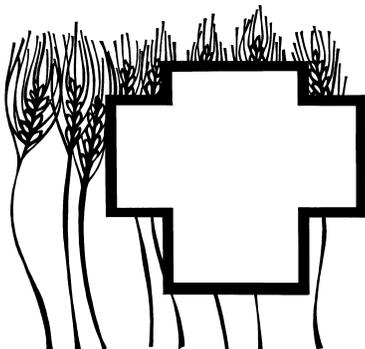
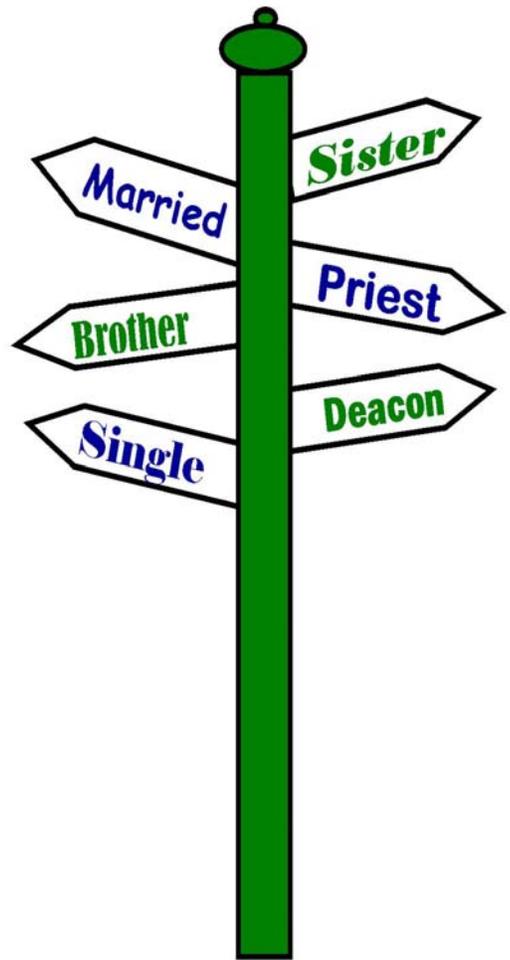


PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

Fostering a Culture
of Vocation



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1. Parish Vocation Committee: Introduction and Overview

In the decree of the Second Vatican Council, parish communities should 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 committee can raise awareness about, and share information about the various Catholic vocations: to the priesthood, the diaconate and to the religious, married, and single life.

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

1.1 Why Form a Parish Vocation Committee?

The parish community needs to pray and work together to encourage and foster a culture of vocation. Specific attention may 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 Vocation Committee?

The initiative to establish a Parish Vocation Committee is likely to come from the Pastor, a religious community, a Serran or others in the parish who are interested in fostering a culture of vocation.

1.3 Initial Planning

For those seeking to establish a Parish Vocation Committee, it would be necessary to first meet with the Pastor to explain the concept and to seek his support and ongoing commitment to this ministry. To achieve strong parish support the Parish Council and other relevant parish groups would need to be informed and asked for their support.

A Steering Committee would then be formed to establish:

- The purpose and focus of the Committee
- Key people involved
- Selection of members

2. Suggested Steps for Starting a Parish Vocation Committee:

2.1 Getting Organized

After consultation with the Pastor and Parish Council, the Committee will need to appoint a chairperson and decide how often you 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 Vocation Committee is to promote a culture of vocation through:

- Prayer
- Education of the Committee itself and other parishioners
- 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 Pastor of your plans and vision. Invite his input and participation. It is also important to meet regularly with the Parish Council to inform them of your activities. Provide them with a copy of your vision statement and reports of your on-going activities so that 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 Section 3.4).
- 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 Section 3.5).

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 morning Mass, etc. You may wish to attend their meetings and ask for their suggestions and help. Always give them something to pass on to others: e.g. prayer card or brochure.

2.6 Becoming Familiar with Available Resources

Become familiar with available resources:

- Vocation directors (Directory available through Archdiocesan Vocation Office)
- Printed materials in the resource catalogue of the National Coalition for Church Vocations: www.nccv-vocations.org
- VISION Magazine: www.visionguide.org
- Vocation information websites: www.nrvic.net; www.catholicozvocations.org.au; www.vocacioncatolica.org; www.whatismyvocation.com; www.vocations.com
- Marriage and Family Life website: <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/nav/family.htm>

2.7 Networking

Stay in contact with other parish vocation committees in your vicariate/diocese. They can be a source of support and new ideas. Consider organizing an annual meeting at the vicariate/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 Vocation Committee

Name

The name of this group will be the Parish Vocation Committee of (*parish name*) Catholic Community.

Purpose

The purpose of the Parish Vocation Committee is to inspire and assist the community of (*parish name*) in fulfilling its mission of fostering a culture of vocation, 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 Culture of Vocation

Committee members will foster a culture of vocation 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
- highlighting and celebrating the annual National Vocations Awareness Week (NVAW)
- regularly featuring discernment of vocation in the Sunday Prayers of the Faithful
- participating in the annual World Day of Prayer for Vocations
- establishing a Serran '31 Club' (*Appendix 9*)
- establishing the Parish Vocation Cross Program (*Appendix 10*)

2. Formation/Education of the Committee and Parishioners

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

- Reading and discussing relevant material, including the Vatican II Document *Lumen Gentium* (# 32 & 40), *HORIZON* magazine (the journal of the NRVC) Website: www.nrv.net
- Attending workshops/conferences
- Familiarization with Vocational Discernment Processes
- Understanding the various forms of both personal and communal prayer

3. Prayer

The Parish Vocation Committee will organize ongoing prayer for vocation discernment in the parish.

This may include:

- Prayers of the Faithful
- Vocation prayer cards for specific use by the elderly, sick and housebound
- Prayer groups and morning Mass goers be asked to make vocation discernment a special intention
- 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
- Parishioners be invited to participate in Serra Prayer programs*

**Contact your local or regional Serra Club for information.*

4. Inviting Individuals to Discern their Vocation

Parish Vocation Committee members 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 or religious life. ** The resources contained in Appendix 7 of these guidelines could be helpful.*

Relationship to Other Groups

Our Parish Vocation Committee is responsible to and reports regularly to the Parish 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. The Committee will also try to meet with other vocation committees in the vicariate/region/diocese.

Membership

Our Parish Vocation Committee is composed of not more than 10 members approved by the Parish Council. Ideally, we will have representation on the Committee from each of our vocational groupings: priest, deacon, married couple, single person, sister and/or brother. 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 Coordinator and other officers as needed.

Annual Review

It is recommended that we review the operation of this Committee annually in the light of these guidelines, and plan accordingly for coming year.

Approved by the Pastor and/or Parish Council

Pastor Parish Council President

Date / / 200 _

Appendix 2

Parish Vocation Committee Roles

Co-ordinator: Personal Attributes and Responsibilities

- Has a passion for the promotion of a culture of vocation
- 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 Vatican II Theology of Vocation
- Has skills in communication and team-building
- Has ability to speak publicly on behalf of the group
- Is willing to ensure that the Parish Vocation Committee remains vibrant through prayer, study, and planned activities for the parish
- Has a readiness to serve as the "connecting link" with the other Vocation Committees, the Archdiocesan Vocation Office
- Has the support and approval of the Pastor and Parish Administration

Committee Member: Personal Attributes and Responsibilities

- Has a passion for the promotion of a culture of vocation
- 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 Vatican II Theology of Vocation
- Places announcements in parish bulletins and newsletters, as well as advertises 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
- Affirms all involved in active ministry in the parish
- Publicizes deanery, regional, diocesan and national vocation events
- Enlists the support of the Pastor/s and the Parish Council for vocation events
- Links with the local Serra Club (if applicable). Information about Serra is available at this website: www.serraus.org.

Appendix 3

Parish Assessment Tool

VOCATION EDUCATION and AWARENESS SURVEY

Please indicate on the scale (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. Vocation 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 updated 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 priestly vocations by providing them with a positive and updated image of these lifestyles?

Minimum _____ **Maximum**
0 1 2 3 4 5

6. People need to know how God calls a person to the married, single, ordained or consecrated life.

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 Archdiocesan Vocation Office or the National Vocation Offices for parish, or youth ministry?

Yes No

8. Does our parish recognize and promote the annual National Vocation Awareness Week?

Yes No

9. 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

10. 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**
11. 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

12. Current research shows that young people desire to be invited to consider a vocation to the consecrated or ordained life.

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

Minimum _____ **Maximum**
0 1 2 3 4 5

13. 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

14. By virtue of our baptism, everyone has a vocation.

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

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

Does the parish staff confer with the staff of the elementary school to ensure that vocations to ordained ministry and religious life are fostered?

Minimum _____ **Maximum**
0 1 2 3 4 5

16. The local church is the place for promoting the various vocations: married, single, ordained, and consecrated religious life.

Does our parish have a functioning vocation committee that animates us in the fostering of a culture of vocation?

Minimum _____ **Maximum**
0 1 2 3 4 5

**Sample Bulletin Announcement for the
Parish Vocation Committee**

Parish Vocation Committee

Our parish has recently established a *Parish Vocation 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 (married, single, ordained, and consecrated life) are discerned
4. To establish a parish process for inviting individuals to consider a Religious or Priestly Vocation

The Committee members are: (names of members):

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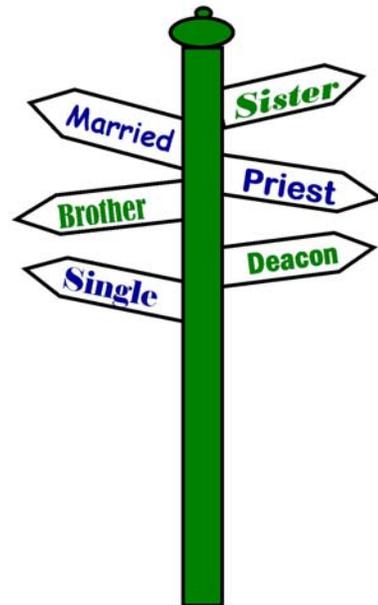
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Appendix 5

Sample Presentation by a Committee Member

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 Parish Vocation Committee.

Good evening/morning!

My name is _____ . I am a member of the newly formed Parish Vocation Committee in our parish. More parishes are becoming aware of the responsibility of promoting a healthy culture of vocation. 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 vocation**
- **To inform and educate the Committee and Parishioners regarding the theology of vocation**
- **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. Vocation ministry is the responsibility of each 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 begin our efforts, we have prayer cards available at the entrance to the Church. Please make sure to take one. If you have any questions about our Committee, I will be available after this Mass.

Thank you.

Appendix 6

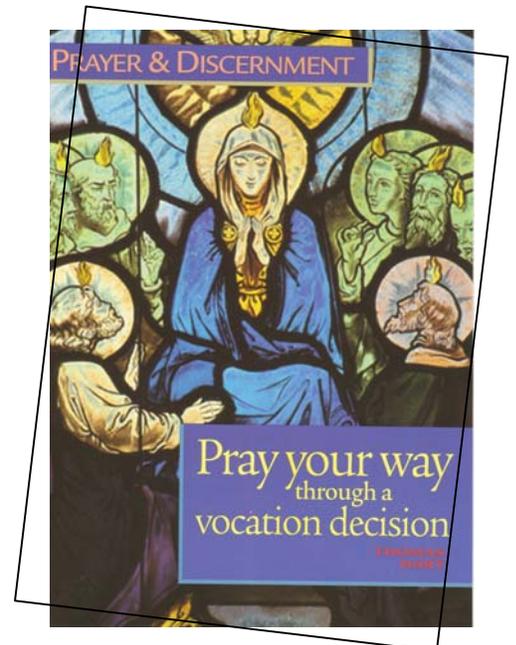
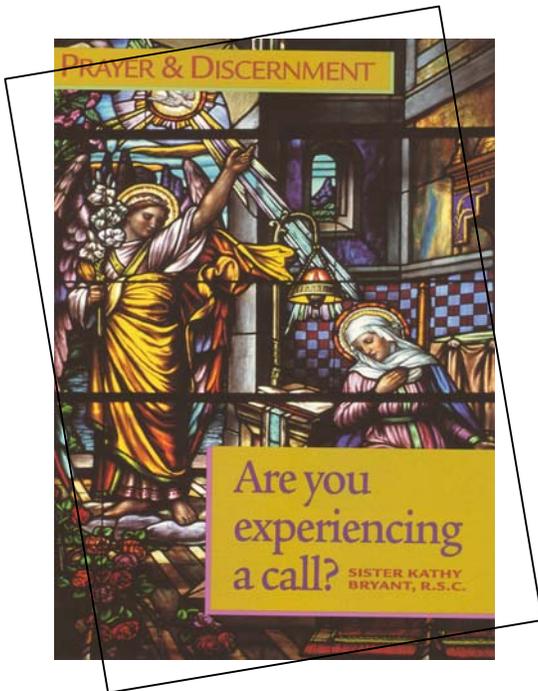
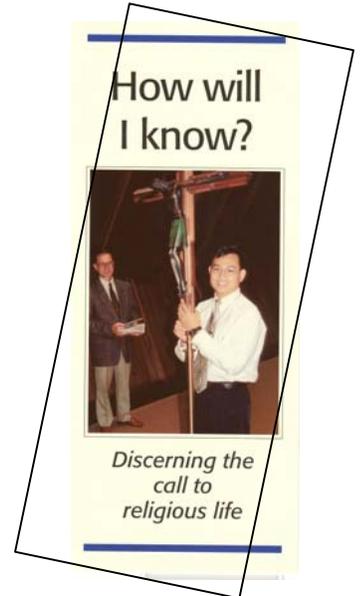
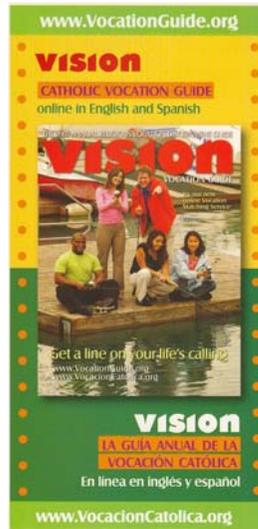
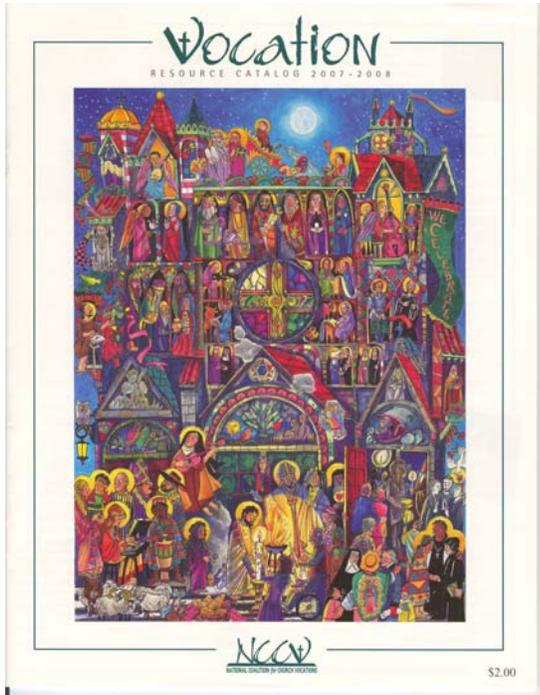
Underlying Principles in Vocation Awareness

- 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 vocation 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 equal 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 vocation decision until adulthood.
- Sisters, priests, deacons and brothers are ordinary people who do not 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.
- Priesthood, permanent diaconate and religious life are for healthy, happy and energetic women and men.
- 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: vocation, ministry, religious life, priesthood, diaconate, charism, vows, formation, novitiate.
- Religious life, priesthood, diaconate continue to evolve in ways rarely presented by the stereotypical images in the media.

Based on "A Future Full of Hope" – Parish Leadership (NCCV Chicago)

Appendix 7

Resources for Fostering a Culture of Vocation



Vocation Prayers

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. 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.

(Sr. Charlene Herinckx, SSMO)

3. 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.

4. 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 vocation 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)

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 favour 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 be praised without ceasing. Amen. (Archdiocese of Sydney, 2006)

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 vocation 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 all that your gift of life holds for me. 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 particular 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. *(Melbourne Vocations Website)*

A Vocation Discernment Prayer

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.

Serra Vocation Prayer

God our Father, Lord of the Harvest, through the intercession of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, St Joseph, Blessed Mary MacKillop, Blessed Junipero Serra and all the saints, we pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.



May your disciples respond generously when You call them into the ordained ministry and consecrated life in the Church. Thank you, Lord, for those who serve us now as dedicated bishops, priests, deacons and religious. May they be found faithful in fulfilling the ministry for which they have been chosen. We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Appendix 9

Parish 31 Club Program

If you ask others to pray for vocations, you need to begin by praying yourself. Make praying for good vocation discernment part of your private prayer every day. You may wish to use one of the vocation prayers in Appendix 8.

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.

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, and brothers 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 10

Parish Vocation Cross Program

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 Cross Program in the parish.

A cross (provided by Serra, or the parish or diocese) is circulated throughout the parish, with each family hosting the cross 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. Copies of a special vocation prayer are provided by the Parish Vocation Committee for use by the family. The cross 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 cross to the hosting family during a Sunday Mass. As well as creating a formal setting for handing over the cross, this reminds the entire congregation to pray for religious and priestly vocations.

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

"I present this cross 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 8* is provided for the family/person who is the custodian of the cross for the week.

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

Genesis 12:14; 15:6

Deuteronomy 29:3

1 Kings 19:19-21

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

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

Mark 1:16-20

John 1:35-51

Thessalonians 5:11

Exodus 3:11-12

1 Samuel 3:1-10

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

Amos 7:15

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

2 Timothy 1:6-13

Appendix 11

Further Possible Activities

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

Deuteronomy 29:3

1 Kings 19:19-21

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

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

Mark 1:16-20

John 1:35-51

Thessalonians 5:11

Exodus 3:11-12

1 Samuel 3:1-10

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

Amos 7:15

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

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 Vocation Awareness petitions 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 married couples will receive the graces to live out their vocation to marriage with joy and generosity
4. That young men and women will listen to the Spirit in their hearts and respond to the cry from deep within
5. 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
6. That our parish community, by its life of prayer and service, will actively nurture religious and priestly vocations
7. 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
8. That our daily living may transform our suffering world into a place of love, justice and peace
9. That the mystery of God's deep love will strengthen those who struggle in their vowed commitment
10. That we, as a parish, continue to support our priests, sisters, and brothers who inspire and strengthen us by the witness of their commitment
11. That God will continue to call women and men of faith to serve as ministers in our Church
12. That your Spirit will empower us all to respond to your call with courage, faith and generosity
13. That God will continue to call women and men to serve your church as sisters, brothers priests and deacons
14. That our lives may be a sign of your presence and love in the world
15. That parents and teachers may have the courage and faith to speak God's word in what they do and say
16. That those who seek to know the truth may hear the call of the Gospel and respond generously
17. 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
18. That parents may have the wisdom and knowledge to hand on their faith to their children
19. That our priests may be men of prayer who share your words of comfort and life with those who experience struggle, weariness and emptiness
20. That our young priests may experience the support and encouragement they need as they face an increasingly demanding future as shepherds of your flock
21. 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 your call to service

22. That we, as members of our parish, recognize our responsibility to invite younger parishioners to consider the call to ordained ministry and/or religious life.
23. 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 vocation prayers each day.

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 vocation prayers regularly.

Ministry to and by the Sick and Housebound

Ask those who are sick or housebound 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 8 for a suggested prayer.*) Encourage the priest/s and all who minister to the sick and housebound 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 Housebound' commitment card.* * *These need to be printed out on cards.*

Vocations Ministry of the Sick and Housebound

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 an act of kindness for someone.**
- 5. Accept willingly whatever daily life brings in terms of pain and loneliness.**

Sample Letter to Ministers of the Sick:

(Address)

(Date)

Dear _____

I am writing to invite your assistance in promoting prayer for good vocation discernment among our parishioners in response to God's call to holiness through one of these ways of loving: married, single, ordained, or religious life.

The sick and housebound 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 Housebound' commitment card. Would you kindly distribute these cards to the sick, housebound, 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 Vocation 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; 2 Thessalonians 2:14 - 17;

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

1 Peter 1:1-10

Appendix 12

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

People Need An Invitation

A major task of the Parish Vocation Committee is to identify individuals in the parish who might make good priests or religious, and personally invite them to consider this special call. This is a crucial part of vocation 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 the Parish Vocation Committee believes would make a good priest or religious, each Committee members should spend some time in prayer, 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.

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, ministers of Eucharist, musicians ...
- Primary and secondary teachers and catechists
- Youth leaders
- Other parish committee/organization members

There are many young, single Catholics 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 Vocation 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. During this search process 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 convey their contact information (name and phone number) to the committee*. 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 (i.e. priesthood or permanent diaconate) :

- **SERVICE** – Does the young person show signs of altruism?
- **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?
- **INQUIETUDE** – Is this an inquisitive person, someone who consistently asks the larger questions?
- **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 believe 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 Pastor 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 will approach which candidate. Say something like this:

“I am contacting you on behalf of our Parish Vocation 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 continue this conversation later, 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 Pastor /religious/deacon OR they may prefer someone outside the parish. All dioceses, and most religious congregations have designated vocation directors whose contact details are listed on the Archdiocesan website: www.archdpx.org.