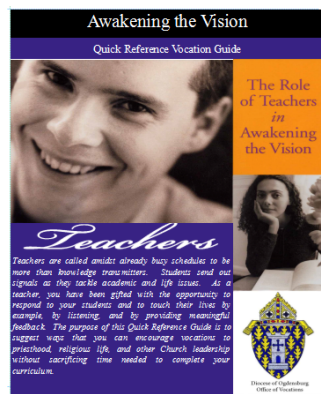
**YOLO Be HOLY** (Vianney Vocations)



**Sacred Moment—How to speak to a young man about the priesthood**  
(Vianney Vocations)



**How to Pray the Rosary for Vocations—pamphlet** (Vianney Vocations)



**Awakening the Vision—A quick Vocations reference guide for Teachers**

## Audio

**Speak Lord, MP3 Download of the month.** Institute on Religious Life, Lighthouse Catholic Media.

Through Lighthouse, anyone discerning a vocation to the priesthood or religious life can sign up for a year of monthly free talks at [www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org/speakLord](http://www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org/speakLord)

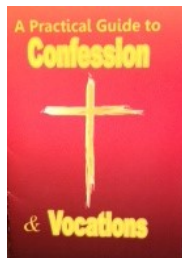


## Prayer Resources

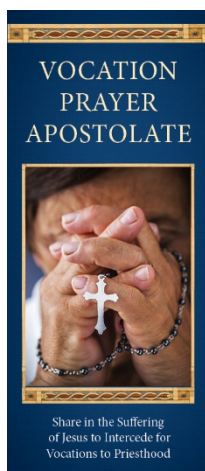
**Holy Hours**—2 have been published here in the Diocese

<http://pastoral.rcdony.org/Vocation/index.html>

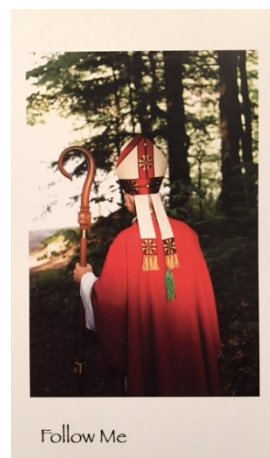
**A Practical Guide to Confession and Vocations**—published here in the Diocese



**Homebound Apostolate**—requesting the prayers and sacrifices of those to whom we bring Holy



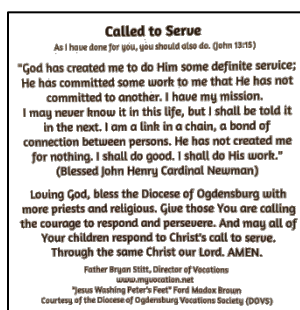
Communion at home



**Diocesan Holy Cards:** (Yearly produced and distributed in the schools during Vocations talks and in the parishes for National Vocations Awareness Week)



Though He was in the form of God,  
Jesus took the form of a slave (Philippians 2:6a,7b)



**Called to Serve**  
*As I have done for you, you should also do. (John 13:15)*

**Dear God,**  
 Help me to be what you  
 want me to be  
 so that I can be happy  
 in this life and in the next.  
 Amen.

Diocese of Ogdenburg  
 Father Bryan Stitt, Director of Vocations  
 Prayer written by Father Timothy Canavan  
 www.myvocation.net

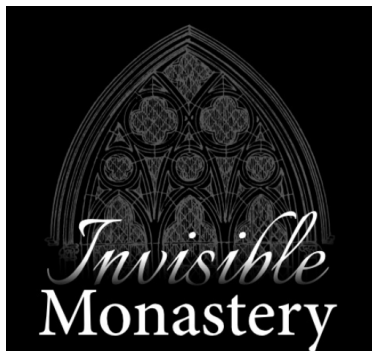
## Weekly Bulletin Blurbs and Sunday Vocations Petitions

Both can be found and/or downloaded from the Pastoral Documentation page at:  
<http://pastoral.rcdony.org/Vocation/index.html>

## Seminarian Flyers—for Classrooms or Parish Bulletin boards



## Invisible Monastery—website to join other Catholics in pledging to pray for Vocations



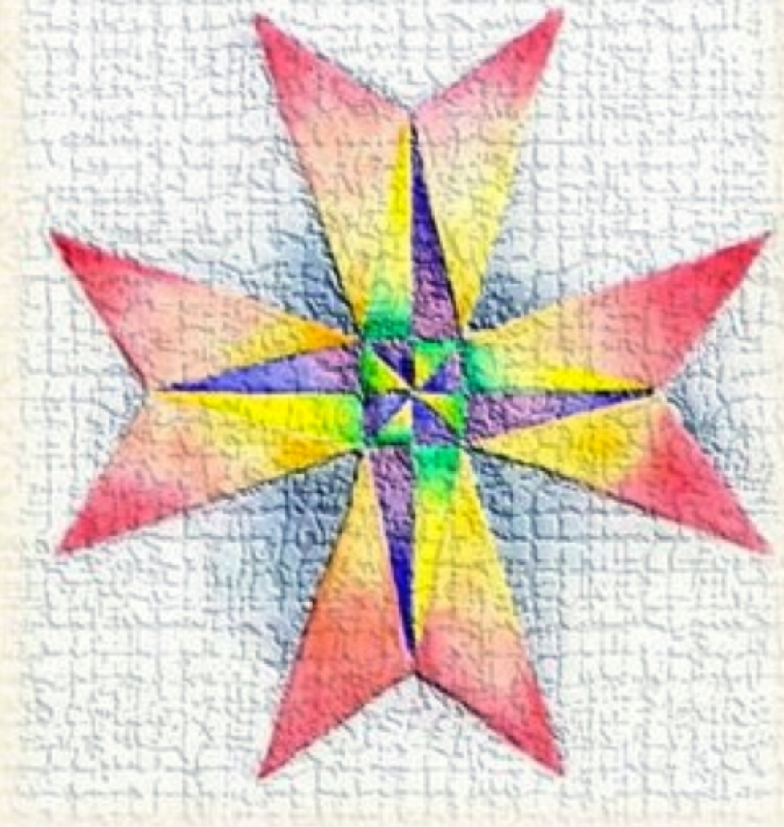
Other



Priest/ Nun cut-outs--Seriously. We've got'em. And the kids love them.



***10 THINGS***  
***"EVERYONE"***  
***CAN DO!***







*What can we do to promote vocations  
to the Priesthood and Religious Life As . . .*

**Catechist**

**Deacon**

**Parent**

**Family**

**Priest**

**Parishioner**

**Religious Brother or  
Sister**

**Seminarian**

**Senior Citizen**

**Single Person**

**Teacher**

**Youth Minister**

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## ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Catechist***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Develop vocation oriented projects.</b></p> <p>Have students work on projects with vocation themes. This can be done through poster contests, creative writing, photography, interviews and a variety of other activities. This will also encourage student interaction with sisters, brothers and priests and lead to a deeper understanding of religious and priestly vocations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Encourage service.</b></p> <p>Serving the Lord by loving our neighbor is an idea that is central to our faith. There are numerous ways that this service can be lived out. Have someone speak to your students about the opportunities to serve that exist in the parish. Service to others is one way that we can best imitate Jesus.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Compose a vocation prayer.</b></p> <p>Have the students write a prayer for vocations to the priesthood and religious life that they can say each day. When the class meets, pray together one of the prayers the children have written. If some are particularly good, share them with the Diocesan Vocation Office.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Discuss modern day heroes in the church.</b></p> <p>Young people need to see that the church is alive, and that serving as a priest or religious is not something people only did in the past. Identify all the wonderful people serving in the church today. Let students dream about what it might be like in the future.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Suggest reading material.</b></p> <p>Create a reading list of spiritual books that students can read for class or on their own. Books that have short readings or prayers for each day will probably be the most appealing. Ask them to read about how a particular saint realized their vocation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Explore scripture.</b></p> <p>The classroom setting is the perfect place to spend time reading and reflecting on the way vocation is presented in scripture. Consider the different ways those in scripture stories are called to their vocation and how they respond to that call.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Provide a list of vocation Websites.</b></p> <p>The appeal of the internet to young people cannot be ignored. Providing them with the addresses of religious and vocation oriented websites can create an interest and keep them away from the more inappropriate sites. The Diocesan Vocation Office will gladly share this information with you.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Show support for seminarians.</b></p> <p>Have an ongoing project in your class to “sponsor a seminarian.” Students will write letters and promise to pray for a particular seminarian. They can write their own prayer and make prayer cards. Attend an ordination ceremony with the class.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Invite a priest or religious speak to your class.</b></p> <p>Having priests and religious share their stories about how they came to their particular vocation is a great way to spend a class period. Leave some time for discussion so that the students can air some of their thoughts and ask questions about religious and priestly vocations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. Make a commitment to pray for this intention as a class. Also, consider praying for a particular priest or religious in your parish.</p>

## ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Deacon***

<p><b>Promote parish ministries.</b></p> <p>An active parish produces church vocations. As a deacon, you play an important role in helping the parish to be the vital, healthy community that is the seed-bed for a life of service in the church. Your participation in and knowledge of the various ministries in the parish make you a valuable resource in promoting these ministries.</p>	<p><b>Spend time with youth.</b></p> <p>Whether or not you are involved in a ministry that serves young people, try to find ways to spend time with them. Attend their activities or find ways that they can be helpful to you. Friendships between youth and those who have an involvement in parish life often aid in the discernment of a vocation.</p>
<p><b>Preach about vocations.</b></p> <p>By having the opportunity to reach the parish community through preaching, you can offer your unique perspective as deacon to address the topic of vocations. Share your own vocation story- perhaps it will inspire listeners to consider their own vocation.</p>	<p><b>Extend an invitation.</b></p> <p>Many people claim that they were never invited to explore a vocation to a life of service in the church. Ask young people who you think exhibit characteristics required of priests, religious or deacons if they have ever considered a church vocation. It can make a difference</p>
<p><b>Visit classrooms.</b></p> <p>Children need to understand more fully the role of priests, religious and deacons. An educational setting is the natural place to do this. Speak to students about what you do in the parish community and the meaning your ministry has for the larger church.</p>	<p><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to a life of service in the church, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. As a deacon, your commitment to prayer is important and your prayer for this intention is invaluable. Consider forming small prayer groups to pray for vocations.</p>
<p><b>Exhibit a love of your vocation as deacon.</b></p> <p>It is encouraging to see people who are enthusiastic that they have devoted their lives to the Lord. By sharing the love you have for your vocation, you can serve the faith community in yet another way - as an inspiration!</p>	<p><b>Participate in Vocation Awareness Week.</b></p> <p>Promote the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which takes place on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, and other events sponsored by the Diocesan Vocation Office. Your presence and support will enhance the effectiveness of these events.</p>
<p><b>Encourage service.</b></p> <p>Serving the Lord by loving our neighbor is an idea that is central to our faith. The example you set in your vocation as deacon can encourage the many people you come into contact with to share their gifts through service in the church. Service to others is one of the best ways we can imitate Jesus.</p>	<p><b>Encourage cooperation.</b></p> <p>It is only by the cooperation of the entire community, with each member responding to the vocation that he or she received through baptism, that we will be able to create the proper environment to foster the increase of church vocations - with the Holy Spirit leading the way!</p>

## ***Ten Things We Can Do As Parents***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Identify the gifts of family members.</b></p> <p>Through baptism each of us has received special gifts and talents. Reflect as a family on the gifts and talents of each person and how they can be used in service to the family and to the parish. There is a place for each of your unique gifts in the church.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Participate in parish activities.</b></p> <p>A healthy parish community includes the participation of all its members. The involvement of your family in the activities offered in your parish will help create the life- giving environment necessary for the nurturing of religious and priestly vocations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. Make a commitment to pray for this intention everyday as a family, perhaps at mealtime. Also consider praying for a particular priest or religious in your parish.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tell stories.</b></p> <p>Recall times in your lives when a priest deacon, or religious showed kindness to you and helped make a positive difference. Have the children share an experience too. Talk about what these men and women mean to you and the services they offer to God's people, the church.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Offer friendship to priests and religious.</b></p> <p>Whether it be sharing a meal, taking a walk, or simply having a conversation, make an effort to share friendship with priests and religious. Friendships will foster awareness, communication and respect for the lifestyle and needs of each person. Feelings of happiness and satisfaction will be the sure result!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Say thank you.</b></p> <p>We all know that it feels good to be thanked. Say thanks to a priest or religious. It is encouraging for them to feel that their generosity is being appreciated and the time they spend in service to the parish community is being recognized. Offering thanks also sheds a positive light on priests and religious.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Attend Mass.</b></p> <p>The celebration of the Eucharist is a fundamental aspect of our faith. Gathering around the Lord's table will serve to strengthen the bond in your own family and the bond of the parish family. It is a strong parish family that produces priestly and religious vocations. Bring the children - they add life to the celebration!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Perform acts of charity.</b></p> <p>In the Gospels Jesus directs us to love our neighbor and he calls us to serve one another. There are varied ways that we can behave charitably and serve the Lord gladly. Look into ways that your family can generously meet the needs of your neighbors. A charitable heart is a hallmark of priestly and religious vocations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send cards.</b></p> <p>Find out the anniversary dates of ordination or entrance into religious life celebrated by priests and religious, and send them a card. By this simple act they will be assured of our prayers, support and friendship. It will also serve to reinforce the family atmosphere of the parish community.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Your home is the "domestic church."</b></p> <p>Parents are the first preachers of the faith to their children and the home is where early formation occurs. Create a climate within your home that will foster and encourage all members of your family to live out the vocation that God has planned for them. Pray, read spiritual books, talk about your faith and vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Let your home truly be a dwelling place for the Lord!</p>

## *Ten Things I Can Do As A Family*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Explain the idea of “vocation.”</b></p> <p>Define the word “vocation” to your children. Stress how a vocation is different from a profession or career, and how it is distinguished from one’s lifestyle. Our vocation is who we are. Explain how through baptism we have each received certain gifts that we will use in living out the vocation that God has intended for us.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Suggest a priestly or religious vocation for your child.</b></p> <p>It takes a great deal of generosity on the part of a parent to suggest a vocation to the priesthood or religious life for your child. Some young people will not consider this as an option for their life unless they have been asked. Be generous. Do the asking.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Share your vocation story.</b></p> <p>Let your children know that you have a vocation - that of husband and wife, mom and dad. Share with them the story of how you fell in love and how you felt when they were born. Your children will treasure these stories and lead them to consider what their own vocation might be.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Serve in a parish ministry.</b></p> <p>Consider becoming a lector, Eucharistic minister, usher, religious education teacher or some other parish minister. Not only will you be helping your parish, but you will be setting an example for your children. It will make your family part of the parish family and inspire service.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Show support.</b></p> <p>Often times when a young person does express an interest in the priesthood or religious life, they do not receive support and encouragement from their parents. Explore how you would feel if your child were to express a desire for a church vocation. It could lead to a healthy and more productive dialogue with your child.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Provide opportunities for prayer in your home everyday. Make it a normal part of decision-making. Pray in particular for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Ask God to bless the priests and religious known to your children by name. Pray for those who are in formation for a priestly or religious vocation.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Create a peaceful atmosphere in your home.</b></p> <p>The “busy-ness” of our lives can become overwhelming. The constant hunger for activity can prevent us from taking the time we need to sit in silence and stillness. Create an atmosphere in your home where the abiding presence of the Lord can be felt.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Speak positively about priests and religious.</b></p> <p>Our words and attitudes make an enormous impression on our children. By always speaking positively about priests and religious, you will foster a set of values that will promote the respect and gratitude that is due to those who serve God’s church so faithfully.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Read the Bible.</b></p> <p>Read the Bible or other books of a spiritual nature to your children, or if they are old enough, encourage them to read on their own. Talk about the significance of what you have read. Keep the Bible in an accessible place in you home. Nothing nourishes a priestly or religious vocation like the sacred scriptures!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Love.</b></p> <p>The best and holiest thing any of us can do for our children is to love them. By loving them and expressing this love they will have the courage and faith they need to allow the Holy Spirit to work within them and guide them to receiving their particular vocation. So just love them.</p>

## ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Priest***

<p><b>Offer friendship to priests and religious.</b></p> <p>Whether it be sharing a meal, taking a walk, or simply having a conversation after mass, make an effort to share friendship with priests and religious. Healthy friendships will foster awareness, communication and respect for the lifestyle and needs of each person. Feelings of happiness and satisfaction will be the sure result!</p>	<p><b>Say thank you.</b></p> <p>We all know that it feels good to be thanked for a job well done. Say “thanks” to a priest or religious. It is encouraging for them to feel that the generosity of their lives is appreciated. This appreciation sheds a positive light on priestly and religious vocations. Your show of gratitude may lead others to do the same.</p>
<p><b>Extend an invitation.</b></p> <p>Many people claim that they were never invited to explore a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Extend this invitation to a young person who you think might have a religious or priestly vocation. Your invitation could make a difference in someone’s life.</p>	<p><b>Serve in parish ministry.</b></p> <p>In the Gospels Jesus directs each of us to a life of service. Your service in the activities of your parish will help create the life-giving environment necessary for the nurturing of religious and priestly vocations. Let us fulfill this Gospel message by sharing our gifts.</p>
<p><b>Exhibit a love of your faith.</b></p> <p>By showing a love of your faith, you can provide the parish community with a powerful personal witness as to the importance of living out one’s vocation as the Lord intended. You can be a model for others to discover the vocation to which they are being called.</p>	<p><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. Make a commitment to pray for this intention everyday. Also consider praying for a particular priest or religious in your parish.</p>
<p><b>Attend Mass.</b></p> <p>Celebration of the Eucharist is a fundamental aspect of our faith. Gathering around the Lord’s table will serve to strengthen the bond you have to your faith and the bond of the parish family. It is a strong parish family that produces priestly and religious vocations.</p>	<p><b>Participate in Vocation Awareness Week.</b></p> <p>Take part in the events of Vocation Awareness Week by praying with others throughout the diocese for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Your presence and support will enhance the effectiveness of these events. Include vocation activities in the bulletin.</p>
<p><b>Support parish functions.</b></p> <p>Your participation in parish functions is important. Not only will you benefit in terms of your own spiritual growth, you will be setting a fine example for your friends and neighbors. Having the parish as a focal point in your life can be an impetus for others to do the same. Such an atmosphere gives rise to church vocations.</p>	<p><b>Encourage cooperation among the different ministries in your parish.</b></p> <p>It is only by the cooperation of the entire community, with members responding to the vocation they received through baptism, that we will be able to create the proper environment to foster the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life - with the Holy Spirit leading the way!</p>

### ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Parishioner***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Preach about vocations.</b></p> <p>In the Gospels we read the story of how Jesus chose his first disciples. Their stories were as vital to the early church as your story is to the church today. Whether it is dramatic, ordinary, inspiring or mundane, share your vocation story and invite others to share theirs!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Greet Parishioners.</b></p> <p>The simple act of greeting parishioners after Sunday and daily Mass is an excellent way to promote a friendly, caring atmosphere in your parish. Such environments will serve as the foundation that is necessary for nurturing vocations to the priesthood and religious life.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Recognize altar servers.</b></p> <p>There is an undeniably strong link between altar servers and a future in the priesthood and religious life. Giving altar servers recognition in some way during mass is an excellent way to make them feel special and give an increased importance and holiness to their service.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. During the General Intercessions, include a petition for the increase of church vocations. Encourage Eucharistic adoration.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Spend time with youth.</b></p> <p>Young people need to see priests as approachable and friendly. Attend their activities or find ways that they can be helpful to you. Consider offering them employment at the rectory. Friendships between youth and priests and religious can often aid in the discernment of a church vocation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Attend Operation Andrew.</b></p> <p>These evenings of fun, dinner, prayer and conversation provide an opportunity for young men to learn more about the priesthood. This event has proven to be a positive experience for all those involved. It allows young men to share their thoughts, questions and concerns with priests in an informal setting.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Extend an invitation.</b></p> <p>Many people claim that they were never invited to explore a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Extend this invitation to young people who you think might have a church vocation. Your invitation could make a difference in their lives.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exhibit a love of priesthood.</b></p> <p>It is encouraging to see a man who is enthusiastic about living out his priestly vocation. Your positive, prayerful attitude will help others recognize that the vocation of priest is worthwhile, valuable and fulfilling. Be an inspiration.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visit Classrooms.</b></p> <p>It is only natural that vocations should be addressed in an educational setting. Talk to the students about the meaning of “vocation” and encourage them to consider their own vocation. You will always be welcomed by the students, even if it is because it means a break from the usual classroom routine!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Encourage cooperation among the different ministries in your parish.</b></p> <p>It is only by the cooperation of the entire community, with members responding to the vocation they received through baptism, that we will be able to create the proper environment to foster the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life - with the Holy Spirit leading the way!</p>

## ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Religious Brother or Sister***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Share your vocation story.</b></p> <p>In the Gospels we read the story of how Jesus chose his first disciples. Their stories were as vital to the early church as your story is to the church today. Whether it is dramatic, ordinary, inspiring or mundane, share your story and invite others to share theirs!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Use the bulletin to keep the parish informed.</b></p> <p>The efforts of religious men and women often go unnoticed. The bulletin can be a good place to spread the word as to the tireless work being done in your various ministries. This will reinforce the active, vital role religious sisters and brothers play in the church.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exhibit a love of religious life.</b></p> <p>It is encouraging to see women and men who are enthusiastic that they have devoted their lives to the Lord. By sharing the love you have for your vocation, you can serve the faith community in yet another way - as an inspiration!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Participate in Vocation Awareness Week.</b></p> <p>Promote the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which takes place on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, and other events sponsored by the Diocesan Vocation Office. Your presence and support will enhance the effectiveness of these events.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Extend an invitation.</b></p> <p>Many people claim that they were never invited to explore a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Ask young people who you think exhibit qualities characteristic of a priest or religious if this might be a possibility for their life. It can make a difference.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. As a religious sister or brother your commitment to prayer is important and your prayer for this intention is invaluable.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Invite young people to share a meal with you.</b></p> <p>The communal aspect of religious life is unique and much needed in our society in which individualism is the rule. Let others experience the human and spiritual support that exists in community and the love and companionship that is inherent in faith communities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Spend time with youth.</b></p> <p>Whether or not you are involved in a ministry that serves young people, try to find ways to spend time with them. Attend their activities or find ways that they can be helpful to you. Friendships between youth and religious can often aid in the discernment of a church vocation.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Publicize those in formation in your religious community.</b></p> <p>Make up prayer cards with the names of those preparing for final vows or create a display with their pictures and bios. It will be encouraging to them as well as the parish to see that there are vocations out there. Don't keep them a secret!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Encourage cooperation.</b></p> <p>As religious sisters and brothers, you are models of cooperation through your lives as members of a community. Your involvement in so many different ministries enables you to teach others to live in the spirit of cooperation that is necessary in a parish community. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, vocations to the priesthood and religious life will indeed flourish!</p>



## ***Ten Things I Can Do As Seminarian***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Offer a tour of the seminary.</b></p> <p>Offering a tour of the seminary is an excellent way of introducing young people to the formation process of a priest. Exposing them to the beauty and prayerfulness of the seminary grounds will be a memorable experience.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Participate in Vocation Awareness Week.</b></p> <p>Promote the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which takes place on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, and other events sponsored by the Diocesan Vocation Office. Your presence and support will enhance the effectiveness of these events.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Share your vocation story.</b></p> <p>In the Gospels we read the story of how Jesus chose his first disciples. Their stories were as vital to the early church as your story is to the church today. Whether it is dramatic, ordinary, inspiring or mundane, share your vocation story and invite others to share theirs!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Make it attractive.</b></p> <p>Show the priesthood for what it truly is – a call to be a spiritual father to the whole family of faith. The challenge for priests and religious is to be joyful models of their vocations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visit Classrooms.</b></p> <p>It is only natural that vocations should be addressed in an educational setting. Seeing young men who are aspiring to a priestly vocation is vital to young people. Your willingness to make this commitment will be an inspiration to them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Extend an invitation.</b></p> <p>Many people claim that they were never invited to explore a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Extend this invitation to young people who you think might have a church vocation. Your invitation could make a difference in their lives.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>As seminarians, you understand well the necessity of prayer when it comes to increasing vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The importance of your prayer for this intention is invaluable. Also be assured of the prayers offered for you as you continue your journey toward priesthood.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Spend time with youth.</b></p> <p>Young people who know and spend time with seminarians and priests are more likely to consider thinking about the priesthood for themselves. Make an effort at spending time with youth in an informal setting. Often, these friendships can lead to the discernment of a vocation.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Involve yourself in the activities of your home parish.</b></p> <p>The people of your parish appreciate the specialness of having a member of their community become a priest. It is encouraging for them to see you participate in church events. Your vocation can strengthen the bond of the parish family that will lead to the nurturing of future vocations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Be a presence at vocation-oriented events.</b></p> <p>Although you have busy schedules, try to attend vocation-oriented events around the diocese, such as Operation Andrew. Most parishioners do not have the opportunity to see seminarians very often and your presence makes an impression.</p>

## ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Senior Citizen***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tell stories to your family.</b></p> <p>Families cherish stories that have been passed down through generations, and grandparents are marvelous sources of stories. Stress the importance of the family bond and the role played by priests and religious in your youth and throughout your life.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Attend parish functions.</b></p> <p>Church vocations are the responsibility of the entire community and as a member of the parish family, your presence is vital. You're never too old to join the community in prayer or fun. If you can't join us physically, join us through prayer! We need you!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Offer a monthly Holy Hour.</b></p> <p>Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament is a blessing and grace to everybody. Whether it be at your parish church or in your home make a commitment to pray a holy hour for an increase of vocation to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated religious life at least once a month.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Extend an invitation.</b></p> <p>Many people claim that they were never invited to explore a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Through the wisdom of your years, you may have the keen awareness of the presence of a church vocation in a young person. Ask this person if he or she has ever considered exploring this possibility.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Say thank you.</b></p> <p>We all know that it feels good to be thanked. Say thanks to priests and religious. It is encouraging for them to feel that their generosity is being appreciated and the time they spend in service to the parish community is being recognized. Offering thanks also sheds a positive light on priests and religious.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Prayer is essential in working toward an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The prayer of senior citizens for this intention is invaluable. Pray the rosary for an increase in church vocations, or pray daily for a particular priest, religious or person considering a life as a priest or religious.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send cards.</b></p> <p>Find out the anniversary dates of ordination or entrance into religious life celebrated by priests and religious and send them a card. By this simple act they will be assured of our prayers, support and friendship. It will also serve to reinforce the family atmosphere of the parish community.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exhibit a love of your faith.</b></p> <p>By showing a love of your faith you can provide the parish community with a powerful personal witness as to the importance of living out one's vocation as the Lord intended. You can be a model for others to discover the vocation to which they are being called.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Share your wisdom.</b></p> <p>With age comes an increased spirituality that is yet undeveloped in younger people, even in some priests and religious. Express the deepening spirituality that can only come from years of faithfulness, and indeed friendship with the Lord. As people of wisdom in the parish community you can provide the pastoring that is necessary in the ongoing formation of priests and religious.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Encourage those who serve in your parish.</b></p> <p>Take the time to offer acknowledgment to those who serve in various parish ministries. Your taking the time to recognize their hard work will lend encouragement and support to those whose tireless efforts often go unnoticed. Share a positive comment with your pastor when you see something worthwhile going on. Observations from respected parishioners such as you will help foster the life-giving environment so vital to the nurturing of church vocations.</p>

## ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Single Person***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Become involved in youth ministry.</b></p> <p>Our young people need positive role models. Consider volunteering some of your time in youth ministry. It will benefit the young people of the parish to see the example of your vocation as a generous single person and you will benefit from the energy and enthusiasm that youth brings to the church!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Attend Mass.</b></p> <p>Celebration of the Eucharist is a fundamental aspect of our faith. It is around the table of the Lord that the parish family gathers and you are an important part of that family. Our prayer is not complete without you. Such community-oriented environments give rise to priestly and religious vocations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Attend Holy Hours.</b></p> <p>Make a commitment to attend a Holy Hour for Vocations to the Priesthood or Religious Life at least once a month. Our Lord hears our prayers anywhere, but He has revealed that those who visit Him in the Eucharist will obtain a more abundant measure of grace. (St. Alphonsus Ligouri)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Participate in Vocation Awareness Week.</b></p> <p>Promote the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which takes place on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, and other events sponsored by the Diocesan Vocation Office. Your presence and support will enhance the effectiveness of these events.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Teach a religious education class.</b></p> <p>Religious education programs are always eager for intelligent, faithful people to teach religious education classes. Helping children explore their spirituality will be a rewarding experience for you and start them on the path that will one day lead them to their vocation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. Make a commitment to pray for this intention everyday. Also, consider praying for a particular priest or religious in your parish.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Participate in parish activities.</b></p> <p>A healthy parish community includes the participation of all its members. Your involvement in the activities, both spiritual and social, offered in your parish will help create the life-giving environment necessary for the nurturing of religious and priestly vocations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Extend an invitation.</b></p> <p>Many people claim that they were never invited to explore a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Extend this invitation to young people you know who you think might have a church vocation. Your invitation could make a difference in their lives.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Say thank you.</b></p> <p>We all know that it feels good to be thanked for a job well done. Say thanks to priest or religious or send them a card expressing your gratitude. It is encouraging for them to feel that the generosity of a life of service is appreciated. It also sheds a positive light on priestly and religious vocations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Explore the possibility of a church vocation for yourself.</b></p> <p>As a single person, you may still be considering a vocation to marriage and parenthood. Feel invited to also explore the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. If you would like information or just some conversation, contact a vocation director. Give it some thought.</p>

## ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Teacher***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Develop vocation-oriented projects.</b></p> <p>Have students work on projects with vocation themes. This can be done through poster contests, creative writing, photography, interviews and a variety of other activities. This will also encourage student interaction with sisters, brothers and priests and lead to a deeper understanding of religious and priestly vocations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Encourage service.</b></p> <p>Serving the Lord by loving our neighbor is an idea that is central to our faith. There are numerous ways that this service can be lived out. Have someone speak to your students about the opportunities to serve that exist in the parish. Service to others is one way that we can best imitate Jesus.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Create a “Vocation Bulletin Board.”</b></p> <p>Devote a bulletin board in your classroom to highlighting a particular priest, sister or brother and display their picture and a short biography. Identify and explain their work and the many ministries they are involved in.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Explore scripture.</b></p> <p>The classroom setting is the perfect place to spend time reading and reflecting on the way vocation is presented in scripture. Consider the different ways those in scripture stories are called to their vocation and how they respond to that call.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sponsor field trips.</b></p> <p>Take your students on a field trip to a religious community, seminary or the rectory. A familiarity with the lifestyle of priests and religious-seeing how they live, work and pray- may be appealing to some young people and may aid them in the discernment of a church vocation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. Make a commitment to pray for this intention as a class. Also consider praying for a particular priest or religious in your parish.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Make vocation literature available.</b></p> <p>The Diocesan Vocation Office has materials that will gladly be shared with you for distribution and for discussion in your classes. You may even want some literature available on a table in a corner of the room that your students can feel free to take and read on their own.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Acquaint students with the various ministries in the church.</b></p> <p>Inform your students as to the different ministries that are present in the church. Remind them that they each have unique gifts and talents that can be offered to the parish community in a variety of ways.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Invite a priest or religious brother or sister to speak to your class.</b></p> <p>Having priests and religious share their stories about how they came to their particular vocation is a great way to spend a class period. Allow time for discussion so that the students can air some of their thoughts and ask questions about religious and priestly vocations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Attend diocesan sponsored events as a class.</b></p> <p>There are many events that take place in the diocese that would be enhanced by the participation of young people. Consider attending one of these events as a class or plan your own vocation event! This will increase their awareness and stress the importance of the need for vocations in the church.</p>

## ***Ten Things I Can Do As A Youth Minister***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plan “Prayer time for Vocations.”</b></p> <p>Have your youth group plan a time of prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life. Have them invite priests, religious, seminarians and parishioners to the event. This can be a marvelous way for them to get involved in a parish activity while bringing attention to the need for religious and priestly vocations.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pray.</b></p> <p>Of all the ways we can work toward the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, prayer is undoubtedly the most essential. Make a commitment with your youth group to pray for this intention. If you celebrate a youth mass in your parish, include a petition for an increase in church vocations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Extend an invitation.</b></p> <p>Many people claim that they were never invited to explore a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Extend the invitation to young people and encourage those who are interested to contact the vocation director.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Show films with religious themes.</b></p> <p>Watching videos is a favorite activity among youth. Devote a “video night” to viewing films that will lead to a discussion of church vocations. In the ensuing discussion, explore how the protagonist was led to his or her vocation.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inform the parish youth of vocation events.</b></p> <p>Keep the youth informed of the events that they can participate in regarding vocations. These may include Operation Andrew evenings, holy hours, retreats and more. Consider attending a diocesan ordination as a group.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exhibit a love and respect of priests and religious.</b></p> <p>Our attitudes regarding priests and religious have a tremendous influence on the attitudes of young people. Talk about how your life has been affected by a particular priest or religious and provide opportunities for the youth to do the same.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Make vocation literature available.</b></p> <p>The Diocesan Vocation Office has materials that will gladly be shared with you. In addition, offer young people a reading list of spiritual books or suggest biblical readings and follow up with a group discussion. A list of vocation- oriented websites can be obtained from the Diocesan Vocation Office or from the Parish Vocations Committee.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Participate in Vocation Awareness Week.</b></p> <p>Promote the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which takes place on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, and other events sponsored by the Diocesan Vocation Office. Your presence and support will enhance the effectiveness of these events.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Invite a priest or religious brother or sister to spend time with youth.</b></p> <p>Invite a priest or religious to come and share their vocation story with the youth group. Having them spend time with young people offers an opportunity to develop personal relationships which are so important to a developing vocation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plan a trip to a Seminary or Convent.</b></p> <p>In addition to exploring a Seminary or Convent, your youth group can have the opportunity to see what it would be to live, study and pray at a seminary or convent. They can also meet women and men who are on their journey toward priesthood and religious life and hear how they were led to their particular vocation.</p>