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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIFE NIGHTS

- 10 **RE-GIFTED**
- Universal Call To Holiness
- 22 **NOW HIRING**
- God's Unique Call for Each of Us
- 36 **FOR BETTER OR WORSE**
- The Vocation of Marriage
- 52 **A HOUSE DIVIDED**
- Divorce
- 64 **REAL LIFE | HOLY ORDERS**
- The Vocation of Holy Orders
- 74 **I OBJECT!**
- Objections to Holy Orders
- 84 **A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN**
- The Consecrated Life
- 94 **BOUND TOGETHER**
- Discernment and Community

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Life Teen *Curriculum Guide*. This book takes the place of the old Life Night Planning Guide (LNPG). The goal of the Curriculum Guides is to help you provide systematic and complete catechesis for your teenagers while providing opportunities for evangelization and transformation as well.

This book is the eighth of an 8-semester curriculum. The content for the eight semesters is based on the United States Council of Catholic Bishops “National Doctrinal Curriculum Framework for High School.” The Bishop’s Council approved this framework in November 2008. A member of the USCCB staff, Michael Steier, commented on the Framework, “The Framework is not a teaching tool itself but a tool designed to guide the development of texts and other teaching materials (by publishers). The Committee on Catechesis is relying on the expertise of publishers to develop texts which reflect the doctrinal content of the Framework in a manner that will appeal to young people.”

In accordance with the Curriculum Framework, Life Teen recommends that a 4-year (or 8 semester) catechetical plan be implemented in each parish to ensure that complete and quality catechesis is offered to every teen involved in a Life Teen program.

In May 2007 we published the first *Curriculum Guide* on Sacred Scripture. While you do not have to use the semesters in the order that we present them, each book will typically build on each other and work together to create a systematic curriculum. Below is an overview of the entire 8-semester plan:

- Sacred Scripture
- Person of Christ
- Paschal Mystery
- Church
- Sacraments
- Morality
- Social Justice
- Vocation

This book is the final in the series and breaks open the universal call to holiness and the individual vocations of Holy Order, Marriage, Single Life and Consecrated Life. In this book you will find eight Life Nights that introduce the concept of discerning God’s will for our lives and practical ways to do so. These nights are designed to call your teens to holiness in creative and engaging ways. What you will not find is the issue and social Life Nights that used to be included in the LNPG books. You can find those types of nights in the resource called *Spotlight*, which is also in your Life Support box.

When planning your semester on Vocation, it is recommended that you combine these doctrinal Life Nights with issue and social Life Nights as well. Typically, a Life Teen parish doing Life Nights every week will have 2 doctrinal, 1 issue, and 1 social night during the course of a month. Pay attention to the calendar when planning out your semester. Be sure to connect the Life Nights with what is going on in the teen’s life as well as the life of the Church. For example, if there is Homecoming or Prom during the semester have a night addressing peer pressure. Similarly, if Advent or Lent begins during the semester, have a night helping teens enter into the liturgical season.

As always, these Life Nights were never designed to work “straight out of the box.” These are planning guides that can serve as starting points in the planning of your Life Nights. In your planning, you must always take into consideration the needs of your teens and the resources of your parish. For example, the teaching outline for each night is filled with more information than a typically teenager can absorb during a 10-minute talk. But by giving the presenter more than enough information, he or she can create an engaging and informative presentation. This semester in particular will take more planning in order to bring in people from the various vocations to present at the Life Nights.

In order to help you in your adaptation of these Life Nights, we have included two sections at the end of each guide. The first is *Community Connection*. These are ideas on how to involve the larger parish community in your youth ministry program, everyone from parents to priests. The second is called *Making It Work*. This includes alternative ideas to consider when adapting the Night depending on the size of your program and the needs of your teens.

We pray that this *Curriculum Guide* will allow you to more effectively reach and form your young people as vibrant, active and holy Disciples of Christ.

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

RESPONDING TO THE CALL OF JESUS CHRIST - VOCATION

The purpose of this course is to help teens understand the vocations of life: how Christ calls us to live. In this semester teens will learn how all vocations are similar and how they differ. Teens will 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.

Universal Call To Holiness (Re-Gifted)

A. Universal call to holiness (CCC, 2013-2014, 2028, 2813)

1. A longing for God is inherent to the human person
2. God wants every person to know him, to love him and to serve him
3. How we reflect Trinitarian life
4. How Christ shows us the way to discipleship
5. The ways in which God sanctifies us
6. Learning how to make a gift of oneself

God's Unique Call for Each of Us (Now Hiring)

A. Our vocation from God (CCC, Glossary)

1. A vocation is not the same as a job or career
 - a. The relationship between one's work and vocation
2. Definition/description of discernment—role of Church and individual
 - a. Divine Providence in the events of one's life
 - b. Prayerful reflection and discernment
3. Traditionally recognized states of life (CCC, 2004, 2230)
 - a. Married (CCC, 1535)
 - b. Committed single life (CCC, 898-900, 2442)
 - c. Ordained bishop, priest or deacon (CCC, 1578, 1593)
 - d. Consecrated life (CCC, 916, 933)

4. Lay ecclesial movements and ministries (CCC, 901-913)

B. Sacraments at the Service of Communion (CCC, 1533-1535)

1. Marriage as a Sacrament given to foster the good of the human family, society and the Church (CCC, 1601—1666)
2. Holy Orders as a Sacrament given to foster the good of the spiritual family, the Church (CCC, 1536-1600)

C. Isn't having the right vocation, job or career essential for a person's happiness?

1. No. The foundational call from God is not to a particular vocation, job, career or way of life but to universal holiness and communion with him. This is the basis of all happiness.
2. Often the key to happiness is using one's gifts fully for God by using them to serve others in Christian love.
3. However, a refusal to answer God's call may result in a more difficult road to eternal life, or it may even jeopardize one's salvation.

D. Isn't the real measure of success in life the degree of one's financial security and material comfort?

1. To some, the measure of success may be money and physical comforts, but that is not what Jesus Christ either taught or lived.
2. Personal satisfaction in life finds a firm foundation in our relationship with the Lord and secondly in our relationships with other people.
3. The ultimate goal in life should be holiness; this is where true success lies.
4. In the Beatitudes, Jesus Christ teaches us attitudes essential for true happiness

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

- e. Marriage involves a total self-giving of the spouses; requires a sense of discipline, generosity and an understanding of true love
 - f. Expressions of healthy sexual relations in marriage
 - 1) Natural Family Planning
 - 2) Arguments against contraception
 - g. Healthy personal and dating habits as a high-school aged person
 - h. Marriage reflects Christ's relationship to the Church (Eph 5:21-33; CCC, 1642)
 - i. Develop skills for living a life-long commitment
3. Immediate preparation
- a. Church's responsibility to prepare couples for marriage
 - b. Dioceses require period of preparation that varies by diocese
 - c. Focus on the couples' promises
 - 1) Life-long union
 - 2) Exclusive and faithful union
 - 3) Openness to children
 - d. Help engaged persons grow in knowledge of self, their future spouse, and their relationship.
 - e. Teach practical skills to help couples live what they promise

E. Effects of the Sacrament (CCC, 1638-1642)

1. Married couples given the grace to love unselfishly
2. Also the grace to strengthen the permanent nature of their union and to appreciate the joy their union can bring (CCC, 1615).
3. Couples given the grace which strengthens them to attain eternal life (CCC, 1617, 1639, 1641)
4. When blessed with children parents helped to raise them in faith and love (CCC, 1652-1654)
5. Witness of faithful couples strengthens Church community and the fabric of society (CCC, 1655-1658)

Divorce (A House Divided)

A. Challenges to Marriage and Family Life (CCC, 1649-1651)

1. Social challenges: acceptance of divorce and remarriage; popular cultural values are pushing aside traditional values; cohabitation before marriage; weakening of the bond between husband and wife
2. Increase in inter-church marriages
3. Impact of images in media, and challenges to traditional marriage in law
4. Blended families; loss of the extended family ties
5. Financial burdens; need for both parents to work outside the home
6. Loss of respect for the dignity of all human beings
7. Lack of willingness to accept children as a gift from God
8. Natural authority of parents is challenged

B. The question of divorce and/or remarriage

1. Christ teaches that a marriage lasts as long as both parties are still alive (CCC, 1650)
2. When and why a civil divorce may be permitted (CCC, 1649)
 - a. Civil divorce does not end a valid sacramental marriage
 - b. Sacraments for divorced but not remarried Catholics
 - c. Consequences for divorced Catholics who attempt marriage without a declaration of nullity (CCC, 1665)
 - 1) Catholic parties in a civil marriage are living in an objective state of sin; they are also a source of scandal to others
 - 2) They are not separated from the Church and are obligated to attend Sunday Mass but barred from the reception of Sacraments except in danger of death
 - 3) Ineligible to serve as a sponsor for Baptism or Confirmation

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

3. Determining the validity of previous marriage of divorced Catholics

- a. A declaration of nullity of marriage can be issued if it is proven that there was a defect of consent, a defect of form, or the existence of an impediment. (CCC, 1625-1632)
- b. Other reasons for declaration of nullity
 - 1) If one or both of the spouses lacked the psychological capacity to assume the essential obligations of marriage
 - 2) If one or both were forced into the marriage

C. Just as a person falls in love, they also fall out of love. Isn't a failed marriage just a regular part of life?

1. Failed marriages might be a regular part of life but they happen because of our fallen human nature. God teaches us to see and understand marriage as something which lasts for life.
2. We know through Revelation that from the creation of the world and the creation of human beings, God's plan included marriage. Jesus Christ raised marriage to the level of a Sacrament and taught that properly understood it involves life-long commitment.
3. Jesus Christ has taught us to recognize that the love between spouses is an image of the unending aspect of God's love for us; he has promised to love us and he does not break his promises. Neither should we break promises of marriage.
4. Married love involves not just feelings but also a commitment of reason and will; married love cannot deepen unless it faces and overcomes hard times and adversity.
5. God does give the grace needed to live out our commitments

The Vocation of Holy Orders (Real Life | Holy Orders)

A. Instituted by Christ at the Last Supper as a sign of the Lord's abiding presence and priestly action in the Church (CCC, 1564)

B. Historical development of the three orders of the Sacrament

1. Apostles as the pastors and leaders of the early Church, the first bishops
2. As the Church grew, Apostles and successors ordained priests as their co-workers
3. Original deacons ordained to serve material needs of Community (Acts 6:1-7)

C. The three degrees of Holy Orders

1. Bishop (office of sanctifying, teaching, and governing) (CCC, 1555-1561)
 - a. Successor of the Apostles
 - b. A member of the college of bishops in communion with pope
 - c. The bishop is the shepherd and high priest of a diocese, responsible for teaching and sanctifying his flock and proclaiming the truth to all; he wears a miter and carries a crozier to symbolize this
 - d. Bishop is understood as "married" to diocese; this is partly why he wears a ring
 - e. Minister of all Sacraments;
 - 1) Confirmation generally conferred by bishops in the Latin Church
 - 2) Ordination is reserved to bishops alone
 - f. Chosen by the pope from among priests
 - g. Archbishops and Cardinals (or Patriarch or Major Archbishop in some Eastern Churches)
2. Priest (CCC, 1562-1568)
 - a. Priest acts in the person of Christ: in persona Christi capitis
 - b. Ordained by bishop as co-worker with bishop
 - c. Special focus of priest is ministry of the word and of the sacraments
 - d. Generally serves in a parish; only a priest can serve as a pastor of a parish
 - e. Minister of:
 - 1) Sacraments of Baptism (and Chrismation in the Eastern Churches), Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and Confirmation in certain circumstances;
 - 2) In Sacrament of Marriage in the Latin Church the priest receives the consent of the spouses in name of Church and gives blessing of the Church (CCC, 1630)

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

3. Deacon (CCC, 1569-1571)
 - a. Ordained by bishop to be of service to him and his priests
 - b. Special focus of deacon is ministry of charitable service
 - c. Assists in celebration of the Divine mysteries (CCC, 1570)
 - 1) Minister of Baptism (CCC, 1256)
 - 2) Assists at the Eucharist
 - 3) Proclaims Gospel and preaches
 - 4) Can preside at Funerals
 - 5) Assist at and bless marriages (CCC, 1630)
 - d. In the Eastern Churches the deacon is not the ordinary minister of Baptism and also cannot solemnize or witness a marriage.
 - e. Types of deacons
 - 1) Transitional: before being ordained a priest, a man is first ordained a deacon and serves in that role generally for six months to a year
 - 2) Permanent: some men (including married men) are ordained deacons for life

D. Preparation

1. A bishop is prepared through ministry as a priest and a life of prayer and sacrifice
2. Remote preparation for priesthood
 - a. As a child, there is the example of parish priests and the encouragement from family and community
 - b. Prayer and discernment by the candidate
3. A priest is prepared through years of formation in a seminary
 - a. Study of philosophy and theology
 - b. Human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral development
 - c. Understanding and embracing the promises he makes:
 - 1) obedience to his bishop (CCC, 1567)
 - 2) the gift of celibacy; marriage renounced for the sake of the Kingdom (CCC, 1579)
 - 3) priests in religious institutes must also embrace vows
4. A transitional deacon is prepared as part of his training for priesthood (CCC, 1569- 1571)

5. Permanent deacons participate in a number of years of part-time preparation
 - a. Human and intellectual formation
 - b. Spiritual and pastoral formation

E. Celebration of the Sacrament

1. Essential element of each order is the laying on of hands by the bishop and the consecratory prayer (CCC, 1573)
2. Chrism is used in the ordination of a priest and of a bishop (CCC, 1574)
 - a. At the ordination of a priest, his hands are anointed with Chrism
 - b. At the ordination of a bishop, Chrism is poured on his head
3. Unique elements at the ordination of each
 - a. A bishop is presented with a ring, a crosier and a miter
 - b. A priest is clothed in the vestments of a priest (stole and chasuble) and then presented with the bread and wine that will be consecrated
 - c. A deacon is clothed in the vestments of a deacon (stole and dalmatic) and presented with the Book of the Gospels which he will proclaim

F. Effects of the Sacrament (CCC, 1581-1584)

1. The one ordained is marked with a permanent seal or character
2. Purpose of seal or character (CCC, 1581-1584)

Objections to Holy Orders (I Object!)

A. Holy Orders is a Sacrament reserved to men (CCC, 1577)

- a. "The Church is not free to ordain women" (Ordinatio sacerdotalis)
 - 1) It is not a question of the ability to carry out the functions of the ministry
 - 2) It is the matter of what Christ has established, and the sacramental reality and symbolism of the priestly office

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

- b. Bishop or priest serves as an icon of Christ: Head of his Body, Bridegroom of the Church
- c. There is no historical basis for women serving as deacons in the diaconate as we now know and understand it

B. Don't men and women who promise celibacy or life-long chastity live lonely, unhappy lives?

1. Some who promise life-long celibacy and chastity may experience loneliness as do some married people.
2. Most men who become priests, monks or brothers and most women who become nuns, sisters, and consecrated virgins generally live happy and fulfilling lives.
3. Sexual intimacy with another is not essential for personal fulfillment and happiness.
4. The heart of celibacy is a truly loving relationship with the Lord, expressed in a self-gift to others in his name.
5. Committed celibacy for the sake of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom brings consolation that cannot be appreciated by one who has not lived it. Living a life of committed celibacy or chastity gives one a sense of the gifts of the eternal life to come
6. God gives the grace needed to live out our commitments.

The Consecrated Life (A Marriage Made in Heaven)

A. The work of the Spirit in the various forms of consecrated life (CCC, 914-933)

1. Monastic life
2. The Order of Virgins; hermits and widows (CCC, 920-924)
3. Apostolic Religious Life (CCC, 925-927)
4. Secular institutes (CCC, 928-929)

5. Societies of Apostolic Life (CCC, 930)
6. New expressions of consecrated life (CCC, 931-933)
7. Lay ecclesial movements

B. The Evangelical Counsels: poverty, chastity and obedience (CCC, 915-916)

C. Consecrated like Christ for the Kingdom of God

D. The Paschal dimension of the consecrated life

E. Witnesses to Christ in the world

F. Eschatological dimension of the consecrated life

G. The Virgin Mary, model of consecration and discipleship (CCC, 967, 2030)

Discernment and Community (Bound Together)

A. Teaching and example of Jesus—His commandment of love (CCC, 1823)

1. An unselfish gift of self to God and others
2. Service to our brothers and sisters in the Church and world

B. No vocation is lived in isolation (CCC, 543, 804, 831, 1886, 1878-1885)

1. Human beings exist in relationship with others; give of oneself in order to find oneself
2. There are many levels and types of relationship

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

The goal for this Life Night is to introduce this semester on vocation. This Life Night will address the universal vocation of holiness before we talk about specific vocations.

Life Night at a Glance

This Life Night seeks to break open the foundation of all vocations—our call to holiness. In this first night of the vocations semester, the teens will understand that no matter what specific vocation God calls them to, they must first offer themselves as a gift back to the Father. The Life Night starts off with a free-for-all gift unwrapping and humorous skit about re-gifting. The teaching breaks open the universal call to holiness. The Break gathers teens into small groups to discuss what they think "self-gift" means. The night ends with a time of adoration that focuses on the self-gift of Jesus Christ and a challenge to the teens to open their hearts for the semester.

Mass Announcement

If the youth minister gives announcements at the end of Mass, try this fun announcement for the Life Night: while the youth minister is giving the announcements for the week, have a Core Member come forward and interrupt him/her by giving a gift. The dialogue should play out to reveal that the youth minister gave that gift to the Core Member a year ago and the Core Member has re-gifted it. At the end, make sure that the youth minister invites all high school teens to Life Night.

Environment

The environment for this night is like Christmas on steroids! A few weeks before the night, collect at least as many boxes as number of teens in the program. The more boxes, the better. The boxes will be used in the Gather of the night. After all the boxes are collected, wrap them with wrapping paper and/or newspaper. Once all the boxes are wrapped, set them up all around the meeting space. Try to fill the perimeter of the whole space. The boxes can be stacked on top of each other or placed around the room. Be as creative as possible in the set-up.

GATHER *20 Minutes*

Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

As the teens gather for Life Night, be sure that the Core Members are welcoming all the teens. It is important to set a tone of hospitality for the semester. Once all the teens have gathered, the youth minister should welcome all the teens at Life Night for the first time. After all the teens are introduced, the youth minister should introduce the semester on vocations and this Life Night on the universal call to holiness.

"Unwrapped" Game (10 min)

Instruct all the teens that they have two minutes to unwrap as many gifts as possible. Tell them that one of the boxes has a gift inside of it. The person who finds the gift wins it. The gift should be something re-gifted from the youth minister.

Re-gifted Skit (5 min)

This short and humorous skit portrays a Core Member getting caught in the act of re-gifting.

The skit can be found on pages 18-19.

PROCLAIM *10 Minutes*

Universal Call To Holiness

Teaching (10 min)

This teaching should set the tone for the entire semester and address some of the teens' misconceptions about vocations and God's plan for their lives. The person giving the teaching should utilize his/her own experience to bring the topic to life.

The teaching outline can be found on pages 13-17.

CATECHISM REFERENCES:

2013-2014

2028

2813

SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 5:48

Psalms 63

1 Thessalonians 4:3

BREAK 25 Minutes

Semester Small Groups

Many youth groups are discovering the benefit of small groups that stay consistent for an entire school semester or year. When small groups stay the same over a period of time, it creates a deeper sense of community and trust between peers. It also helps create accountability not only between Core Members and teens, but also between teens. Groups that stay together for a whole semester are also able to dive deeper into conversations and topics.

If your youth group does not already have small groups that stay the same for the semester, consider doing so for this Vocations semester. During the gathering of the first night, have all the teens sign up for a small group. Or have the youth minister break the teens present into small groups. Explain to them that the groups will remain unchanged for the semester. During the first small group time, the Core Members will announce which group they will facilitate. If the groups are all male or female, try and have a same-sex Core Member lead that group. As new teens arrive throughout the semester, be sure to have a plan on how to incorporate them into existing small groups. Challenge the Core Members to foster sincere relationships with the teens in their groups and to contact them outside of the Life Night setting.

Semester Small Groups (25 min)

At the beginning of the small group, have all the teens introduce themselves by giving their name and where they go to school. The youth minister should then open the group in prayer. During this small group time, take time to discuss the following questions:

1. What is the best gift you have received?
2. What is the best gift you have given?
3. If you could only get one more gift for the rest of your life, what would it be?
4. What do you think that St. Augustine meant when he said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You"?
5. What does it mean to you to be a "self-gift"?

6. What are a few ways you can be a better self-gift to God? To family? To peers?

SEND 20 Minutes

Recap (2 min)

The youth minister should gather the group back together in the chapel or church. He/She should remind the teens that everyone's vocation is to give God their whole lives as a gift of self, because God first gave Himself to us.

Self-Gift of the Eucharist (3 min)

We have a perfect example of total self-gift and sacrifice to God the Father in Jesus Christ. The Send for this night will give the teens an opportunity to ask the Lord for openness to their vocation.

Use the following as a guide to introduce Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:

For many of us, this place is very familiar. We come to this church/chapel every week. We know the little details of the decorations. We might even have our spot picked out. But, do we really understand and perceive what happens before our eyes every time we come to Mass? Whether we believe it or not, Jesus Christ, body, blood, soul, and divinity, the very Real Presence of the Eucharist is made present to us by the power of the Holy Spirit on this very altar. We, in that very moment are brought back to the Crucifixion, the moment when Jesus offered his life as a total self-gift for us to the Father. He heard the call from his Father and followed His will. Jesus gave us the Eucharist so that He could always be with us. In the Eucharist, we are reminded that loving and serving God, especially though our vocation, requires us to die to ourselves and give our lives back to God. That is what this semester is all about: giving our lives back to God. We are going to bring the Eucharist out for Adoration. This is a time when we can come before the Real Presence of Jesus Christ to worship and pray. Tonight, we want to challenge you to commit to praying and asking God to open your heart to vocation—not whether you should be married or a priest, but that God has a greater plan and purpose for your life. After we bring out Jesus and when you are ready to truly commit to that challenge, we invite you to move forward to the altar as a sign of your openness.

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Eucharistic Adoration (15 min)

Have the priest or deacon process in with the monstrance and begin the time of Adoration. If possible, have the music minister present to lead a time of worship. If necessary, the youth minister should be available to offer some guidance. The Core Members should also be available for the teens, if they want to talk. Close the time of Adoration with Benediction and the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

Making it Work

- Ask different families and parents to donate wrapping paper and boxes for the environment of the night.
- Create a card to hand to all of the teens at the end of the night with a schedule of events for the semester. Be sure to have all the Life Night dates and titles. Leave room on the front for them to write the name of their small group leader.
- Work out the details of having consistent small groups with the Core team in advance. Challenge them to make a commitment to building relationships with the teens in their groups. If possible, host a training day on small group facilitation before the semester begins.

Community Connection

- Invite parents from the community to help with food for the semester. Create a list of volunteers and assign them to a Life Night.
- Invite the parish priests and deacons to be a part of the semester. Give them a schedule of events and ask them to be a part of the events as their schedules allow.
- If there are communities of religious sisters in your area, invite them to be part of this semester.
- Give the names of all the teens in the parish to different families, priests, and religious groups to pray for during the semester.

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

TEACHING

To the presenter: The teaching outlines given in this Curriculum Guide cover much more information than can be presented in a 10-minute talk. This is done on purpose. It is the role of presenter to be familiar with the topic and then prayerfully prepare the main points that will be presented to the teens. Use Scripture, Catechism and personal experience to convey the message.

What it is

Have you ever heard the saying that there is a “God-shaped hole” in each of us? This is an old saying that means we all have some need that only God can fill. Though the example may seem a little offsetting, it has always been true that man has always searched for God. Ancient cultures have had designated religious men and women whose responsibility was to establish communication with the sacred. Philosophers operating without a direct link to Revelation have pondered our existence and have consistently arrived at the truth that we are here because of a power greater than ourselves. In our own tradition, we know that man and God have always had a direct link. Our God is a God who has revealed Himself in history and continues to act in the world today. There is also a degree of emptiness in the heart of each of us. This is in part due to the great loss of our original innocence and grace, which leaves us in need of redemption—in need of the God who makes Himself known.

Psalm 63 begins with the words of praise: “O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; / My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, / In a dry and weary land where there is no water.” This is the cry of every human person. However, God is not always where people look for answers and happiness. Sometimes we can reconstruct this verse to say, “O [insert vice here], you are my god; I shall seek you...” Even though we may place other things higher than we place our Lord, we are always trying to satiate that emptiness we can sometimes feel. St. Augustine speaks of God saying, “You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You.” How true this is.

**Psalm 63:1
Confessions, 1.1**

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

TEACHING

It is God who we serve, and it is God in whom we will find our happiness. This isn't just what the Church says. It is what our hearts tell us:

"It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal."

God is calling each of us—individually and personally. You have a call from God. It is specifically **your** call. It is **your** vocation.

We all have a vocation, a calling from God. In the past, the word vocation was only used when talking about becoming a priest or a religious. Since the Second Vatican Council, we now understand that this is a bit shortsighted. Your vocation may be to be a mom or a dad. You may be called to the single life. You may be called to be a doctor, a teacher, a salesperson, or an office worker all for the greater glory of God. Yes, God may call you into a career through which you are made holier and He is glorified.

This represents what the Church calls the "universal call to holiness" that we all share. The Second Vatican Council tells us that, "everyone [in the Church] whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle [St. Paul]: 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification'."

The Scriptures tell us here that our holiness is God's concern. He wants to fill our emptiness as desperately as we seek to have it filled. It is our call to make this holiness of the Church manifest in the world through our perfection of love.

Pope John Paul II the Great, address to World Youth Day, 2000

Lumen Gentium, V (39)

1 Thessalonians 4:3

Matthew 5:48,

CCC 201

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

TEACHING

prayer and in the cooperation with His grace in our lives. We can become disciples of our Lord in the world—to live out our Baptismal calling of holiness in society and change the world in which we live.

How it's lived

God chooses to cleanse us of our depravity and to fill up the empty cistern of our hearts with the living water of His grace. The place where this happens most often is within the Sacraments; more specifically at Baptism. It is “in the waters of Baptism [that] we have been ‘washed ... sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.’”

Now that you've been cleansed and baptized into Christ, how do you sustain this new life of Grace?

Go to the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the representation of our Savior's sacrifice on the cross, and the “source and summit of Christian life” from which all graces flow. It is the food that sustains us in our quest for holiness and the source of our strength. Its benefit to our Christian life of prayer and holiness is invaluable. It is God.

The other Sacraments will lead us to a life of holiness. Reconciliation helps to renew our faith and love in Christ after we have used something else to satisfy our longing and need for God. Confirmation strengthens the gift of Grace we received at Baptism. Anointing of the Sick brings us closer to our Lord in our most corporeally desperate moments and gives us the grace to persevere.

These Sacraments sustain our soul and preserve our call to holiness. The final two Sacraments come with vocations: Marriage and Holy Orders. In these two particular vocations, people are called not only to give of themselves, but also to completely make themselves a *self-gift*. If you are called to one of these vocations (and most of us are), your pursuit of holiness takes on a new direction, as you no longer live only for yourself, but for another. A man who desires to be holy prays and works for the Lord. Once he is ordained a priest, his calling is to give of himself for the sake of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Through this sacrifice the priest is made holier. A couple that enters into marriage does so by

CCC 2813

1 Corinthians 6:11

CCC 1324

Gaudium et Spes, 24

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

TEACHING

vowing to love—to sacrifice for—the other. They are required to make themselves a *self-gift* for the sake of their spouse in order to lead them to holiness. In doing this, they satisfy their vocation—their call to be holy. Holy Mother Church teaches at the Second Vatican Council that someone “cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.” This is why we are called by our Lord to give.

To repeat the words of our former pontiff, John Paul II the Great, “It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle.”

It is Jesus who is calling you to be holy because it is with him you will find the most joy in this world and the next.

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

SKIT

Characters:

Youth Minister

Core Member

**Note: Be sure to substitute the youth minister's and Core Member's name where it says "youth minister name" or "Core Member name."*

SCENARIO:

The youth minister is transitioning into the teaching for the night when a Core Member interrupts the youth minister with a surprise gift.

YOUTH MINISTER

We are so excited to have you all with us for our semester on vocations. It is going to be a great semester. We are going to dive deeper into the vocations of marriage, priesthood and religious life. But, before we get started I want to read a Scripture verse that has been on my heart while we were preparing for this semester.

(Reaches for his/her Bible but finds it missing)

Um, hold on. My Bible seems to be misplaced.

CORE MEMBER

(Core Member interrupts by walking up front with a wrapped gift)

Excuse me, (youth minister name)

YOUTH MINISTER

Not now, (Core Member name.) My Bible is gone.

CORE MEMBER

Yeah, I took your Bible on purpose.

YOUTH MINISTER

You did? Why? Don't you know its wrong to steal? It's in the Bible.

CORE MEMBER

I know. But, I wanted to give you this gift. I figured you do so much for all of us that you deserved it. And, what a better place than in front of all the teens.

(hands youth minister the wrapped gift)

YOUTH MINISTER

(opening gift)

(Core Member name), you are so thoughtful. Thank you so much. You didn't have to do that.

CORE MEMBER

(smiling)

Well, you know. It's just a little something.

YOUTH MINISTER

(surprised and laughing)

A new Bible! I need one of these! Mine was stolen!

(Thumbs through it and becomes increasingly upset)

CORE MEMBER

Do you like it?

YOUTH MINISTER

Where did you get this Bible? It seems familiar.

CORE MEMBER

Um... the store? Why do you ask?

YOUTH MINISTER

Uh huh...

(Core Member name), can you please read what's written on the inside cover to the group.

(Hands the Bible to the Core Member)

CORE MEMBER

(reading very quickly)

(Core Member name), I am so thankful for your "yes" to God's call to serve as a Core Member here at (parish name). May the Holy Spirit guide your ministry and may the Word of God strengthen you. Please know that you will remain in my daily prayers. God's Peace.
(Youth Minister name).

YOUTH MINISTER

Is this not the Bible I gave you your first day as a Core Member? Are you re-gifting me the Bible I gave to you?

CORE MEMBER

(with a large smile)

Um.....Maybe?

YOUTH MINISTER

I can't even believe you!

CORE MEMBER

(sucking up)

It's the thought that counts, right.

YOUTH MINISTER

Thank you for the Bible. I'll be sure to return it to you after the night is over. Now, go sit down. You apparently need this night as much as the rest of us.

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

Unwrapped Game _____

Re-Gifted Skit _____

Eucharistic Adoration _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.

Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the materials needed.

Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Teaching _____

Re-Gifted Skit Characters (2)

Week of the Life Night:

Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.

Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night. Youth minister gives feedback.

Create environment and collect needed supplies.

Email entire Core team an overview of the night and all small group questions.

Day of the Life Night:

Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.

Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.

Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.



NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

This night will help teens understand vocations as a specific and unique calling rather than a job or something they can choose. This night will give the teens practical tools to begin to discern their vocations.

Life Night at a Glance

In today's society, a job is central to a person's life. It provides for physical needs and helps define a person's status. This night seeks to help teens understand that a vocation is different from a job or career. The night begins with a skit between Jesus and three different people interviewing for a position. The skit leads into a teaching on the difference between a job or career and a vocation. In small groups, the teens will break open this topic by answering questions related to jobs and vocations. Finally, the teens will begin a novena to St. Joseph for vocations.

Environment

For this Life Night create a "job fair" with four to five booths. Each booth can be labeled after one of the vocations (multiple booths for the same vocation is okay). Have one or two Core Members at each booth dressed in the typical dress of that particular vocation (priest, sister, married couple, etc.) The Core Members should try and recruit/interview the teens as they are gathering into the room like they would someone on a job interview. The Holy Orders booth should not let the girls come to their booth. Each booth should ask the teens to write down their name and email address. At the front of the room, have the scene set for the "Job Opening" skit.

GATHER *12 Minutes*

Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

The youth minister should welcome everyone to the Life Night. He/she should introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

Job Opening Skit (7 min)

This skit portrays three different people interviewing with Jesus for a job position. This skit was first published in the Life Night "Sync Up."

The "Job Opening" skit can be found on pages 30-33.

PROCLAIM *18 Minutes*

"God's Calling" Teaching (10 min)

The teaching for this night will focus on the difference between a job and a vocation. It will also give a brief overview of the different vocations in the Church.

The teaching can be found on pages 24-29.

"Mystery Trip" Video (8 min)

As a transition into the small group discussion, play the Mystery Trip trailer. This film was produced by Dumb Ox Productions and documents a group of teens who went on a trip with no details about the journey or destination. It leaves the audience with the question: Can you trust God, even if you don't know where He will lead you?

"Mystery Trip Trailer" can be found on Video Support 8

BREAK *30 Minutes*

Small Groups (30 min)

After the teaching and video, break the teens up into their small groups. The groups will answer questions about the difference between a career and a vocation.

1. What is your dream job? Why?
2. What do the words "discernment" and "vocation" mean to you?
3. Do you trust God with your future? Why or why not?
4. Have you taken the time to think about what vocation God may be calling you to? How can you continue to discern where God is calling you?
5. Is there one vocation that you fear God is calling you to? Why?

CATECHISM REFERENCES:

# 305	# 1578	# 2442
# 898-913	# 1593	
# 916	# 1601- 1666	
# 933	# 2004	
# 1533-1535	# 2230	

SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 5:3-12, 19:8-9, 22:37-40	Ephesians 5:24 Hebrews 13:5 1 Peter 5:7
Luke 12:49 John 15:16	
Romans 12:6-8	
1 Corinthians 12	

SEND 15 Minutes**Recap** (5 min)

Gather all the teens back together. The Core Members should hand each teen a "Novena to St. Joseph" card. The youth minister should recap the night reminding the teens that our vocation is a specific calling from God that requires prayer, trust and offering our lives back to God. It is our vocation that will lead us to eternal life with God, not our jobs or career.

Novena to St. Joseph for Vocation (10 min)

If there ever was a "man of mystery," St. Joseph was it. We know very little about him yet we know that he was a man after God's heart. St. Joseph was visited by an angel and told to take Mary as his wife, even though she was already pregnant. He could have disregarded the angels request, but he took Mary as his wife. He was a man of faith and obedience. He gave up his own plan for God's. St. Joseph was also a carpenter. That was his career. His vocation, his calling, was to be a husband and foster father to Jesus. He is a great example to each of us on what it means to be seek God and be obedient to His call for our lives. We can ask St. Joseph to pray for us and help us open our lives to God's plan for our vocation. The Church is full of many blessings and forms of prayer. One of those forms of prayer is what is called a novena (which comes from the Latin for "nine"). It is a prayer that is recited for nine days with a specific intention. Novenas are normally prayed through the intercession of a saint—like St. Joseph.

Instruct the teens on how to pray the novena. Tell them the novena will begin tonight and end nine days from now. Begin the time of prayer by thanking God for the opportunity to be in relationship with him through our vocation. Ask for an openness of heart to hear God's voice and what vocation He is calling each person to. Close the time of prayer by asking St. Joseph to pray and intercede for the group over the semester, but most especially the next nine days. Pray the novena prayer on the St. Joseph card and close with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

St. Joseph novena card can be found on page 34.

Making it Work

- If possible, create a small documentary on the "other lives" of the Core Members. Get video footage of them at work, at home, at play, etc. This could be used as an alternative Gather for the Life Night and a way to introduce the idea that career and vocation are not the same thing.
- If the group is small enough, have a large group discussion instead of small group time during the Break. Encourage the teens to be honest about their dreams, fears and understanding of God's plan for their lives.
- Have a night of sharing and prayer nine days after this Life Night. Close the novena as a group and ask the teens to share what God has revealed to them during the last nine days of prayer.

Community Connection

- Have actual priests, sisters and married couples from the community come and "work" the job fair at the beginning of the Life Night.
- Ask parents to help with the environment for this Life Night.
- It may be a good idea to contact the vocations director for your diocese to come and either give the teaching or be available at the end of the Life Night to talk to those teens who are discerning their vocation.

NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

TEACHING

To the presenter: The teaching outlines given in this Curriculum Guide cover much more information than can be presented in a 10-minute talk. This is done on purpose. It is the role of presenter to be familiar with the topic and then prayerfully prepare the main points that will be presented to the teens. Use Scripture, Catechism and personal experience to convey the message.

What it is

Have you ever counted the days until your next vacation or break in your work schedule? A good day off or a vacation gives us a chance to focus on and enjoy those other areas of our life that aren't school or work. We all enjoy this time because our jobs aren't what defines us; God calls each of us to more. This calling is known as our *vocation*—a word that comes from a word that means “to call”—and it comes to us by the only one able to call us to greatness: our creator God.

Someone's vocation is not the same as their career or job. A job is something that you have in order to be able to provide for yourself, your family or someone else whom you support. A vocation is much deeper. It is the calling from God that is unique only to you. It is true that we all have the same universal calling from God to be holy, but that is the beginning of God's plan. He wants to be able to work through you in more specific, specialized ways. This is a great thing.

A man or woman may work in retail sales because they have what it takes to sell a product, establish customer relations, follow directions and work with a team to accomplish daily tasks. That same person's *vocation* may be to be a wife or a husband, to be a deacon in the Church, or to remain single, “for the sake of the Kingdom [of God].” The latter examples do not take away from the person's job, but they will enhance it and bring their ordinary work to perfection. These callings go much deeper to the core of who a person is. Being a mom or a dad is significantly more dignified than being a sales representative. How many coffee shop *baristas* have changed lives through iced-venti-caramel-mocha-doubleshot-no whip-lattés?

Matthew 19: 8-9

NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

TEACHING

It is important to mention that there are times that your personal vocation and your job can be closely connected. For example, if you are called by God to enter into holy matrimony, you may need to contribute financially to help support your family. In that case, a job is secondary to your calling, and doing it well would be following your primary and personal vocation. However, it's important to realize which of these should come first. At times there is a very real need to work harder than you normally would, especially in economically challenging times, but sacrificing the good of your family for the sake of your career is not what God is calling you to do.

Now, the great thing about vocations is that God calls everyone to Himself—we each have a vocation! This is good because we know of God's love for us and His promise never to abandon us. So, what now? We just sit by the phone and wait to get that call from the Lord telling us that it's time to start looking for a spouse or go get measured for our habit? It doesn't quite work that way.

How do you normally make the right choice in life when it comes to something significant? It's usually a good idea to first consider all of your options. You should also consider your personal capabilities, interests, and any other incentives that may help to narrow down your options. For example, when you buy your first car, you're going to check out the newspaper or a website and immediately rule out cars you cannot afford. Then, it's best to consider what you will be paying for. Do you want an environmentally friendly car even if it would cost more? Do you have to have AC? Is a stereo a must? Eventually you will be able to *discern* which is the best option for you and discover which car was best for you all along.

This is an example. With things like a vocation, which will define the rest of your life, more care is needed than that taken for a car purchase. When we talk about discerning our vocation, we cannot do this without opening our hearts to God. It is, after all, a call from Him to us. It is not determining what we *want* to do for the rest of our lives. Jesus tells us and he tells His apostles, "You did not choose me; no, I chose you."

"It is therefore indispensable for each one to seek and to recognize day after day the long path on which the Lord is leading him to his personal encounter with him. Dear friends, question yourselves seriously about your vocation and be ready to answer the Lord who is calling you to take

Hebrews 13:5

John 15:16

World Youth Day XIII Address, no. 8

NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

TEACHING

the place he has prepared for you from eternity.” This is the path of discernment. Discernment means to separate or to realize something is true apart from an alternative. When we discern our vocation, we discover the path our Lord is calling us to travel with Him.

God is concerned with our lives and wants us to choose him. For this reason, it is good to reflect upon the truth of God’s providence in our lives. Providence is God’s protective care for our lives. Jesus asks us to trust in God’s providence and to rely on Him that he may take care of our lives in the same way that a child trusts a parent. Many times, we worry about the “little things” to the point where we may miss the big picture. Jesus assures us to leave the small things to God. Focusing on our call to serve Him will prepare our hearts for Him to serve us and to take care of our needs. Our first pope repeats the call to “cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

For discernment to work at all, prayer is necessary. Through prayer, we come to know God and ourselves in a deeper way. Vatican II reminds us, “Christ...reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling perfectly clear.” How does Christ do this? The first step is developing a prayer relationship with Him. This relationship cannot be overemphasized. It is the well from which all divine influence in your life can be drawn.

CCC 305

1 Peter 5:7

Gaudium et Spes, 22

What paths are out there?

In the bounty of the Church’s graces, there are many ministries to which a person may be called. St. Paul tells us repeatedly of the many gifts of the Holy Spirit and the responsibility of those to whom they are given. Our Lord confirms this as well. God grants us the use of our free will to choose our life’s work. God does not force you to do anything. There is no love in making someone your slave.

CCC 2004

Romans 12:6-8

1 Corinthians 12 Luke 12:48

CCC 2230

Some vocations may be very obvious because of our familiarity with them such as **Marriage** (being called to serve as a husband or a wife) and **Holy Orders** (being called to serve as a bishop, priest or deacon). Others we may know little or nothing about.

NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

TEACHING

God may call some people to the **committed single life**. The single life is not a vocation for those who never found the right person to marry and didn't want to enter the religious life. It is a very real calling to remain single for the sake of the Kingdom. Committed single persons are not ordained; they are part of the laity and are called to enrich the Church, as all lay people are called to do, through their holiness and service. They are called to breathe Christ's Good News into all the areas of life through social action.

CCC 898-900
CCC 2442

As you are aware, the many of adults marry and have a family to which all their time, finances and sacrifices are directed. Some adults are not called to this life and may lead the life of a **committed single** person. An adult who is called to the committed single life is able to use his time, talents, and treasure in ways that many people are not able to do because their vocation calls them to do otherwise. A parent is called to provide for their children first. A committed single person is called to provide for the needs of those who have no one to provide for them. This is a very noble calling and one that satisfies a person for their entire life.

Ordination of bishops, priests and deacons is a vocation to which men are called by the gift of God's grace. Though you and I are all members of the priesthood of Christ by virtue of our Baptism and are all able to freely and openly communicate with our God, the ministerial priesthood is a special consecrated ministry within the Church. The Church is the bride of Christ and is ministered to as a husband cares for his wife. It is therefore most fitting that the sacred ministry of the priesthood and diaconate is a vocation in which men serve the bride of Christ as Christ's representative.

CCC 1578, 1593

Another permanent vocation is the call to enter **consecrated life** such as a monk, nun, brother or sister. These men and women are "moved by the Holy Spirit...to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, [and] to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come." This commitment may manifest itself in public works or even in secret works depending on their particular religious order or commitment.

CCC 916
CCC 933

NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

TEACHING

Within the Church there are other callings, which are known as **lay ecclesial movements and ministries**. This covers a broad range of activities within the Church, such as the various roles of the laity in the liturgy, parenting, helping to sanctify one's family, teaching the faith, spreading the Gospel and evangelizing in the world. Some of these movements come in the form of an organization within the Church and some are even approved by the Holy See.

Lay people have this ability in their vocation because they have been baptized as priest, prophet and king through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this, they are essential in transforming the world and setting it on fire for the Lord.

CCC 901-913
Luke 12:49

Through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist, we are ennobled by God to participate in the calling of the entire world into a relationship of holiness with God our Father. Holy Orders and Marriage are Sacraments concerned with the holiness of others specifically. These Sacraments are at the service of communion and have particular missions involved in them. Marriage carries with it the duty to lead your spouse to heaven. Through Holy Orders, a man is called to bring the members of the Church into salvation.

CCC 1533-1535

Some things to remember

As children, we are often asked what we want to be when we grow up. Most schools are set up to train us for a future career. The Church also emphasizes choosing the right job (vocation) for yourself. Does this mean that having the right vocation, job or career essential is for a person's happiness? Surprisingly, no. The foundational call from God is not to a particular vocation, job, career or way of life, but to **universal holiness** and communion with Him. This is the basis of all happiness. Often the key to happiness is using one's gifts fully for God by serving others in Christian love. This is why the Church teaches that "man... cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." However, a refusal to answer God's call may result in a more difficult road to eternal life, or it may even jeopardize one's salvation. This is another reason why discernment is important.

Gaudium et Spes, 24

NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

TEACHING

We often measure our success in life by the degree of financial security and material comfort. To some, the measure of success may be material or physical comforts, but that is not what Jesus Christ taught nor lived. Personal satisfaction in life finds a firm foundation in our relationship with the Lord and secondly in our relationships with other people. This is the basis of the two greatest commandments, to love God with your whole being and to love your neighbor as yourself. It's not an arbitrary law; it's the key to happiness and holiness. The ultimate goal in life should be holiness; this is where true success lies.

Matthew 22:37-40

In our walk towards holiness, we should keep in mind the Beatitudes that Jesus left us. They will guide our actions and direct our prayer that we may find our Lord and the holiness to which we are being called.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of
righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:3-12

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

SKIT

Characters:

Secretary's Voice
Jesus
Young Executive #1
Young Executive #2
Tom

The scene is set to look like a typical office. A desk, a few chairs, maybe a bookcase or two, use whatever supplies your group can put together. A man in white (Jesus) is sitting behind the desk looking at a clipboard when the phone on the desk rings (you can create both this and the following effect by recording the sounds and secretary's voice ahead of time).

JESUS

Yes?

SECRETARY'S VOICE

Your next interview is here.

JESUS

Send him in.

Almost instantly, a young executive bursts through the door. He is well-dressed, carrying a briefcase and looking official but is over enthusiastic and practically sprints to the chair facing the desk. Once there, he grabs Jesus' hand, pumping it up and down wildly.

YOUNG EXEC 1

Thanks for seeing me! I'm glad to be here! Glad to meet you! I think this is going to be great. I already have a great vibe from you, I think we'll make a great team.

JESUS

Can you tell me...

YOUNG EXEC 1

A little about myself? Of course! But here, let me show you my resume (*pulls resume out of his briefcase and throws it across the desk*) See? I can make things happen for you!

JESUS

Ok. But what I really need...

YOUNG EXEC 1

Trust me, I know what you need! You need leadership, right? I got it. You need drive? I got it! I'm here to make a name for myself, to rise to the top, to be a success...

JESUS

But what I'm looking for...

YOUNG EXEC 1

Trust me, I'm what you're looking for! I've got charisma (*stops, grins and poses*). I've got charm (*poses again*). And I've got the ambition to make it all the way to the top.

JESUS

Ambition isn't really...

YOUNG EXEC 1

Isn't enough without the right attitude, right? I know! And believe me, I've got the right attitude. I'm a worker, a thinker. I'm a real go-getter!

JESUS

But...

YOUNG EXEC 1

No buts about it! I'm a go-getter... in fact, I'm going to prove it to you (*jumps up*). I'm going to GO (*points at the door*) and GET the job done!

JESUS

But you don't even know what I want, what I'm looking for...

YOUNG EXEC 1

(*from door*)

I'm going to go! And I'm going to get it! (*Storms from room*).

Jesus sits at his desk for a long minute, regrouping and obviously trying to clear his head. After a significant pause, he crosses out the name on his clipboard and pushes a button on the phone.

JESUS

Please send in the next interview.

The door bursts open again and another young executive walks in. This one is carrying a flip chart under one arm. He goes to Jesus, shakes his hand quickly, then goes to the corner of the desk and starts setting up the flip chart.

JESUS

I don't know if all this is necessary, I just want to talk...

YOUNG EXEC 2

I'm almost ready.

JESUS

But...

YOUNG EXEC 2

Trust me!

JESUS

(*under his breath*)

I hate it when people say that to me.

Young Exec 2 finally finishes setting up the chart and straightens up proudly.

YOUNG EXEC 2

There!

(He turns to Jesus with big, phony grin)

Now, let me show you what I can do for you! *(slaps the first graph on the chart)* This represents where your recruitment was about 25 years ago. Your numbers were good, souls were being saved. You were probably feeling like the King of the World.

JESUS

I am the King of the World.

YOUNG EXEC 2

Exactly. But here...

(flips the page on the chart revealing a graph with figures sloping negatively). This is where recruitment is today. Not so great, huh?

JESUS

I'm not sure recruitment is the right word...

YOUNG EXEC 2

But here, *(flips another page)* here is where we want recruitment to be.

JESUS

That would be great but...

YOUNG EXEC 2

But how are we going to get there? Good question. Luckily, I have just the answer *(flips final page on the chart, revealing a large picture of himself)*. I can help. I already have a plan.

JESUS

What plan?

YOUNG EXEC 2

(thumping the picture dramatically)

Advertising!

JESUS

(dubiously)

This isn't really an advertising type thing...

YOUNG EXEC 2

(ignoring this)

I'm going to get your name out there, on the street.

I'm going to sell, sell, sell!

JESUS

But...

YOUNG EXEC 2

In fact, look what I brought!

(Pulls out a bumper sticker or pin or pennant or anything where a logo will be visible. The item reads "Jesus for President")

I think we're ready to get started!

JESUS

I think you're missing the point.

YOUNG EXEC 2

Look, you're going to have to trust me on this one;
I'm the guy for you.

JESUS

But you don't even know what I really need or what I want from you.
I want you, I do, but...

YOUNG EXEC 2

But what? Not like this? You don't like my plan? Fine! Say no
more! I'm out of here!

*With that, Young Exec 2 grabs his flip chart and storms from the
room. Jesus sighs, takes a deep breath and scratches another
name off the clipboard. Then he clicks the phone one last time.*

JESUS

Do I have anyone else?

SECRETARY'S VOICE

Just one more, sir.

*A moment later the door opens and a calm young person walks in.
He is poised and self-confident but not overbearing. He walks over
to the desk and sits down in the chair, waiting for Jesus to introduce
himself.*

JESUS

Thanks for coming today, Tom.

TOM

Thanks for inviting me.

JESUS

So, what can you do for our organization?

TOM

What do you need?

JESUS

(in a hopeful voice)

Excuse me?

TOM

(shrugs) What do you need? What do you want me to do?
Whatever it is, that's what I'll do. You're in charge.

Jesus puts down the clipboard with a smile.

JESUS

You're hired.



Novena to St. Joseph

Saint Joseph, I, your unworthy child, greet you. You are the faithful protector and intercessor of all who love and venerate you. You know that I have special confidence in you and that, after Jesus and Mary, I place all my hope of salvation in you, for you are especially powerful with God and will never abandon your faithful servants. Therefore I humbly invoke you and commend myself, with all who are dear to me and all that belong to me, to your intercession. I beg of you, by your love for Jesus and Mary, not to abandon me during life and to assist me at the hour of my death.

Glorious Saint Joseph, spouse of the Immaculate Virgin, obtain for me a pure, humble, charitable mind, and perfect resignation to the divine Will. Be my guide, my father, and my model through life that I may merit to die as you did in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Loving Saint Joseph, faithful follower of Jesus Christ, I raise my heart to you to implore your powerful intercession in obtaining from the Divine Heart of Jesus all the graces necessary for my spiritual and temporal welfare, particularly the grace of a happy death, and the special grace I now implore:

(Mention your request).

Guardian of the Word Incarnate, I feel confident that your prayers in my behalf will be graciously heard before the throne of God. Amen.



Novena to St. Joseph

Saint Joseph, I, your unworthy child, greet you. You are the faithful protector and intercessor of all who love and venerate you. You know that I have special confidence in you and that, after Jesus and Mary, I place all my hope of salvation in you, for you are especially powerful with God and will never abandon your faithful servants. Therefore I humbly invoke you and commend myself, with all who are dear to me and all that belong to me, to your intercession. I beg of you, by your love for Jesus and Mary, not to abandon me during life and to assist me at the hour of my death.

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NOW HIRING

God's Unique Call to Each of Us

CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

Job Opening Skit _____

Novena to S. Joseph _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.

Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the materials needed.

Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Teaching _____

Job Opening Skit Characters:

Secretary's Voice _____

Jesus _____

Young Executive #1 _____

Young Executive #2 _____

Tom _____

Week of the Life Night:

Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.

Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night.

Create environment and collect needed supplies.

E-mail entire Core team an overview of the night.

Day of the Life Night:

Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.

Set up audio and video. Test the video clips to make sure both picture and sound work.

Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.

Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

This Life Night will look at the vocation of Marriage as a unique calling from God designed to mirror Christ's love for the Church. The teens will understand that the grace of the Sacrament gives couples the ability to live holy, life-long Marriages. Finally, this night will look specifically at dating relationships as a foundation for discernment and Marriage preparation.

Life Night at a Glance

In today's culture, the sanctity and dignity of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is under attack. This Life Night will help teens understand that Holy Matrimony is created and sustained by God. The night opens with a fun cake-decorating competition within the small groups. The teaching for the night will focus on the centrality of Marriage in God's plan and Christ elevation of Marriage to a Sacrament. The Break will give teens an opportunity to interact with couples who are dating, engaged, or married. The couples will share their journey and offer practical advice on how to prepare for the Sacrament of Matrimony (even as teens). The Send of the night will give teens a time to pray for couples who are discerning Marriage, who are married and who are divorced or separated.

Environment

Every couple preparing to be married has to face a few big questions. One of those questions is "what will our cake look like?" The environment of this night will be based off of that question. Set up the room to look like a kitchen. Have a few metal tables with cooking utensils across the front. If your parish has a kitchen, borrow a few tall metal tray racks and place them behind the tables. On the tray racks, have enough baked, cooled and undecorated nine-inch round cakes to give one to every small group (these will be used in the Gather). If other equipment is available to use from the kitchen, use it. Be sure to return everything after the night is over. Create fake oven and appliance fronts out of butcher paper as an added effect to the space. Have items like flower, sugar, eggs, spices, and other cooking ingredients on the tables to fill out the environment. As an added bonus, have all the Core Members dress up like chefs and walk around with mixing bowls while greeting the teens. For the Break of the night, you will need four distinct locations for the teens to go to. Be creative in the use of your parish facilities to pull this off.

GATHER *15 Minutes*

Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

The youth minister should gather all the teens together, welcome everyone to the Life Night and split them into small groups. He/She should introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

Cake Decorating Contest (10 min)

The youth minister should explain that a local bakery contacted him/her about needing some extra help with the cake orders they received for this month. They need some people to design wedding cakes. The youth minister should tell the teens that the bakery has supplied cakes and supplies for each group to decorate a cake. To entice them even more, tell the teens that the bakery has offered prizes for the three best cakes voted by the youth minister. Give each small group one nine-inch round cake, a tub of icing, a knife, cake decorations like sprinkles, food coloring and a few plastic bags. The group will have 10 minutes to decorate a wedding cake. After time is up, the group will bring it forward and place it on the tables. The youth minister will judge the cakes and announce the winners at the end of the night.

PROCLAIM *10 minutes*

"I Do" Teaching (10 min)

The teaching for this night focus on a few main points: God's plan for Marriage, Marriage as a Sacrament and vocation, and how we prepare for this particular vocation. For this night, try to split the teaching up. Have different people or couples give the teaching. The youth minister should start the teaching by focusing first on Marriage beginning in the Garden of Eden, the nuptial orientation of salvation history (wedding themes throughout Scripture), and how Christ gave Marriage dignity by elevating it to a Sacrament. The rest of the teaching can be covered by the witness of the couples during the Break of the night.

The teaching can be found on pages 39-50.

CATECHISM REFERENCES:

1601-1666 #2399
 # 2331-2359
 # 2270-2274
 # 2353-2359
 #2370

SCRIPTURES:

Genesis 1:28, 1:31, 2:4-25 Galatians 5:17
 Exodus 20:14
 Mark 10:6-8, 11-12
 John 2:1-11
 Ephesians 5

BREAK *45 minutes***Rotating Sessions** (45 min)

The Break for this night will give the teens a better understanding at the stages of the Sacrament of Matrimony. This portion of the night will require four different couples—dating, engaged, married with young children, married with grown children (grandparents). Each will be “stationed” at a different location.

Break the teens into four evenly divided groups. The groups will then travel to one of the four locations. At each location, each couple will give a short story of how they met and then talk about how their different states are a unique part of the sacrament of marriage (see below). At the end of the sharing, give the teens an opportunity to ask questions. The teens should be at each station for approximately 10 minutes.

Dating:

The dating couple should focus on the need for chastity and practice the call to be a self-gift. They should also discuss that dating is a tool for discernment and give some practical advice for good dating habits in high school.

Engaged:

The engaged couple should focus on the need for good preparation and how engagement is still a time of discernment for the Sacrament of Matrimony. They should share how engagement is different than dating as well as practical tips on how to practice self-sacrifice now.

Married with young children:

The married with young children couple should focus on the vows of Marriage and how in Marriage husbands and wives are called to live those out everyday—to be a self-gift. They should focus on the goods of Marriage: faithful, indissoluble until death, and openness to children, as well as the call to chastity even within Marriage.

Married with grown children:

The married with grown children should focus on the fact that no matter how long a couple is married, they are going to need God’s grace to get through hard times. They should also discuss that all married couples, no matter how old or young are called to be a reflection of Christ’s love for the Church.

SEND *15 minutes***“A Glimpse Into Married Life” Video** (5 min)

Bring the entire group back together in the main meeting room. Use this video as a transition into the Send of the Life Night. The video will take the teens through a day in the life of one married couple and show how God is moving in their family and Marriage.

“A Glimpse Into Married Life” Video can be found on Video Support 8

Prayer for the Sacrament of Matrimony (10 min)

A few weeks before this Life Night, ask five teens to write prayers for this night. Give each teen one topic: dating couples, engaged couples, married couples, separated couples or divorced couples. Their prayers should pray for that specific group of people asking God to bless them and give them strength to seek Him at every moment, no matter their state. Set the room with a tone of prayer by dimming the lights. For this night, invite the music minister to be a part of the Send. He or she should play soft music in the background. The youth minister should open the time of prayer by thanking God for the gift of the Sacrament of Matrimony and its centrality in the life of the Church. After the youth minister is done, he/she should call forward the first teen to read their prayer. Once he/she is finished, the youth minister should play the chorus of the Matt Maher song “Unwavering” (found on his album entitled on “Empty and Beautiful.” Song books available at Lifeteen.com). Repeat this through all five prayers.

After the prayers are spoken, give the teens a few moments of silence to pray for their parents (whether married or not). The youth minister should close the time of prayer by asking for the intercession of Mary and Joseph, our perfect examples of holy Marriages. Close the night with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Making It Work

- If your group is small enough, keep everyone together for the four stations of the Break, rather than dividing them into four smaller groups.
- Many teens have very negative views of Marriage. Make sure the people presenting during this night are sensitive to the different situations of the teens.
- Serve the decorated cakes at the end of the Life Night as the snack. First have the youth minister announce the winning cakes.

Community Connection

- Invite 10 married couples to the Life Night to pray over the teens for their parents (whether married, divorced, or separated) as well as for their continual discernment and seeking God's plan for their life. This can be done as an alternative to the suggested Send.
- Have a Parent Life Night on the vocation of Marriage the same night as this night. Give the families discussion questions to take home and talk about.
- Ask parents, grandparents or other relatives of the teens to be the couples who share during the Break of the night.

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

To the presenter: The teaching outlines given in this Curriculum Guide cover much more information than can be presented in a 10-minute talk. This is done on purpose. It is the role of presenter to be familiar with the topic and then prayerfully prepare the main points that will be presented to the teens. Use Scripture, Catechism and personal experience to convey the message.

What it is

“Marriage...is far from being the effect of chance or the result of the blind evolution of natural forces. It is in reality the wise and provident institution of God the Creator, whose purpose was to effect in man His loving design. As a consequence, husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives.” In this excerpt from the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, we are introduced to a basic understanding of what marriage is to the Christian, what it involves, what it takes and how it is to be lived. Though direct, this part of the encyclical does not specifically answer the variety of questions facing Holy Matrimony today. Why can't married couples use birth control? Why can't married couples divorce if they don't love each other anymore? Why can't marriage be defined as two men or women (or whatever combination suits those “in love”)? What is the Church doing in the bedroom and since when does God have something to say about sex? This Life Night will answer that.

Humanae Vitae, 8

Marriage is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church—one of the unique ways in which God has allows His grace to be made manifest in this world through tangible, sensual experiences. Because it is a Sacrament, it means that at some point, Christ had something to do with its foundation. We'll get to that in a bit, but first, let's take a look at the earliest marriage in the Bible, that of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

In Genesis, God makes Adam out of the dust of the earth and breathes His life into him. The Lord said, “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him,” that is, God said: ‘I will make someone he can love.’ At first, God created animals for Adam but they were not suitable enough to be Adam's partner. Why? Because only Adam was made in the image and likeness of God. The animals were not. God then fashioned Eve from the

Genesis 2:4-25 (Second Creation Narrative)

Good News about Sex and Marriage, p. 22

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

living body of Adam, which was animated by God's Holy Spirit and contained God's likeness, that is, some sort of communion with Him. Eve is the suitable partner for Adam because she is bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.

Genesis 1:28

This union is described by our Lord as a one-flesh union. When questioned by the Pharisees on marriage, our Lord explains "at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one." Marriage existed in the Old Testament (and other cultures) but it was not the same institution as was established in Eden with Adam and Eve. Divorce and polygamy (multiple spouses at once) was a permissible custom. Jesus elevates marriage to its original status, as it was "in the beginning" in this moment in Scripture and reinstitutes the sacramental understanding—the sharing in God's likeness by means of the mutual love of the unity of husband and wife in their one flesh.

Mark 10:6-8

CCC 1614

CCC 1615

Marriage is something that runs throughout the Bible. Scripture opens with a story of the first marriage and culminates with the wedding feast of the Lamb in Revelation. Jesus' first miracle was even performed at a wedding! This stands as a clear "confirmation of the goodness of marriage."

John 2:1-11

CCC 1613

In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul describes the call of marriage and links the love of husband and wife (we will call this "nuptial" or "conjugal" love) to the love of God. He instructs husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her. What many people don't realize is that this is what St. Paul also speaks of when he instructs wives to be subordinate to their husbands—*he's promoting the submission to a limitless love!* (Not so bad, huh?) St. Paul immediately follows up this decree with a reaffirmation of Christ's teaching of the one-flesh union of husband and wife.

Ephesians 5

Think about this: Christ so loved His Church that by His love we, the Church, the Bride of Christ, may have new life in the salvation bestowed upon us through the complete gift of His life and fidelity on the cross. This is the image of love that St. Paul calls married couples to live out in their mutual, complete, faithful and fruitful gift of their own lives—of their very selves—for the sake of their spouse's

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

salvation. This is the basis of what the great Pope John Paul II describes as a Theology of the Body.

You may have heard of this before. Theology of the Body comes from 129 lectures given by Pope John Paul II from September 1979 to November 1984. The first three parts of this catechetical lecture series deals primarily with Christian anthropology—our origins, our present state and our end—drawing from the richness of Church tradition as well as extending it. The last three parts deal with the questions of celibacy, marriage and the fruitful love of husband and wife. John Paul draws from Scripture, especially Genesis and Ephesians, to illustrate how human love is properly understood and expressed through our bodies. The conjugal love between a man and a woman bears the likeness of Christ’s love for His bride, the Church, and the love between the persons of the Trinity. Something of God can be known by looking at the relationship between man and woman found in the beginning of time and in the true love found in the one-flesh union of Matrimony.

Explanation of Matrimony – What is the vocation?

Christian Marriage is a life-long commitment between a baptized man and a baptized woman as husband and wife designed to reflect the unending love that God has for his people, individually and collectively; a covenant of love.” As in every vocation from the Lord, a person is called to know and to love God better. In Marriage (and the family), Christ’s saving work is carried out by virtue of the sacramental covenant between husband and wife in their nuptial love.

CCC 1625

The Church recognizes the world in which we live today, a world of increased personal freedom and interconnected relationships. Marriage is compatible with these trends, but remember that these freedoms and relationships are social. The moral principles of marriage do not change. They are true, and that which is true is always true.

When God created Adam and Eve, He created them “very good”—the crown jewel of creation. After every plant and animal, earth and sea, and stars in heaven above, husband and wife were the only creatures who stood in the image and likeness of the Almighty Creator. This likeness is a shared dignity of both the man and the woman. Married couples share in the love of God, which supports and sustains them. By their faithfulness to one

Genesis 1:31

CCC 1648

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

another and to God, they can be witnesses to God's fruitful love.

"This fruitful love is best seen in children. Children are the fruit of marriage. Children are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves." Did you realize that man is the only creature who has the power to create another living and eternal soul? This is what happens when a child is conceived. Let's take this seriously for a second. If a human being is created in the image and likeness of our Lord and has the capacity to love as Christ loves His Bride, what would the best place to raise and foster a human life through the early stages of their life? Ideally, the situation that would best suit a person's development, education and spiritual formation is in the context of a family—surrounded by the faithful and fruitful love of husband and wife. Parents are the principal educators of their children. How many more useful things have your parents taught you than you learned in all your years of school? This also can apply to extended family, beyond a child's biological parents.

CCC 1652
Gaudium et Spes, 50

CCC 1652-1654

Mutual self-giving within Marriage and family serves as basis for responsible activity in society and in the Church. It was in your family that you first learned right from wrong. The first place you experienced what it was like to live within a community was in a family. It is where you learn to pray, to play, to share; you learn how to help others and how to love others even when it's not easy. You learn your role in the family that will lead you to develop an idea of what your vocation is in life. This is a good thing.

The vocational fidelity found in the conjugal love of husband and wife is under attack. Infidelity is the sin that is found at the root of the Sixth Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery." Why not? Because God's love is always faithful! So should ours be. Fidelity is tempted easily. Adam and Eve's infidelity to God's law caused them to sin and fall from grace. Today, fidelity is threatened by pornography, masturbation, lust, sex outside of marriage, rape and prostitution. In all of these ways, a person is unfaithful to their (perhaps future) spouse, to God or to both. The mind and heart is perverted and polluted—deprived of what it means to freely and fully give one's self—and in all these cases, turns another person into an object used for another's gratification.

Exodus 20:14

CCC 2351-2356

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

What should be sought to counter this threat is the virtue of **chastity**. Many times we may think chastity means, “don’t have sex!” when that may only be a portion of what it means to be chaste. Chastity is the proper exercise of sexuality depending on a person’s present state of life. It’s a virtue; a good habit fueled by grace. It’s a virtue that helps you to not use people, especially in regards to sexuality. Chastity is what helps those who are single to remain free from adulterous activity so as not to make an object out of another person. It is also chastity that enables husbands and wives to *have sex without using each other for sex*.

CCC 2337-2345

Unfortunately and all too often, problems in families spring from “a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God’s plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one’s own selfish well-being,” which is contrary to God’s love. Spouses are not in competition with one another. Children should not feel oppressed by their parents. I know that sometimes it may seem as though there is no reasonable explanation for the way that parents act, the rules they make or what they think is socially beneficial for their children, but God calls us to love and to be obedient to our present state of life. Ideally, husband and wife love and support each other. With God’s grace, parents and children will grow in love for each other. The family is the domestic church, as John Paul II calls it. It is the smallest unit of society, a microcosm of the entire human community, and should never be a place of selfishness or degradation. With God’s help and grace, man and woman can live according to the original plan for Marriage.

Familiaris Consortio, 6

CCC 1606

CCC 1607

When the roles of man and woman are distorted, a multitude of problems enter the picture. Everyone is called to be open to life because human life is sacred. This is especially true in the actions of husband and wife, specifically in sex. Let’s face it; you are here today because two people had sex. It is an amazing gift from the Lord. From the intimate marital embrace of husband and wife, God brings new life into His creation.

CCC 1608

CCC 2270 – 2274

Sometimes couples are not open to a new life for various reasons. Some of these reasons may be completely valid. For example, a couple may not be able to financially support a child. In such cases, couples should abstain

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

from sex. Some couples decide to prevent new life by means of external actions such as artificial birth control or sterilization. Utilizing one of these forms of birth control is *contraceptive*, that is, destructive and contrary to life. Sex is wonderful, but it cannot be separated from the procreative aspect of the act. An artificial attempt to “block” fertilization or alter natural biological function in a way that is contrary to life is at the same time, by definition, aligned with death. This makes it a grave offense. Abortion goes beyond the mere blocking of the opportunity for new life. Abortion destroys a created human life. This should never be tolerated. Such an attitude is poisonous in the context of marriage and the family.

CCC 2370

CCC 2399

Other things devalue the meaning of marriage and the original plan of God set forth in Eden, such as cohabitation of unmarried couples and homosexual unions. God wants everyone to love and be loved, but there is a proper way to do so. This is because of its free, total, faithful, and fruitful nature in the one-flesh union of conjugal love. Husband and wife are *complimentary* in their bearing of the image of God.

Because one of the results of sex is new life and because a couple “living together” as though they were married is not the place in which children are best suited to be raised, sex outside of marriage violates the dignity of the human person. It shortchanges the potential child and takes advantage of the members of the relationship.

CCC 2353

Homosexual unions are contrary to life and misuse the other’s sexuality for mutual self-gratification. Homosexuals cannot be married, not because the Church doesn’t recognize that any two people can “love” each other to a great extent, but because marriage must be a total, faithful and fruitful union. Homosexuals cannot enter into a fruitful union. The fruit of marriage is the ability to bring new life into the world. There is disorder in the relationship.

CCC 2357

Homosexuals should nevertheless be “accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided... Homosexual persons are called to chastity.”

CCC 2358

Ever since the legalization of abortion and widespread acceptance of contraceptive methods, divorces have increased. In some places the divorce rate is reported to be approaching 70 percent. The Church realizes that there

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

are situations in which living together as husband and wife becomes increasingly difficult. In such occasions, physical separation is permissible. The couple is not free to enter into another marital union because they are already bound to another. The Church encourages reconciliation between the spouses. There is always hope.

CCC 1649

Our Lord tells us that, “whoever divorces and marries another commits adultery.” The one-flesh union of husband and wife cannot be dissolved except in death. Someone who divorces civilly is still married to his/her spouse even though it’s not recognized by the state. Thus, any sexual relations are unfaithful and adulterous.

Mark 10:11-12

CCC1650

Couples may divorce because of reasons that have to do with falling “out of love” or some variation thereof, as if love was a good feeling that evaporated over time and therefore the marriage did as well. The love of husband and wife is like the love of Christ and His Church. It was not because of a “good feeling” that Christ got up on the cross. It was not because of a “good feeling” that saints gave their lives for their Lord and Savior. Love is a decision to serve and sacrifice for another. Not loving someone is not enough to d

Let’s get married

For those whom the Lord calls to enter into the sacred bonds of Marriage, there is, of course, a way to begin this new life with their spouse. Because marriage is a publicly recognized status in the Church, it’s fitting that a public, liturgical celebration commemorates the beginning of the new sacramental life. In the Latin Church (Roman Catholic), this takes place during a nuptial Mass. It is also appropriate for the bride and groom to present themselves to the Lord and ask for forgiveness prior to their wedding in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

CCC 1621

CCC 1622

The ministers for the Sacrament are the spouses. The husband confers the Sacrament upon his wife and the wife upon the husband. They are the ministers of God’s grace and make Marriage a Sacramental vocation. It usually happens that a minister of the Church is present at the ceremony to stand as witness on behalf of the community for the Sacrament to be valid. In the Eastern Churches, the bishop or priest confers the Sacrament of Matrimony.

CCC 1623

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

The three essential promises made by the spouses are **fidelity, indissolubility** and **openness to children**, “By its very nature, marriage demands faithfulness of heart, mind, and action to your one and only spouse.” This is true fidelity. When you say, “I do,” you are promising to give the entirety of your personhood over for the service of your beloved. Indissolubility is the permanent aspect of Marriage, “If this isn’t what bride and groom intend to establish, then they don’t intend to establish a marriage. Marriage is all or nothing.”

Openness to children is deeply rooted in the very nature of marriage. This does not mean that couples **MUST** have children for their marriage to be valid. There are many cases in which a couple is unable to conceive a child. This in no way invalidates their love, fidelity and the completeness of their one-flesh union. However, to intentionally avoid having children is contrary to the vocation.

In the Latin Church, the Nuptial Mass is the proper place for the marriage ceremony. If the marriage is between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the ceremony can take place outside the Eucharistic context. With permission from a bishop, the Eucharistic Liturgy may take place with the understanding among non-Catholics present that they may not receive the Eucharist, as is the normal custom for non-Catholics who attend ordinary Mass.

Catholics are encouraged to marry other Catholics. Practically speaking, one’s faith is something that entails deeply rooted convictions about life, truth and God. It is beneficial for both husband and wife if they are in communion in regards to faith for their own mutual support as well as that of their children. “Mixed-marriages” are allowed within the Church. In such cases, ecclesial authority provides consent needed to approve the Sacrament. The Marriage is only sacramental in the case that the non-Catholic spouse agrees that the children are to be raised according to the Catholic faith.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to prepare for marriage as you would prepare to enter into any other Sacrament, “Marriage preparation has to be seen and put into practice as a gradual and continuous process. It includes three main stages: **remote, proximate** and **immediate preparation**.”

The Good News of Sex and Marriage, 53

Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, 159

CCC 1633-1637

CCC 1622

Familiaris Consortio, 66.3

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

"Remote preparation begins in early childhood, in that wise family training which leads children to discover themselves, in relation to their surrounding society, their interior life, and their relationship with God." That's right—you begin preparing for marriage as a child! You may remember following mom or dad around during their work around the house and trying to help and be like them. This is how we learn what it is that moms and dads, husbands and wives, do.

Following this, we learn of a "proximate" preparation period, in which a teen or young adult rediscovers an admiration for the Sacrament in light of mature catechesis and formation in their faith. No longer do they see marriage through the eyes of a child. They are more ready to experience the greatness of the Sacrament as a young person and is able to understand what the relationship of husband and wife entails, "This renewed catechesis of young people and others preparing for Christian marriage is absolutely necessary in order that the sacrament may be celebrated and lived with the right moral and spiritual dispositions." This knowledge also entails a healthy self-understanding of sexuality. Sexuality is part of a persons' very being. Though at times we may feel like anything sexually related may be the flesh waging war on our holy intentions, as St. Paul mentions, we must be assured that our sexuality is not intended to be disconnected from who we are. We are created as an eternal soul united to our bodies in a complete way. Our bodies are as much of who we are as our souls are. This is good. This is God's gift to us and is what enables us to love with our bodies. We relate through a personhood that includes sexuality. We must have a proper understand of this in order to operate correctly in our vocation.

"The immediate preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony should take place in the months and weeks immediately preceding the wedding." This is the homestretch! This is the stage of planning that is greatly connected with the future spouse. All other preparation is formational development of the individual so that he/she may be properly disposed to make a complete self-gift. This final stage is rich in discernment.

Familiaris Consortio, 66.4

Familiaris Consortio, 66.5

Galatians 5:17

Summa Theologica, 1, Q.76, a.8

Familiaris Consortio, 66.7

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

If we next look at the Marriage between man and woman, we will see the complete compatibility and interconnectedness in the complementary relationship between husband and wife. As St. Paul explains in Ephesians, husband and wife have separate roles and are present for the mutual building up of the other, “Husband and wife are, in fact, ‘subject to one another,’ mutually subordinated to one another. The *source* of this reciprocal submission lies in the Christian *pietas* [duty] and *its expression is love.*”

CCC 2333

Theology of the Body 89.3

It is in this context of marriage and within the reciprocal and complementary love that sexual intimacy is reserved. The love of husband and wife is not only manifest in sex, “Sexual relations between them can only be the expression of a unification already complete.” Sex affirms that faithful, permanent and fruitful promises have already been made! Sex outside of marriage denies all of these things. Sexual intimacy is at home within the context of marriage. It’s the expression that united Adam and Eve in the Garden.

Love and Responsibility II, 2.3

You may be confused at this point in thinking that sex is only for bringing new life into the world. If this were true, couples who were physically unable to have children would never be allowed to have sex, and that is not the case. It is permissible to regulate procreation by means of self-observation of fertile periods and abstinence in order to plan births. This is known as Natural Family Planning or NFP. NFP is not intended to allow couples to selfishly have sex when they have a hunch that pregnancy would be difficult. The mutual respect and selflessness is always required in every act of marriage.

CCC 2367-2372

Now in the immediate preparation for marriage, the Church provides education for engaged couples at the parish and diocesan level. Classes are often offered that focus on the couples’ promises, grow in knowledge of self, their future spouse and of their relationship. Classes also teach practical skills to help couples live what they promise, such as more detailed NFP instructions.

The Sacramental Effects

All Sacraments bestow grace upon their recipients. Marriage is no different. Along with this grace, “from a valid marriage arises a *bond* between the spouses which by its very nature is perpetual and exclusive; furthermore, in a Christian marriage the spouses are strengthened and,

CCC 1638

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

as it were, consecrated for the duties and the dignity of their state by a *special sacrament*.”

Married couples are given the grace to love unselfishly, and because of Christ’s restoration of marriage to the original plan, strengthens the love of the spouses through His grace and forges a stronger bond and union in joy. This renewed purpose of marriage is what makes it salvific. For the Christian, the goal of marriage is entirely Christocentric, concerned with salvation and eternal life. In a way, marriage is a preparation for death! Parents are called to raise their children in faith and love. Grace gives them the strength to accomplish this task. Married couples are also called to be a witness to Christ’s love in their community.

CCC 1615

CCC 1617, 1639, 1641

CCC 1652-1654

CCC 1655-1658

Marriage’s place in high school

As a high-school teen, dating can seem like a big deal. There are many pressures to live up to what your friends, TV, and movies tell you that you’re “supposed to do” in a relationship. Sex in highschool will not lead you to the free, total, faithful and fruitful joys of a marriage. Now, this isn’t only true of sex, but sexual activity in all forms—oral and anal sex, fondling, heavy make-out sessions—anything that leads to a lustful arousal is contrary to your vocation as a high school teen—your vocation to *chastity*. Chastity will enable you to fully and freely give yourself when the time is right (in marriage). Also, the person that you are sexually active with may be someone else’s future spouse. This is another reason to act chastely. It’s hard to control your desires, especially in high-school and especially in the midst of the sexually saturated culture we live in. With God’s grace, we can persevere in holiness. The virtue of chastity and the habit of self-control is beneficial in marriage too. A high school teen should be aware of what it is dating is meant for— preparation for marriage!

Does that mean that you shouldn’t date unless you’re ready to get married? It depends on what you feel dating should entail. If you believe that dating is when two people do everything with another person because they are attached at the hip, then you probably shouldn’t ever date anyone. If you think dating is used as a means to “explore” another person physically and hopefully have them “explore” you, you’re probably better off not dating. If dating is something that you think you’re ready for

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

TEACHING

because everyone else has someone that they're going out with, it still may not be the right time for you.

Dating is a process of discernment. Dating is based on love because it is a very real relationship with another person, "a person is an entity of a sort to which the only proper and adequate way to relate is love." From this love, friendship blossoms. The objective reality of those who are in love is a mutual, reciprocal friendship. This is not the type of relationship that MTV is selling. Nevertheless, it is in this context of love that chastity has the easiest time forming and mutual respect for each other's dignity can flourish. It is the beginning of what may be a life long commitment of love in marriage. Because dating involves discernment, you may discover that the person who you are dating is not someone who you would ever marry. It's respectful in this case to end any exclusive dating relationship. There is no need to lead anyone on in believing something is potentially there when it is not. Also, don't overstress about dating. No one who has ever worried about finding someone has found happiness through their worrying. God's time is not our time. Be patient and remember that it all has to do with loving in the imitation of Christ.

Love and Responsibility, 41

Love and Responsibility, 127

For Better or Worse

The Vocation of Marriage

CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

Cake Decorating Contest _____

Rotating Sessions _____

Prayer for the Sacrament of Matrimony

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and

make any necessary changes.

Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the materials needed.

Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Teaching _____

Rotating Sessions:

Dating couple _____

Engaged couple _____

Married with young children _____

Married with grown children _____

Week of the Life Night:

Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.

Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night. Youth minister gives feedback.

Create environment and collect needed supplies.

Email entire Core team an overview of the night.

Day of the Life Night:

Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.

Set up audio and video. Test the video clips to make sure both picture and sound work.

Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.

Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

This Life Night will address questions and issues on divorce, annulment and remarriage. This Life Night will also give teens the opportunity to ask God for prayer and healing for those who have been affected by divorce.

Life Night at a Glance

Divorce, especially in the United States, is a growing problem. The majority of teens today come from homes broken by divorced or separated parents. It is important to remember the sensitivity of this issue and the hurt in many teens' lives due to divorce. Begin by walking the group through a series of questions asking how many teens and adults are affected by divorce. The teaching will address the issues of divorce, annulment and remarriage, as well as God's original plan for Marriage. The Break will give the teens an opportunity to be in small groups with teens who are in similar family situations to discuss how they have been affected by divorce. The night will end by giving the teens hope that God's love is greater than the pain of divorce or separation, and a chance to pray with one another.

Environment

The environment for this night should reflect the idea of a "broken home." Set up a typical living room but have every element broken or torn up. The couch can be half missing or broken in the middle. A chair and coffee table can be torn apart and one leg shorter than the other. The TV screen can be broken and smashed in. The more broken - the better. Shop garage sales and thrift stores to find broken or cheap furniture. If possible, ask the parents of teens if they have any furniture they need to get rid of and would donate for the night.

GATHER *20 Minutes*

Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

The youth minister should welcome everyone to the Life Night. He/she should introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

A Room Divided (10 min)

The object of the activity is to show how many Core Members and teens are affected by divorce. The activity is done by reading a series of statements. Divide the room in half with a piece of tape on the ground. Ask all the teens to sit on one half of the room. The other half will be reserved for those whose lives are affected by divorce. Read the following statements and instruct the teens the statement applies to cross over the line to the other side.

1. I live with my mom because my dad left due to divorce
2. I live with my dad because my mom left due to divorce
3. My parents have been divorced more than five years
4. My parents have been divorced less than five years
5. My parents are currently going through a divorce

The youth minister should point out the divided room and how divorce is a major issue in today's culture.

Witness - Part I (5 min)

Invite a teen whose family is separated by divorce share about his/her experience. He/She should share how it affects the family and how the family had to adjust to the new life. He/She will share the rest of their witness at the end of the night.

PROCLAIM *10 minutes*

Divorce Teaching (10 min)

The teaching for this night looks at what the Church teaches on the issues of divorce, annulments and remarriage and how they affect teens lives.

The teaching can be found on pages 55-61.
Optional Video Clip: The Parent Trap.

CATECHISM REFERENCES:

- # 1625-1632
- # 1649-1651
- # 1665

SCRIPTURES:

- Matthew 26:42
- Mark 10:5-12

The youth minister can choose to use either version of the Disney film *The Parent Trap* to begin the night. The scene to use would be when the girls talk about their parents' separation. The youth minister or Core Member doing the teaching can use this scene as a transition into his/her teaching on divorce.

BREAK 25 minutes

Divided Small Groups (25 min)

The youth minister or Core Member who gave the Proclaim will ask the teens to separate into small groups with people from the same side of the room. Each of the small groups will be given a set of questions dealing with marriage and divorce. If need be, come up with questions of your own.

Divorced/Separated:

1. Do you relate to the witness we heard at the beginning of the night? Why or why not?
2. What has been the hardest part of divorce?
3. How has it affected your faith life?
4. How as your view of marriage changed because of divorce in your family?
5. Do you have a harder time trusting God because of your family situation? Why or why not?
6. How can you be a reflection of Christ's love and forgiveness to your family?

Not Divorced:

1. Why do you think divorce is common in our society?
2. What do you think has helped your parents' marriage stay together?
3. How has your view of marriage been strengthened (or weakened) by the example of marriages in your life?
4. Do you ever find it difficult to relate to a friend whose parents are struggling with divorce?
5. How can you support your friends and family who are

going through divorce?

SEND 20 minutes

Witness - Part II (5 min)

Invite the same teen back up to finish his/her witness. He/she should share how God has played a role in helping him/her deal with divorce.

The Good News! (15 min)

The youth minister should thank the teen for their witness. He/She should remind the group that no matter what type of home the teens come from, broken by divorce or a family that shares everything together, the community they are a part of at the parish is always a welcoming place. The youth minister should address each side of the room to set up for the prayer time:

Divorced:

For those who have gone through or are going through this painful process, we want you to know that you are not alone and that there is Good News and hope. The Good News is that God offers healing for your heart and your family. He does not leave us alone in these situations. He desires that we invite Him into our sadness, loneliness, anger and hurt. He wants you to know that His love for you is greater and more powerful than the pain of divorce. He wants to offer you peace.

Non-Divorced:

For those of you have not experienced divorce in your family, you have an opportunity to pray for those who have. Reach out in a spirit of love to those who are hurting, especially any of your friends. Let us all ask God to strengthen those who are committed to each other in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The youth minister should then instruct the teens from to find one or two other people from the other side of the room and get into groups. The groups should spend a few minutes praying over each other for God's love to pour down into their hearts. They should also pray for the strengthening of all marriages, especially those on the verge of divorce or separation. End the Life Night by praying a Hail Mary and the Ave Maria.

Making It Work

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

- Have a local Christian counselor available for the teens to talk to during the night.
- Have a few of the Core Members available in the chapel or church after the Life Night to talk and pray with teens.
- The youth minister and Core team will need to work hard to ensure that this night does not become an “us vs. them.” The division of the teens is a way for them to see the reality of the issue, not to feel singled out. If you feel this will not work for your group, then find other ways to introduce the Life Night.
- Remember that just because teens’ parents are married does not mean that the marriage is healthy and/or holy. Be sure to connect this Life Night with the Life Night on marriage (For Better or Worse) and remind the teens of God’s desire and plan for marriage.

Community Connection

- Consider hosting a Parent Life Night on the same night. Give the parents a few questions to take home to discuss with their family regarding the issues of divorce as well as the sanctity of Marriage.
- Instead of a teen testimony, invite a family (interviewed before the night) to come and share their experience of divorce and how it affected each member of the family differently and where God fits into everything that happened. Be sure to meet with the family before the Life Night to talk about what to share.
- If the parish has a Divorced and Separated Ministry, ask them to intercede for the teens during this Life Night.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce

TEACHING

To the presenter: The teaching outlines given in this Curriculum Guide cover much more information than can be presented in a 10-minute talk. This is done on purpose. It is the role of presenter to be familiar with the topic and then prayerfully prepare the main points that will be presented to the teens. Use Scripture, Catechism and personal experience to convey the message.

Tough Times

Life is difficult. There are countless social and familial pressures to deal with on top of the economic whirlwind families face. All of these external tensions can take such a toll on families that spouses have trouble being able to love each other and end up divorcing. Other factors may also lead to divorce. We'll talk a little about what's going on out there, what our Church teaches, and what we can do to avoid divorce and the pain that it causes.

The U.S. Census reported in 2004 that about 50 percent of marriages in the U.S. end in divorce. Prenuptial agreements/contracts are almost commonplace in civil marriages. Couples are living together before or instead of getting married more often than ever before. All of these cultural changes are pushing traditional values aside and are weakening the idea of marriage. We live in a new world in which many young adults enter into marriage suspecting that it may not be their last. This is a new phenomenon that suggests that marriage is something of an obsolete religious institution.

Another contributor to this trend is the increase in "inter-church marriages", in which religious customs, teachings, and rites of passage may fall by the wayside because they may not be common beliefs or traditions for both spouses. Consequently, children may not grow up in either faith.

Images in the media convey a message of what we should believe is normal family life. Media also writes off marriage as something unnecessary in the grand scheme of happiness. Plenty of people seem to find true love without having a wedding.

Family structure and relative strength is new today as blended family relationships are considered. Many times, extended relatives are not always around because we

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce TEACHING

may not see much of them or any of them after a divorce. Family ties are lost.

There was a time where families could do very well on the salary of one parent. Today, many families have two working parents, due to increased financial pressures. Financial issues are among the leading causes for difficulty in marriage.

Family size in the United States has steadily decreased since the introduction of the birth control pill. The long held belief of the depth of the marital union present in the sexual embrace has gradually deteriorated over time to the point where pregnancy and sex are almost two entirely different subjects. As a result, children and family size have shifted. Children are not a gift of life from God. They are a choice made by the parents when they are willing to create life on their own. This is a major element in the loss of belief in and respect for the dignity of all human beings.

It's now impossible to speak of children, family, husbands, wives, or marriage without mentioning some sort of a civil precedent. Many times courts have maintained justice and right moral living according to traditionally understood truths. However, the trend is to do the opposite today. Truth is not something that a court wants to determine. At times, courts intervene in families' and children's lives in order to help them when many times they constrict their natural rights.

These issues are a handful of the many reasons men and women do not expect their vocation to be permanent or even expect their marriage to be a vocation (a calling from God). There are ways around these trials and difficulties. We must know that there is a truth—something that is never wrong and that which we must live in accordance. We must find the truth because the truth will lead us to the way of life.

Let's Get the Facts

Many people don't realize that the Church understands that sometimes there are situations within a marriage "in which living together becomes practically impossible for a variety of reasons. In such cases, the Church permits the physical *separation*," which may lead to a divorce. For example, there are unfortunate times when one spouse becomes irrationally and uncontrollably abusive. In this situation, the Church understands that it's not safe for the

CCC 1649

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce TEACHING

spouses to live together and may not be safe for them to share the legal privileges of husband and wife. In such a circumstance, they may separate and end their legally recognized status as spouses.

It's key to realize the difference between divorce and "ending" a marriage. In our last example, while spouses end up divorced and separated, they are still *married* to each other—their promise to love, honor and serve each other was made unconditionally. Thus, they remain married to each other as long as they are both still alive.

The Pharisees asked Christ about divorce, appealing to the Torah, in which Moses wrote that divorce was allowed, "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 'But at the beginning of creation, God "made them male and female." "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate...Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.'"

Mark 10:5-12

Here we have the perfected meaning of marriage, as sacramentally understood in Christ's teaching. "In the beginning," Adam and Eve were joined by a "one-flesh" union in their marriage bond that was intrinsic to their relationship with each other and with God. It is something sacred. Jesus corrects and perfects the Law in this message.

So what does this mean for divorced Catholics? Is all hope lost? Should we reject them? Of course not. Those who are divorced and remain single, demonstrating continence, may enjoy a rich sacramental life within the Church. Assuming a divorce was a last resort to a substantial threat to the safety of an individual, how could the Church punish those who chose the greatest good in that situation? The Church welcomes those afflicted with open arms because we are there to help. Those who are divorced and remain single may receive the Eucharist and assist in liturgical worship where normally appropriate.

CCC 1650

In reality, divorce is not always a safety precaution. The majority of times it is the result of some level of infidelity, financial issues, or selfishness. In these circumstances, those who end up divorcing long for a time in the

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce

TEACHING

relationship when things were going smoothly. Other reasons why someone may want a divorce may not be so cut and dry. Personal demons can manifest themselves in unexplainable ways. Rather than work through the tough, seemingly impossible, situations in which couples find themselves, it may seem more appealing to call it quits or go after another relationship. Divorce only ends the civil duty of the spouse. The marriage remains. Should the spouse remarry, he/she is living contrary to law of God as taught by Christ, "They are not separated from the Church, but they cannot receive Eucharistic communion. They will lead Christian lives especially by educating their children in the faith."

CCC 1665

Marriage takes many shapes and forms. You may have been to wedding ceremonies in different religious traditions that bear little resemblance to one another. A "civil marriage" may have been one of these. Civil marriages are administered by the state and are required for the legal recognition of the union between two persons. All couples that marry in a church must first obtain a civil marriage license. Catholic couples who civilly marry and never *sacramentally* marry live in an objective state of sin and may present scandal to others. The scandal would be a result of living as though the Church was not the central focus of your marriage as a Catholic. Those who are living together, married via civil union and not the Church are not separated from the Church either, but are not living in a state of grace and therefore are not free to receive the Sacraments except in danger of death.

It should be noted that those who are not able to receive Sacraments, but who remain in the Church, are not forbidden from and are still required to attend Mass regularly and may make a spiritual communion.

As part of not being able to participate in the Sacraments, those who are not free to receive the Sacraments are also not free to participate in the administering of the Sacraments including serving as a sponsor for Baptism or Confirmation.

CCC 1650

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce

TEACHING

What's an annulment? Isn't it just a "Catholic divorce"?

As certain situations arise that lead to divorce, Catholics may want to investigate and find out whether or not their marriage was a marriage to begin with. It may be confusing, but there is a chance that something may exist that would nullify the marriage completely. This is different from a divorce. It is an annulment. A divorce says the marriage is over. An annulment says that it never was.

When Catholics divorce, it may be determined that the marriage may be **annulled**. What does this mean? For a marriage to exist, there must be certain prerequisites as in any Sacrament. For the Eucharist to exist under normal circumstances, there must be bread and wine, a priest, words of consecration, and a liturgy. Without these, there is no Eucharistic presence. God teaches that through these materials, He will supply His grace to complete the Sacrament simply by the work being done (*ex opere operato*). In order for two people to enter into a one-flesh, sacramental union, a variety of prerequisites must be met, such as age, status in life, freedom to marry, the absence of impediments and several others. If any of these are not sufficiently met, the marriage may be issued a "declaration of nullity" (annulment) by the Church, which means that it never happened.

For example, imagine Jim was running a marathon through the streets of a big city. While no one was looking, he took a shortcut and won the race. For some time people believed Jim was the winner until Alex, another participant in the marathon, reviewed the race and discovered that Jim did not run the necessary distance. Jim's title would be revoked, as the prerequisite for running a marathon was not met. Even though it looked as though Jim was the winner because he crossed the finish line first, it was never true.

Also, an annulment must be sought after by one of the spouses of the marriage in question. The Church does not sniff around for defective marriages and surprise them with an annulment. Determining the validity of a marriage can be complex. Sometimes it must be determined whether one or both spouses lacked the psychological capacity to assume the essential obligations of marriage. These things are not so easily determined and may take some time.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce

TEACHING

Falling Out of Love; Learning to Love Anew.

Do you remember when you first got those butterflies in your stomach for that special someone? Do you remember when they flew away? That wonderful feeling we get when we are “in love” with other people is special. Sometimes it fades, and we may say that we’ve fallen out of love.

We are unable to love perfectly. There is pain in this world that makes loving someone difficult. Failed marriages might be a regular part of life, but they happen because of our fallen human nature. God teaches us to see and understand marriage as something that lasts for life.

Revelation teaches us that from the start of creation to the end of the world, God’s plan for human beings includes marriage. Jesus raised Marriage to the level of a Sacrament and taught that it involves life-long commitment. Jesus also taught us to recognize the love between spouses as an image of the unending and unconditional aspect of God’s love for us. Marriage is strengthened by this similarity if properly understood.

Married love involves not just feelings but also a commitment of reason and will. There are a few types of love. There is the love we have when we love pizza, the love we have when we love a friend, and then there is the deep love we have for something for which we would give our lives, our whole selves. You won’t die for pizza. You may love your friend, and you may even give your life for your friend, but we are not usually called to love our friends to such an extent. The deep love that exists between a man and a woman in marriage is the third type of love in which one empties themselves for the sake of their spouse. It’s the love that loves even when it’s not easy or fun—it’s the love that does need to feel the butterflies in order to show it, and it is the love that is especially deepened during times of trial, when it is hardest to love. Married love cannot deepen unless it faces and overcomes hard times and adversity.

When we fall out of love in relationships, we may realize that the person was never the right person to spend the rest of our lives with. It’s good that we realize these things. The process of discernment is valuable because it brings these things to light. Through discernment, we realize more about ourselves and who Christ is calling us to be. While dating, we must mutually discern our relationship

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Divorce TEACHING

with our girlfriend or boyfriend in order to discover whether or not the Lord is calling us into Marriage. Eventually the Lord reveals if Marriage is our vocation.

When two people marry, they are given the strength of God's grace to persevere through the difficult times that test their commitment—times when the butterflies are long gone. These moments are where we *decide* to love as Christ decided to love us through His pain in the garden. Love is a choice, not a feeling. Grace sustains us in order to love when it hurts, but the only way to obtain this Grace is through Christ.

Matthew 26:42

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Divorce CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

A Room Divided _____

The Good News! _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

- Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.
- Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the materials needed.
- Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Teaching _____

Witness _____

Week of the Life Night:

- Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.
- Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night. Youth minister gives feedback.
- Create environment and collect needed supplies.
- Email the entire Core team an overview of the night and small group questions.

Day of the Life Night:

- Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.
- Set up audio and video. Test the video clips to make sure both picture and sound work.
- Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.
- Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.

TRUE LIFE | HOLY ORDERS

The Vocation of Holy Orders
LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

This life night will help teens understand why Holy Orders is a vocation and how the vocation is lived out. This night will also give teens a chance to hear the real life discernment stories of priests and deacons. Finally, this night will give teen practical ways to discern their vocation.

Life Night at a Glance

Based on the MTV reality show, “True Life,” this Life Night seeks to get beyond the misconceptions and myths about the priesthood and diaconate. This Life Night will take some extra planning and coordination with the priests, deacons and seminarians in your community. The Life Night begins with a spoof of the MTV show focused on the life of your parish priest. The teaching gives an overview of Holy Orders as a unique and extraordinary calling from God. The Break gives the teens the opportunity to hear from the priests, deacons and seminarians and ask them questions about their journey and everyday life. Finally the Send will give the teens a chance to pray specifically for their bishop, priests and deacons as well as pray for all those discerning this call.

Environment

For the Life Night, create a sign or banner that looks like the MTV “True Life” logo. Surround that sign with pictures of popes, bishops, priests, and deacons celebrating the liturgy, praying over the sick, visiting with families and other pictures of service. Ask the pastor to borrow an older stole, chasuble and alb to hang in the room. Have a screen and projector at the front of the room. If possible, find a video of last year’s diocesan ordination and project it on the screen as teens enter.

GATHER 15 Minutes

Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

The youth minister gathers the group together and welcomes everyone to the Life Night. The youth minister should welcome any new teens to the night. The visiting priests and deacons should also introduce themselves.

True Life | I am a Catholic Priest. (10 min)

Before the Life Night, create a short spoof video of the MTV show “True Life.” But instead of the morally questionable stories that MTV usually highlights, this episode will be on the true life of your parish priest. Within the video, address the misconceptions and myths about the priesthood and diaconate (i.e. priests are always in clerics, always at the Church, were born priests, etc.) Show a “day in the life” of your priest, both the extraordinary and the mundane. Involve teens, the priests and deacons from the parish in the creation of this video.

PROCLAIM 15 minutes

Teaching (10 min)

This teaching is an overview of the Sacrament and Vocation of Holy Orders. If possible, have the pastor or another priest give this teaching.

The teaching outline can be found on pages 66-71.

“Priests: In Their Own Words” Video (5 min)

This video asks priests to share about their calling, the surprises of this vocation and suggestions for women considering the religious life. Use this as the transition into the Break.

“Priests: In Their Own Words” can be found on Video Support 8

BREAK 40 minutes

Panel Discussion and Q&A (40 min)

Ideally this panel should be four men: your parish priest, a deacon, a seminarian and a man who discerned priesthood but was led to marriage instead. If all four are not available, any combination will do. Ask each of

TRUE LIFE | HOLY ORDERS

The Vocation of Holy Orders

TEACHING

To the presenter: The teaching outlines given in this Curriculum Guide cover much more information than can be presented in a 10-minute talk. This is done on purpose. It is the role of presenter to be familiar with the topic and then prayerfully prepare the main points that will be presented to the teens. Use Scripture, Catechism and personal experience to convey the message.

I think that we have started to break down some of the misconceptions in the world today regarding the priesthood. Tonight, we want to talk about the reality that is the Sacrament of Holy Orders. This is a Sacrament that is probably more similar to Marriage than we think, probably nothing like we imagine, but everything that we hoped it could be. So hold on!

The priest is not simply the guy who wears black who gets to speak at the Mass. It is much deeper than that. The priest is an extension of the bishop, who is an extension of Christ. In fact, the priest is the "image of Christ" and even the "person of Christ" because he is supposed to preach the Gospel and serve the people of the Church.

One of the key ways that they do this is through the Mass, the "Divine Worship" which was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper. When Jesus gave the apostles the power to act in His image and His person, He established His ability to be with the Church for all time through the service of the priests and bishops.

In the beginning of the Church, after the Ascension, there was not a clear separation from the Jewish community for the followers of Christ. Christians were Jewish people who kept their Jewish faith in addition of the belief that Jesus Christ was the Messiah who had been promised to the Jews. They celebrated the Mass in their homes in small numbers of about 10 to 15 people.

The pastors and leaders of the early Church were the first bishops, or the apostles. They initially began in Jerusalem, but the Holy Spirit began to move in the Church and the apostles started preaching the Gospel and celebrating the Sacraments in other parts of the world. It became apparent that the bishops needed helpers. This was when they started to ordain priests.

Introduction: It is important that the transition of the introduction include a reference to the True Life video in the Gather section of the night. Without this reference, the teaching will seem disjointed, or out of place with the rest of the night.

CCC 1564
Lumen Gentium 28
Hebrews 5:1-10, 7:24, 9:11-28

Acts 6:1-7

TRUE LIFE | HOLY ORDERS

The Vocation of Holy Orders

TEACHING

There are some bishops who receive honorary titles. All bishops of archdioceses are usually referred to as an archbishop and certain bishops are elevated to the title of cardinal, which gives them the right to be able to participate in the conclave that elects the new Bishop of Rome. (Since the Bishop of Rome cannot elect himself, the College of Cardinals does so.)

Bishops administer all of the Sacraments and in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, the bishop is usually the one who confers the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The co-workers of the bishops are priests. It is not possible for the bishop of your diocese to be everywhere at once. So when you are at Mass and the priest is celebrating, the priest acting as an extension of the bishop.

Because the priest is acting on behalf of the bishop, the priest is able to act in *Persona Christi* or in the person of Christ. The priest is able to function when the bishop is not able to present. Just because the priest is a co-worker does not mean that they are limited or do not take part in the full role of the bishop. The priest is to take part in the full mission of preaching the Gospel everywhere and ministry of the sacraments in a pastoral way.

The priest serves in a special way in the local parish or with a particular Eucharistic Assembly. This is the best way that they serve as co-workers to the bishop in the person of Christ. They are able to proclaim the Gospel, offer sacrifice and prayer on behalf of the parish, celebrate the Mass and most importantly, offer themselves as the person of Christ as the "spotless victim" to the Father in each and every Eucharistic Prayer where the parish takes part in the Last Supper.

The focus of the priests is to confer the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick and in certain circumstances, the priest will confer Confirmation.

You might notice that Marriage is missing from that list. The Sacrament of Marriage is actually conferred by the spouses to each other, but in the Latin Church, the priest or deacon receives the public consent of the spouses in the name of the Church and gives the blessing of the Church to the Sacrament. The presence of the priest, deacon and the assembly of the people shows that the Marriage is a reality in the Church, and spiritually in the grace of God.

CCC 1562-1568, 1121, 611, 849, 1369, 2179, 1537

Acts 1:8

1 Corinthians 11:26

Hebrews 5:1-10, 7:24, 9:11-28

Lumen Gentium 28

Optatam Totius 20

Presbyterorum Ordinis 2, 8

TRUE LIFE | HOLY ORDERS

The Vocation of Holy Orders

TEACHING

Much like wedding vows, the promises of a priest involve elements that allow him to serve his spouse by giving his all to the Church.

The first of these promises is obedience to the bishop. This obedience means that they are willing to live a life of service to the bishop and to the Church. The bishop allows them to serve as an extension of himself so they must be obedient to his authority.

The second promise is the gift of celibacy. The priest renounces marriage for the sake of the Kingdom, choosing to embrace the heavenly marriage. This indicates what they are giving their lives for. Husbands are giving their lives for their wives and families, while priests give their lives for the Church.

Sometimes you may hear of priests who work for schools, religious orders or other institutions. These priests must also embrace vows, although especially in the case of religious communities, there may be more vows than what we have outlined here.

Although the length of preparation varies depending on the diocese, men who are preparing for the permanent diaconate spend several years in part-time preparation. This includes pastoral and intellectual preparation. They are trained in how to spiritually guide the people that they are going to be serving on behalf of the Bishop.

Now that we have discussed the preparation, let's look at how the sacrament is bestowed.

The essential element of all three of the degrees of Holy Orders is the laying on of hands by the bishop and the consecratory prayer. This prayer asks that God pour out the gifts of the Spirit needed for the candidate to perform the ministry to which they are being ordained.

When a man receives the Sacrament to become bishop, the Chrism oil is poured onto his head. He is then presented with the ring, the crosier and the miter: the signs of his office.

For the priest, the Chrism oil is used to anoint his hands, which will be used to consecrate the Eucharist. He is then clothed with the vestments of the priest and presented with the bread and the wine that are going to be consecrated.

CCC 1567, 1579, 1569-1571

CCC 1573-1574, 699, 1585, 1294, 796

TRUE LIFE | HOLY ORDERS

The Vocation of Holy Orders

CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

True Life | I'm a Catholic Priest _____

Panel Discussion and Q & A _____

Pray for Me, I'll Pray for You _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.

Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the materials needed.

Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Teaching _____

Q&A Facilitator _____

Week of the Life Night:

Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.

Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night. Youth minister gives feedback.

Create environment and collect needed supplies.

Email entire Core team an overview of the night and small group questions.

Day of the Life Night:

Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.

Set up any audio and video needs. Test the video.

Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.

Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.



I OBJECT!

Objections to Holy Orders

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

The goal of this Life Night is to answer the common objections to the vocation of Holy Orders. Specifically, this Life Night will address all-male priesthood and the vow of celibacy.

Life Night at a Glance

This Life Night deals with a topic that many teens will question and challenge. It is very important to be well prepared for this night. If necessary, have a few meetings with the parish priest and Core team to prepare. The preparations will help make the whole group more comfortable when questions or challenges come up during the night. This night begins with a skit that shows a family where the dad is both a married man and an ordained priest. The skit shows how it is not possible to live both vocations fully as God intended. The teaching addresses the common objections to an all-male priesthood and the vow to celibacy. Following the teaching, small groups will have an opportunity to discuss what they just learned together. The teens should be able to ask additional questions. The night closes with a call to live into the universal priesthood each Christian has through his/her Baptism.

Environment

The environment of this night is the environment of the skit. Set up a typical office. Have a desk with a computer and stacked papers. If possible, have books overflowing from bookshelves and piled all around the desk on the floor. If bookshelves are not possible, paint full bookshelves on large pieces of butcher paper to hang behind the desk.

GATHER *20 Minutes*

Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

The youth minister should gather all the teens together and welcome everyone to the Life Night. He/She should introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

“So Many Questions” Icebreaker (10 min)

This Life Night deals with some of the common questions and misconceptions about the priesthood. Before getting into the topic, give the teens an opportunity to move around and get to know one another.

Have the entire group stand. Instruct them that they are to meet as many people as possible. The catch is that they can only talk in questions (no statements). When they respond in a statement or cannot think of a question to respond with, they are out of the game and must sit down. Have a prize for the last person standing.

“What’s your Priority?” Skit (5 min)

This skit portrays a family where the dad is a married husband and father and ordained priest. His priorities and loyalties are divided between family and church. This skit will give a good introduction on a few of the issues surrounding objections to the priesthood.

The skit can be found on pages 81-82.

PROCLAIM *10 minutes*

Teaching (10 min)

The teaching for this night addresses two main questions: why the Church only ordains men and the vow of celibacy. If possible, have a parish priest give this teaching and use his witness to drive the points of this teaching.

The teaching can be found on pages 77-80.

“Objections to Holy Orders (teaching)”

Video (10 min)

Another option for the teaching is to play the video teaching found on Video Support 8. Even if not used within the Life Night, this video can help the presenter prepare to give the teaching live.

CATECHISM REFERENCES:

1577 # 1618
 # 551 # 2233
 # 861-862
 # 1579-1580

SCRIPTURES:

Mark 3:14-19 Matthew 19:12
 Luke 6:12-16 1 Corinthians 7:32
 1 Timothy 3:1-13
 2 Timothy 1:6
 Titus 1:5-9

“Objections to Holy Orders” can be found on Video Support 8.

BREAK 30 minutes

For this small group it is very important for the Core Members to be well educated on this topic. If possible, have a Core gathering before this Life Night that breaks open the topic for them in depth so that they feel more comfortable leading small groups for this night.

Small Group Discussion (30 min)

Open with a prayer by one of the teens.

1. According to Church teaching why can't women be priests?
2. What your thoughts and reactions to these teachings?
3. Why is tradition so important for us as Catholics?
4. Do you think priests should be allowed to marry? Why or why not?
5. Explain the complication of having two primary vocations.

SEND 15 minutes**Recap** (5 min)

The youth minister should gather the groups back together. He/She should recap the night by reminding the teens that as disciples of Jesus and members of the Catholic Church we must be obedient to Christ's teachings—especially when it comes to the Sacraments. It is not our right to say what is fair and to go against what Christ has set up, but we can be encouraged that He has a plan for each of our lives and for the Church.

Baptismal Priesthood (10 min)

Use the following as a transition into the Send of the Night:

In our Baptism, we are baptized into Christ's priesthood. We call this our baptismal priesthood. The men you see celebrating Mass and hearing confessions are priests by the sacramental priesthood. We call these men ordained priests. The sacramental priesthood is a priesthood passed down directly from Christ to His apostles. The role of an ordained priest is to offer sacrifices to God. At Mass, he offers the Eucharist to God on our behalf. Although most of us will not be ordained into the sacramental priesthood (receive the sacrament of Holy Orders), we are all called by our Baptism to share in the universal priesthood of Christ. We are all called to offer sacrifices (giving up those things that take God's place, fasting, tithing, etc), to be a self-sacrifice (vocation) and forgive one another. Listen to what is said to us right after we are baptized: "The God of power and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin and brought you to new life through water and the Holy Spirit. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation, so that, united with his people, you may remain for ever a member of Christ who is Priest, Prophet, and King." Through our Baptism we become members of Christ and share in His universal priesthood. It is through living this baptismal priesthood that we find our vocation, whether married, religious or the sacramental priesthood.

Invite all the Core Members (and priest(s) if present) to come forward and spread across the front of the room. Give them each a bowl filled with holy water. Invite the teens to come forward and receive prayer and a blessing. When the teen comes forward say a prayer over him/her for openness of heart for God's call in his/her life, reminding them of their Baptism and identity as priest, prophet and king. After the prayer, bless the teen with holy water saying "though the universal call to priesthood, my God bless you and open your heart to His plan for your life. Amen."

After every teen has had an opportunity to be prayed over and blessed, close the night with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

I OBJECT!

Objections to Holy Orders

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Making It Work

- Instead of the small group time, try to have a large group time using the questions. Be careful to not let the large group time turn into a time of debate.
- Have a follow-up Bible study on Holy Orders the week following this night. This will give the group an opportunity to dive deeper into the issues than the Life Night will allow.
- Instead of doing the skit live, create a video of the skit that can be shown at the beginning of the Life Night.

Community Connection

- Invite a few priests from surrounding parishes to be present for the night to join small groups and pray over the teens. Be sure to ask them well in advance.
- Invite teens that normally are not at Life Night to be part of the skit.
- Email parents a synopsis of the Life Night along with the main teaching points. Encourage them to dialogue with their teens about the Life Night.

I OBJECT!

Objections to Holy Orders TEACHING

To the presenter: The teaching outlines given in this Curriculum Guide cover much more information than can be presented in a 10-minute talk. This is done on purpose. It is the role of presenter to be familiar with the topic and then prayerfully prepare the main points that will be presented to the teens. Use Scripture, Catechism and personal experience to convey the message.

Introduction

It's apparent, if you pay attention to mainstream media, that a group of men who renounce marriage are a big part of the reason why the Church is failing. Most of those who would criticize the Church on these points are seeing the Church through the colored lens, as if they were wearing sunglasses.

Their glasses paint the world as a place where we should be entitled to pursue any sexual experience we desire, except for a few restrictions (that are quickly disappearing). Tonight we want to address some of these objections to the idea of an all-male, all-celibate priesthood. Hopefully in showing what God has planned for the Church, you will be able to answer these objections.

Why Does the Church Not Ordain Women?

On the surface this seems like a really unfair rule made at a time when women were treated more like objects who couldn't vote and or own property. If the Church claims to support women as much as any other organization, why would they not support women in leadership roles and positions of power?

This requires a few points of clarification and perhaps even a history lesson.

First of all, The Catholic Church and even the Jewish faith has always endorsed dignity and rights for women more than any other society. Of course by today's standards, the way that women were discussed and treated in the early Church and Judaism before Christ don't seem exactly equal, but for that time it was quite revolutionary.

CCC 1577, 551, 861-862

Mark 3:14-19

Luke 6:12-16

1 Timothy 3:1-13

2 Timothy 1:6

Titus 1:5-9

Canon Law, Canon 1024

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis

Mulieris Dignitatem 26-27

Acta Apostolicae Sedis 69, 98-116

I OBJECT!

Objections to Holy Orders

TEACHING

The Church also does not say that it will not ordain women. The Church simply says that it is "not free" to ordain women. Certainly women have the ability to be pastoral, to preach and to carry out most of the functions of the ministry. The root issue is that Jesus ordained the apostles to be the bishops who then ordained men to succeed them.

Jesus wasn't just conforming to social norms either. Instead, Jesus deliberately chose men and the Catholic Church is not in the habit of going against Jesus.

Gender and sexuality are also important. God created us male and female and there are distinct roles that our nature plays out in us. The English language does not assign genders to nouns, but the Church is always referred to the feminine. This is because Christ takes the Church as His bride. Christ is the masculine, the Church the feminine. That is why the Church is referred to as our Mother.

Since the bishop or priest serves as an icon or the person of Christ, and Christ was a man, the bishop or priest must be a man as well.

We also make a mistake when we think that the Church uses this rule as a way to suppress women and keep them from positions of power. When we think that the priesthood is all about power it becomes a problem known as "clericalism." Christ gave up His very body for the Church, so that she could become holy. A priest or bishop is supposed to do the same. To be the servant of servants. Remember too that the greatest human being in the history of the Catholic Church was a woman (Mary).

There are some who think that there were women deacons in the early Church. The truth is that there is no historical basis for women serving as deacons as we now know and understand the diaconate.

CCC 1577, 551, 861-862

Mark 3:14-19

Luke 6:12-16

1 Timothy 3:1-13

2 Timothy 1:6

Titus 1:5-9

Canon Law, Canon 1024

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis

Mulieris Dignitatem 26-27

Acta Apostolicae Sedis 69, 98-116

I OBJECT!

Objections to Holy Orders TEACHING

The other main objection that people have about the priesthood is the idea of the ordained men (except permanent deacons) making a vow of celibacy.

How lonely!

How unhappy!

You mean there are people who spend their whole lives not engaging in sexual activity?

Keep in mind that most people are looking at this issue with a lens that reflects the current era of a sexually-saturated culture. Up until 50 years ago, marriage was seen as a way to give life to your spouse and children. To make sacrifices so that you could make more people. You loved your spouse, and that love was expressed in working hard and making sacrifices so that your family could be holy.

In that light, the priesthood, religious life and consecrated virgins was seen as simply another way to make that sacrifice. At different times it was even seen as an easier life than marriage! With a place to live and meals provided, the sacrifice of the priest or religious seemed to be much less of a sacrifice than the couple who would work their whole lives to provide for their family. Today, marriage is simply seen as a way for two people to make each other feel good. This is far from God's original intent and plan.

Sure there is unhappiness and loneliness among those who make a vow of celibacy, but these emotions exist in every vocation. The majority of those who give themselves to God completely, including their sexuality, live happy and fulfilling lives.

The sign of celibacy is that the man or woman is dedicated to serving God with an undivided heart. They don't have to make the decisions between the Body of Christ and their own family. They don't have to worry about providing for a family, or about the harm that might come to that family if they take a stand on an unpopular issue.

CCC 1579-1580, 1618, 2233

Matthew 19:12

1 Corinthians 7:32

Presbyterorum Ordinis 16

I OBJECT!

Objections to Holy Orders

TEACHING

The truth is that God gives us the grace to live out the commitments we make to Him and to the Church. Anyone who is truly living their promise of celibacy knows that it brings a consolation that cannot be appreciated by one who has not lived it. This commitment to celibacy gives the individual a sense of the gifts of the eternal life to come, when we will be fully engulfed in the Body of Christ.

When we understand that the bishop and priest act in the person of Christ and that they are dedicated to living their lives in service of the Church and Christ, celibacy and the all-male priesthood make a lot of sense!

The best way to find out more about the Sacrament of Holy Orders is to get to know a priest who is in love with his vocation! You will find a man who is in love with God, with his Church, with his people and with his life!

I OBJECT!

Objections to Holy Orders
SKIT

Characters:

Jimmy (teen son)
Fr. Father (dad and priest)
Jenny (teen daughter)
Mrs. Father (wife of Fr. Father)

Fr. Father is in his study working on his homily when his son Jimmy enters.

JIMMY

Dad, will you be at my game today? It's a really big one for us.

(Jenny enters the office/study)

JENNY

Hey dad, can you sign this for me?

FR. FATHER

(while signing Jenny's paper)

Sorry Jimmy. I'd love to, but I've got a staff meeting, a Baptism prep class, the Noon Mass, anointing at the hospital, and then the parish school has a play I've got to do the invocation for and then dinner with the Ladies of the Lord group which will take me all the way until 9:00 tonight. They've been planning it for months.

JIMMY

Ok, dad. I hope we win and then you can come to the next game.

FR. FATHER

I hope so too.

(Wife enters office/study)

JENNY

Dad, have you been to any of Jimmy's games this year?

FR. FATHER

Jenny, no, sorry I haven't. The parish is really struggling right now, and it's been pulling me more in all sorts of directions. We've had to cut some staff down to part time, so I have to be at more things lately.

WIFE

Jenny, you know that your dad has to be committed to his vocation as a priest of this parish.

JIMMY

But what about us? Isn't your family supposed to be important to you also?

FR. FATHER

Jimmy, you and this family, along with me being a priest are both top priorities for me. I'm doing my best here.

JENNY

It seems like we always lose on that priority list.

WIFE

Jenny! You show more respect to your father.

JIMMY

But we're learning about Sacraments in school, and we're talking about marriage this week. Our teacher told us that a spouse and family should be your "primary vocation." That sounds like we should be your priority.

FR. FATHER

You're right – and I'm glad you're learning this good stuff in school. But my priestly vocation is also primary. So, that means I also have to have the parish as a top priority.

JENNY

How can you have two "primary" things? It seems like something will end up not primary.

FR. FATHER

Jenny, this is a balancing act.

WIFE

Honey, I'm sorry, but the kids are right. I know your role as a priest is "primary" but we're supposed to be primary also. I try to be understanding and supportive, but too often this family ends up as less important than your work – sorry, the parish. Is this really going to work for this family, or should you maybe find another job?

FR. FATHER

Bring a priest is much more than a job! It's a vocation – sort of like being married.

JIMMY

It seems like you're married to two people, Mom and the church. And the Church usually wins when you have to decide between us.

I OBJECT!

Objections to Holy Orders

CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

So Many Questions Icebreaker _____

What's Your Priority Skit _____

Baptismal Priesthood _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.

Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to collect and purchase the materials needed.

Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Teaching _____

Week of the Life Night:

Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.

Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night. Youth minister gives feedback.

Create environment and collect needed supplies.

Email entire Core team an overview of the night and all small group questions.

Day of the Life Night:

Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.

Set up audio and video. Test the video clips to make sure both picture and sound work.

Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.

Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.

A Marriage Made in Heaven

The Consecrated Life

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

This night will expose the teens to the various forms of consecrated life. This night will focus specifically on the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience taken by consecrated men and women. Finally this Life Night will look at how teens can live out these vows while discerning their individual vocation.

Life Night at a Glance

Many people do not know much about the vocation to religious life. This Life Night seeks to give your youth group insight into the beauty of this vocation. This night begins with a small group competition creating short skits about what they think heaven will be like. The skits move into a teaching on the consecrated life and its various forms. The Break for this night will either give the teens an opportunity to get to know a religious sister or brother from their community or have a chance to discuss the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The night will close with a time of thanksgiving for the vocation of the consecrated life and a time of night prayer.

Environment

The environment for this night should present the “feel” of a convent or monastery. Be creative to make this happen. As the teens enter the room, have Gregorian chant or bells playing. Around the perimeter of the room have various religious pictures and statues. At the front of the room, create a small bedroom that would be found in a convent. Have a bed set up with a blanket and pillow. Have an end table next to the bed with a Bible and lamp on it.

GATHER 20 Minutes

Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

The youth minister should gather all the teens together and welcome everyone to the Life Night. He/She should introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

“The Way I See It” Skits (15 min)

It’s the age-old question: “What will heaven be like?” The Gather for this night will give the teens an opportunity to answer that question in a unique way. The youth minister should explain that each group has five minutes to come up with a one-minute skit on what they think heaven will be like. The skits can be serious or humorous.

Encourage the group to be as creative as possible.

Ensure that every person from the small group has a part in the skit. Once the five minutes is up, have each group come forward and perform their skit. Invite religious sisters from the community or parish to come and judge the skits. If sisters are not available, the rest of the small groups should vote on the best skit. Award the winning group with a prize.

PROCLAIM 15 Minutes

Teaching (10 min)

This teaching focuses on the beauty of consecrated life in many different forms. To make this teaching come alive, try having key words written on a sign or board.

The teaching can be found on pages 88-91.

“Sisters: In Their Own Words” Video (5 min)

This video asks religious sisters to share about their calling, the surprises of this vocation and suggestions for women considering the religious life. Use this as the transition into the Break.

“Sisters: In Their Own Words” can be found on Video Support 8

BREAK 30 Minutes

Large Group Q & A (30 min)

If possible, invite one or two religious brothers and/or sisters to come to Life Night to pray with the teens and share their stories. The youth minister should introduce the guest(s) and ask him/her to share their stories. After, give the teens a chance to ask questions. Close the large group by asking the brother/sister to pray over the teens.

Alternative Break –Poverty, Chastity and Obedience (30 min)

This alternative break will give the teens an opportunity to dive deeper into the evangelical counsels poverty, chastity and obedience. You will need three different spaces (the main room and two more) for this time. Try and have these spaces as close as possible to save on travel time

CATECHISM REFERENCES:
914-924 928-933
2103
1973-1974
2687
2684

SCRIPTURES:
Matthew 19:12
1 Corinthians 7:34-36
Jeremiah 29: 11-13
John 15:10

between rooms. Select three different Core Members to lead the three discussions. Divide small groups up into three large groups. The groups will rotate through the three different vow discussions every 10 minutes. Each discussion will be followed by a short time of small group questions.

#1 - Poverty

What does it mean?

- What comes to mind when you think of the word poverty? (Ask for some answers) This evangelical counsel is central not only to the consecrated life but also to our lives now.
- The vow of poverty is a promise to be detached from the world. When religious empty themselves of worldly goods—attachment to money or physical possessions—they allow God to fill their lives and hearts with his richness and love that lasts beyond this world.
- Why do religious always seem so joy-filled and content? They seem so joy-filled because their hope is not attached to the world. They are filled by the eternal hope that God gives them. They have their attachment in God.
- Jesus was always eating and associating with the poor. Why? Is it because he was poor and weak? No. Jesus was giving us a model of what our lives should look like. The poor are empty. They have no physical possessions. Jesus was showing to us that there was wisdom and virtue in poverty, especially when our poverty is aimed towards God. This is why this counsel is an important part of consecrated life.

How do we live this counsel?

- Does this sound familiar? We too are called to live a life of poverty. We are called to be detached from those things that take God's place in our lives. What are those things for you? Maybe it is a physical possession. Maybe it is another person. Whatever it is, God is calling you to let it go because He wants to give you more happiness and joy than a worldly possession will ever give. This joy lasts forever.

Small Group Questions:

1. What are the things in your life that hinder you from allowing God to come into your heart fully? Why would it be hard to give those things up?
2. Where do you place your hope? If not in God, what can you do to place your hope in God?

#2 - Chastity

What does it mean?

- Our sexuality and the virtue of chastity are gifts from God given to us to glorify him. When a religious takes the vow of chastity, it is in a sense, a type of marriage vow to the Church. He or she promises complete fidelity to God.
- Look at the habit many religious sisters wear. (Show a picture of a religious sister's habit). Is it not a type of wedding gown? The vow of chastity is self-sacrifice to the Bridegroom—Christ. It is a total offering of their body and their sexuality back to God. They are saying "God, I give you everything, including my sexuality, my desire to be a mother or father. I want to be totally yours."
- Like any other vocation, the vow of chastity requires that the religious continually practice temperance or self-control. Just because they are offering their sexuality back to God does not mean those sexual desires or the desire to be a mother or father goes away. It means that they are called to greater prayer and self-sacrifice. Their celibacy is a type of worship to God.
- Religious or consecrated life is a sign to us of what heaven will be like. When we get to heaven we will be giving all of ourselves to Christ. We will be a total self-gift to Christ, and He will fill us up.

How do we live this counsel?

- Our sexuality is a gift reserved for God's use and plan; not our own. He gets to determine the appropriate time for us to use the gift. Each of us, no matter our vocation, is called to the virtue of chastity. We have to work to have greater temperance, asking God to give us strength to protect our sexuality now in preparation for our vocation and for heaven.

A Marriage Made in Heaven

The Consecrated Life

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Small Group Questions:

1. Why do you think so many men and women have a hard time with this vow when discerning religious life?
2. What are some areas that you need temperance in?
3. How can you better live the vow of chastity now in preparation for your future vocation?

#3 – Obedience

What does it mean?

- Open by proclaiming the following Scripture passage: “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” John 15:10
- What do you think Jesus meant when He said this? (Ask for some answers)
- Obedience requires two things from us: submission and trust. We are going to talk about these two briefly.
- Submission: Jesus came not only to save us from our sins and give us everlasting life, but He also came as an example of how to love God with all our mind, heart, and soul and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. One of those ways is by showing obedience to the Father. In everything Jesus did and said, He submitted his will to the Father. He said “THY will be done” not “MY will.” Jesus was “obedient unto death, even death on a cross”(Philippians 2:8).
- This vow requires that a religious give complete submission and commitment to God's plan for their life. Not only to God's plan, but also the orders vow complete submission. They vow to do what they are told in every situation.
- Trust: Obedience is trusting that God's plan is better than our own. As humans, we like to be in control of our lives. We like to call the shots and be our own boss. We think we know what's best for us. The vow of obedience requires that we give up our wills (submission) and trust that God will not lead us to a place we will be unhappy or alone.

- Listen to what God says to the prophet Jeremiah: “For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29: 11-13).

How do we live this counsel?

- This vow can be hard for us. Some of us have a difficult time with obedience. So, how can we begin to live obedience? First, we can respect and obey people in authority in our lives. Whether that is our parents, teachers, police, or other adults, we are called to obey them and respect them. We can also obey and respect the authority of the Church. The Church does not receive her authority from a group of men in a room. The Church's authority comes from Christ. It by Christ's authority that the Church stands as the light of truth in the world. As Catholics, we are called to serve and obey her as we would Christ. Finally, we can live obedience by asking God to help us know in our hearts that He has a plan for our life and He makes the same promise to us as He did Jeremiah.

Small Group Questions:

1. Who do you have a hard time being obedient? Why?
2. Which do you say more often: THY will be done or MY will be done?
3. Do you trust that God has a plan for your life?

SEND 15 Minutes

Hope in Heaven (5 min)

The youth minister should gather the group back together and recap the night. He/She should focus on the gift of the consecrated life to the Church and our call to live the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Set the room with a tone of prayer. Bring down the lights and have soft music playing in the background. The youth minister should introduce the time of prayer with the following point:

A Marriage Made in Heaven

The Consecrated Life

TEACHING

To the presenter: The teaching outlines given in this Curriculum Guide cover much more information than can be presented in a 10-minute talk. This is done on purpose. It is the role of presenter to be familiar with the topic and then prayerfully prepare the main points that will be presented to the teens. Use Scripture, Catechism and personal experience to convey the message.

For the last two educational nights we have focused solely on Holy Orders. Tonight we want to pay special attention to the Consecrated Life which is those who take special vows that are neither Marriage, nor Holy Orders. So many times when we hear the word "vocations" we think that we are only talking about Marriage and Holy Orders. In the history of the Catholic Church, the role of those who consecrate their lives to Christ make up a an important part of the history of the universal Church.

They have served in every area that you can imagine and sometimes they have been "behind the scenes" and sometimes they are in front, leading the charge on any number of movements and issues.

So just in case you thought "vocations" was just for priests or married folk, sit back and relax as we crack open the Consecrated Life!

To understand the Consecrated life we have to understand what is known as the "evangelical counsels" which are offered by Christ to everyone who would listen. Those who are consecrated live these counsels without entering into what is known as the "hierarchical structure of the Church" or Holy Orders.

Those who embrace the counsels take on a life of chastity in celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God, poverty and obedience. When someone takes these on by proclaiming them publicly they take on the characteristics of a life given to God alone.

The Church sees this state of life as a way of experiencing an intimate dedication of one's life to God. Those that take these vows are living their Baptism in a way that follows God as closely as possible, dedicating themselves to a God who simply is love. They pursue a perfection of love in their own lives, freely giving of everything they have to the service of the Kingdom of God. They become a living symbol of the glory of the Church. They are living witnesses of the perfect surrender to God only. They are walking billboards for heaven!

CCC 914 - 916, 2103, 1973-1974, 2687, 933
Lumen Gentium 42-44
Perfectae Caritatis 5
Canon Law 573

A Marriage Made in Heaven

The Consecrated Life

TEACHING

From these three vows we are going to see that there are a great number of forms or ways of living them out. They are both solitary and in community. There are different religious groups, or families that proclaim different gifts. Each of these are looking to enrich the life of the Church, to make their members holy through service to the Body of Christ.

From the beginning of the Church this practice of dedicating your life completely to Christ by practicing the counsels was endorsed by the Church and seen in individuals and groups that became hermits, removed from society, and religious groups and families that accepted the authority of the Church and were approved. As a result, bishops are always looking to prayerfully discern new types of the consecrated life. The approval of these forms is reserved for the pope. Let's go through some of these forms so we can see the large variety in what is known as the Consecrated Life.

The first type of Consecrated that we are going to address are those known as "hermits" or the "eremitic" life. These are those that may not make public vows to follow the counsels, but live a life of private devotion and praise to God. They separate themselves from the world doing prayer and penance, usually in silence.

In doing this, they make an example of their lives of that intimacy with Christ, giving everything to God. Usually, hermits find this call in the desert, where they are able to do spiritual battle, to unify themselves completely with God because God is everything to them.

The second type of Consecrated is those that consecrate their virginity to the Lord. There are those that make a vow of perpetual chastity for the sake of the Kingdom. They live in a special way with a greater freedom of heart, body and spirit to be able to serve the Lord as a spouse. They are consecrated to God by the bishop, taking Jesus as their spouse. The rite is called "Consecratio Virginum" and the person is seen as a sign of the Church's love for Jesus, an image of the heavenly Bride of Christ in the life to come.

Like other types of Consecrated, the order of virgins live in the world praying, doing penance, serving others, and preaching the Gospel according to their gifts. Sometimes they form themselves into communities to help each other serve and live their vows, but this is not always the case.

CCC 917 - 919, 2684
Lumen Gentium 43
Perfectae Caritatis 1
Canon Law 605

CCC 920-924, 2719, 2015, 1618-1620, 1537, 1672
Matthew 19:12
1 Corinthians 7:34-36
Canon Law, 603 - 604
Vita Consecrata 7
Ordo Consecrationis Virginum, Praenotanda 1-2

A Marriage Made in Heaven

The Consecrated Life

TEACHING

The third type of Consecrated life is the Religious Life. In the first centuries of Christianity, these groups that formed under the authority of the Church were always in community. They made their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience publicly. Their prayer was liturgical in nature, and they were a living witness of Christ and the Church. At its root, religious life is about showing the sacrificial love of God in the language of the time. The religious community is making an example to the world of the sacrifice of Christ.

Each religious community assists the Bishop in the pastoral care of the Church. This can be seen throughout history as religious communities have helped with missionary work and evangelization and even the formation of new churches. Religious communities are essential in passing along the faith to those who are learning it for the first time, or even those who need their faith renewed.

There are two other types of Consecrated life that we can touch on. The first is the Secular Institute. It may seem like a strange title for something that is religious in its nature, but the Secular Institute is one where those who are involved work and live in the world. Their goal is the perfection of their sacrificial love so that the world may be made holy.

These Institutes often commit themselves to the counsels through sacred bonds, and have a fellowship that is characteristic of their way of life. Their goal is to always bring the earthly world closer to God through the work they do from the inside. You can even think of it as God's spy network, going into the enemy territory in order to cause a spiritual revolution against Satan!

The other type are the Societies of Apostolic Life. These members do not take the religious vows but pursue the purpose of the society. They live according to a certain way of life and they embrace the counsels according to the constitution of the society in which they live.

As we can see there are many different ways that members of the Church can live what is known as the Consecrated Life. Through this life, the members of the Church are able to see the many gifts of the Holy Spirit and how it is working in the Church. Each of these groups

CCC 925-927, 1672, 796, 854
Canon Law, 607, 591
Unitatis Redintegratio 15
Christus Dominus 33-35
Ad Gentes 18

CCC 928-933, 901, 775, 672, 679
Canon Law, 710, 713, 731, 783
Provida Mater
Perfectae Caritatis 11
Redemptoris Missio 69
Lumen Gentium 31, 44

A Marriage Made in Heaven

The Consecrated Life

TEACHING

pursue evangelization and missionary activity in a way that is particular to them.

Many people in the world who do not understand the Church may say that the religious are simply removing themselves from the world. The truth is that they are imitating Christ in order to follow his example of emptying himself on the cross so that the world can be saved. When the Consecrated man or woman does this, they are choosing a narrow path that allows them to be more present to the world because they are not distracted by material goods, serving a family, or making decisions that are the authority of their superior. They are showing the world that we need to be transfigured through the Beatitudes.

If the Consecrated is public, private or even secret, the example is a beautiful display of a life completely dedicated to Jesus Christ that points to His Second Coming. Their witness points to an eternal life, to the glory of God, to the Heavenly Kingdom, to the joy that is to come. They follow the example of the Blessed Virgin whose own consecration to God brought God to Earth. Each Consecrated person who faithfully lives their life makes God present to the world in the model of the Blessed Mother.

A Marriage Made in Heaven

The Consecrated Life

CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

The Way I see It Skits _____

Religious Witness _____

Poverty, Chastity, Obedience (Optional)

Hope In Heaven _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.

Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to collect and purchase the materials needed.

Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines

Teaching _____

Week of the Life Night:

Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.

Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night. Youth minister gives feedback.

Create environment and collect needed supplies.

E-mail entire Core team an overview of the night.

Day of the Life Night:

Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.

Set up video. Test the slide show to make sure the pictures work.

Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.

Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.

BOUND TOGETHER

Discernment and Community
LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

This Life Night will help the teens understand that no vocation is lived in isolation. This night will explore various relationships in a teen's life and how those relationships are a means to grow closer to God and discover His calling for their lives.

Life Night at a Glance

This is the final night of the semester on vocations. This night seeks to show the teens that we need one another to grow in holiness and foster our primary vocation. This night begins with a game that shows the teens that a task is easier and less burdensome when done as a group. The teaching for this night will help the teens understand that living their vocation starts with loving one another. The Break will give the groups an opportunity to answer a few questions and set up an accountability system. The night will end with the small group members praying over each other.

Environment

The environment for this night should be a visible representation of how all vocations are interconnected. Around the room have large signs with all the various vocations (if possible, bring back the vocation booths from the "Now Hiring" Life Night). From the different signs (or booths), have string or yard connecting to all the others signs. If possible, the string should be one long piece strung around the room. The room should look like a tangled mess of string and should be difficult for the teens to maneuver around. This environment will become an important part of the Send.

Before the Life Night

At the entrance of the room, have a large sign that says, "No Talking, No Eye Contact, No Human Interaction." As the teens enter, the room should be silent. Have Core Members enforce these rules. The point is to make everyone disconnected and isolated from one another. This exercise can be used in the teaching to demonstrate the importance of community.

GATHER *15 Minutes*

Gather and Introductions (5 min)

The youth minister should break the silence and gather all the teens together. After he/she has welcomed everyone to the Life Night, ask a few teens for their reactions to being isolated at the beginning of the night. The youth minister should also introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

"Give Me a Lift" Game (10 min)

For this game, you will need a plywood board that measures five feet by six feet. Ask for six guy volunteers and one girl volunteer (the guys should be strong and the girl should be small). Instruct the girl to sit on the board. The guys should stand around the board. The youth minister should instruct the six guys to pick up the board (with the girl on it) and lift her over their heads. Explain that the object of the game is to see how few guys it will take to keep this girl in the air. One at a time, the youth minister will ask one of the guys to step away from the board. When the board gets too unstable, the game is over (be sure to stop it before she falls). If time allow, have a second group do the same exercise. The youth minister should point out how much easier the task is when there are many people working together. This point will set up the rest of the night.

PROCLAIM *10 Minutes*

Teaching (10 min)

The final teaching for this semester will focus on how the teens can begin to live vocation in their lives now and how we are called to the sacrificial love Christ modeled for us on the cross.

The teaching for this night can be found on pages 96-99.

BOUND TOGETHER

Discernment and Community

TEACHING

Love is not just a sacrifice when it is convenient for us. Love means to desire a person's good and to take the steps needed for them to have it. So part of following the example of Christ is to love the people around us. This means that we have to desire the good of the people around us. Through that we will find our vocation.

Think about it this way. If Jesus designed us and Jesus wants us to love, then each of us are designed to love in a particular way that no one else can. It is not just our duty, but it is simply the one thing that we can do that the rest of the world needs us to do, because no one else can fill that role!

This means that our love is an unselfish gift of ourselves to the world! It is our service to our fellow man, to all of mankind. There is nowhere in the definition of love that says: when it is convenient, when we think it is okay or when we are going to get something out of it. We are literally living for other people. The more that we do it, the more we are going to realize that by giving ourselves away in love we are finding who we are, what God created us for and what we are meant to be.

How is this love to played out in the different relationships that we have every day?

The first thing we have to understand is that God did not restrict all power in the universe to Himself. In the sense that all things come from God, yes, He is the source of all power, but He does give us "dominion" over the earth. An important principle to remember about loving others is the principle of "subsidiarity." This principle means that a "community of a higher order should not interfere with the internal life of a community of a lower order... but rather support it in case of need..." This means that our love should never dictate to others what they should do, but give them the freedom to pursue the good that we desire for them.

This means that your vocation right now is to love others and to help them, through their own free will, pursue the good that God has in store for them. You cannot force them to act a certain way, and you cannot impose your will on someone else, but you can support them in need and help to make sure that they are able to help others. The more that you give yourself away in this way, the more that you are going to find the gifts that God has blessed

CCC 1878-1886
Pacem in Terris 36
Mater et Magistra 60
Gaudium et Spes 25
Centesimus Annus 48

BOUND TOGETHER

Discernment and Community

TEACHING

you with, and the more you are going to see how Jesus is calling you into a specific vocation, a specific way of expressing the divine, sacrificial love of God.

This means that we have to respect the hierarchy of things. The spiritual is the most important because it is immortal. The physical and instinctive dimension of life, which seems to dominate our world today, is actually supposed to be submissive to the our soul, because the physical will not last forever. In respecting this hierarchy we have to respect that we live in a society.

Because we live in a society, we need to recognize and listen to the voices of authority, even if we don't want to hear what they have to say. Your parents, your older siblings, your teachers, your Core Members, your youth minister, your guidance counselors, your priests, your bishop, etc. All of these people have been placed in your life with the ability to guide you and to help you realize how God wants you to serve the world through His gift of self-sacrificial love.

The most important authority to listen to is God's. Just as in the same way that a guidance counselor cannot tell you the best college to go to if you do not visit him/her, God cannot guide you to the correct vocation if you do not open yourself up to Him in prayer. Only God knows exactly what is right for you because only God made you. Only God can tell you what to do with your life and lead you to the right opportunities and people, because only God is outside of time and space. If you don't open yourself up to God on a regular basis, how are you going to be open to what God has in store for you? How are you going to be able to listen to what it is that he has to say if you are not in the practice of listening to him?

In order to find our vocation then, we need to:

1. Love others
2. Pay attention to how that love manifests our gifts
3. Listen to how God is calling us into a particular vocation through those around us, especially those in authority.
4. Most of all: pray

BOUND TOGETHER

Discernment and Community

TEACHING

So how do you live "vocation" now when you are just a teenager?

The answer is simple, but like most things in life that are rewarding, is not easy.

Love.

To become love by loving others.

To love others by giving of yourself unselfishly so that they may have the good that you desire for them.

To understand that the good that you desire for them is a spiritual good because that is everlasting, while a physical or instinctual good is only temporary.

To realize that the best spiritual good for another person is that they get to heaven.

To understand that they get to heaven by living their own vocation, which means that they themselves must be allowed to love, to offer themselves as a sacrificial gift for others. We cannot do this for them and we cannot force it on them.

Sometimes this love is going to sting, hurt and make us uncomfortable.

In the end this love is going to reveal a way to love that is unique to us. It is going to point us to our spouse, be that another person, the Church, or Christ himself. In the end, it is going to reinforce our eventual vocation since all vocations are simply a different way of serving others, of desiring their good, of sacrificing for them so that they get to heaven.

The more we practice doing that, the more we will realize our particular vocation and our path in God's plan.

BOUND TOGETHER

Discernment and Community

CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.

Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.

Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

Give Me A Lift _____

Large Group Sharing _____

Bound Together _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow the youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.

Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the materials needed.

Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Teaching _____

Week of the Life Night:

Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.

Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night. Youth minister gives feedback.

Create environment and collect needed supplies.

Email entire Core team an overview of the night and all small group questions.

Day of the Life Night:

Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.

Set up audio and video. Test the video clips to make sure both picture and sound work.

Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.

Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.

