Our Lady, Queen of Priests, 
ora pro nobis.

O Virgin Mary, bless this Quo Vadis Days discernment camp.
We entrust these young men to your maternal care and protection.
They are yours and they seek your Son.
Lead them to their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

When your vocation was revealed,
you courageously answered YES and the Spirit came to your assistance.
Teach these men, your sons, to hear the Father’s voice.
Pray they accept their vocation and find peace and joy.
Intercede that the Church may be blessed with more priests.

O Blessed Mary, Queen of Priests, sanctify us.
Teach us to more perfectly image your Son, the Great High Priest.
Grant us more brother priests that His Presence may fill the earth.

- Priests of Quo Vadis Days
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# QVD Schedule

**SUNDAY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:00 pm – 5:00 pm</td>
<td>Check In; Social</td>
<td>Rec Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 pm – 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 pm – 6:00 pm</td>
<td>Solemn Vespers</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 pm – 6:45 pm</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Patriot Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:45 pm – 7:30 pm</td>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 pm – 11:00 pm</td>
<td>Night Activity</td>
<td>Football Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 pm – 11:30 pm</td>
<td>Rosary</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 pm – 11:45 pm</td>
<td>Night Prayer</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midnight</td>
<td>Lights out</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### MONDAY and TUESDAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 am – 8:00 am</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Patriot Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15 am – 9:00 am</td>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am – 10:00 am</td>
<td>Morning Prayer and The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am – Noon</td>
<td>Adoration, Confession, Sp. Direction All return to chapel at Noon Pray Angelus in chapel</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 pm – 1:15 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Patriot Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15 pm – 2:30 pm</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Football Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 pm – 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 pm – 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Shower and Clean Up</td>
<td>Halls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 pm – 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 pm – 5:45 pm</td>
<td>Evening Prayer</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45 pm – 6:15 pm</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Patriot Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm – 7:30 pm</td>
<td>Announced at Dinner</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 pm – 11:00 pm</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 pm – 11:30 pm</td>
<td>Rosary</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 pm – 11:45 pm</td>
<td>Night Prayer</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midnight</td>
<td>Lights Out</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00 am – 8:00 am</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Patriot Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:15 am – 9:00 am</td>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 am - 10:00 am</td>
<td>Morning Prayer and The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am - 12:15 pm</td>
<td>Adoration (all afternoon), Confession, Sp. Direction All return to chapel at <strong>Noon Pray Angelus in chapel</strong></td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 pm – 1:15 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Patriot Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 pm – 3:30 pm</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 pm – 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Shower and Clean Up</td>
<td>Halls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 pm - 5:15 pm</td>
<td>Holy Hour with Evening Prayer and Talk</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 pm – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Dinner - Cookout</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm – 10:00 pm</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 pm</td>
<td>Night Prayer</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midnight</td>
<td>Lights out</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
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Thursday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 am – 8:00 am</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Patriot Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15 am – 9:30 am</td>
<td>Holy Hour with Morning Prayer and Talk</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 am - 10:30 am</td>
<td>Small Groups and Evaluations</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 am - 11:00 am</td>
<td>Rosary</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am - Noon</td>
<td>Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with Bishop Rhoades</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noon - 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Cookout - lunch with Bishop Rhoades</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 pm– 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 pm - 5:00 pm</td>
<td>Shower and Clean-Up</td>
<td>Halls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 pm – 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Evening Prayer</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45 pm – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Patriot Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm– 7:00 pm</td>
<td>Clean Up and Dismissal</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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The *Quo Vadis* Tradition

The Quo Vadis tradition is the story of St. Peter’s flight from the Emperor Nero’s persecution of Roman Christians in the first century.

As legend has it, Peter decided to flee Rome at the outbreak of the persecution, perhaps in fear, perhaps because he thought “the rock” should be somewhere safe so others could eventually find and cling to it, and to him.

Heading out the Via Appia, Peter meets Jesus, who is heading into the city of Rome to face the persecution. “Quo vadis, Domine,” Peter asks – “Lord, where are you going?” “I am going to Rome to be crucified,” Jesus answers – and disappears. At which point Peter turns back into the city to embrace martyrdom.

In Rome, you can visit the place on the Via Appia Antica where this meeting is said to have occurred. Christians have built a church on the spot to commemorate it.

The question St. Peter asked the Lord is now being asked of you by the Lord. In our own personal vocation and spiritual journey, the Lord asks: “Where are you going?” To answer the question you must discern “What is the Father’s will for you?”

*Quo Vadis Days* are offered to help you discern what is the Father’s will for you.

*What is your vocation?*
You are here for a Reason!

It is not by chance or coincidence that you are here at this year’s *Quo Vadis Days*. You are here for a *purpose and reason*. Jesus has called you to spend this time with Him. Give Him your heart, time and attention. He wants to speak to you!

Jesus Christ has a great and wonderful plan for your life. You have been created for a reason, a purpose, a mission. This is called your vocation (from the Latin *vocare*, to call forth). It’s your job to listen, to hear Jesus Christ call you to your vocation. Your happiness, salvation, and the salvation of others rests on whether or not you say yes to your vocation.

Maybe Jesus is calling you to be a priest. Yes, you! Remember, He chooses us, we don’t chose Him. Be open to this possibility. The Lord still calls many men to follow Him in service to the Church and the Kingdom as priests. The Priesthood is an indispensable, awesome, and beautiful mission.

From the moment of your baptism, you received a Christian vocation. This calling comes from the commitment of faith, to love and serve God above all things, to love neighbor as oneself, and in doing these things participate in the mission of the Church. However, that baptismal commitment must issue forth in a state in life, the specification of how you will concretely live out your call to love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. Your personal vocation, whether to the priesthood and religious life, to the Sacrament of Marriage, or to the single lay life will set you upon the path that will fundamentally shape your life by the choices and actions required to carry out your personal vocation and God’s specific plan for you.

*Quo Vadis Days* is your chance to listen to Jesus. Only in responding to God’s call will bring you the joy and peace your heart desires.
How to get the most out of Quo Vadis Days

Here are a couple things to keep in mind so you can have a great QV Days!

- Remember why you are here - To meet Jesus.
- Ask yourself Quo Vadis “Where am I going? Am I following Christ? If not, what do I need to work on during this QVD?”
- Each day, spend at least 20 minutes in Adoration of the Holy Eucharist—This is your one-on-one time with Jesus.
- Ask our Blessed Mother and the Saints to intercede for you.
- Ask our Lord if He is calling you to the Priesthood.
- Make sure you get enough sleep to enjoy each day.
- Follow the rules and code of conduct.
- Be a Christian gentleman.
- Get involved in different events and activities.
- Meet new friends.
- Go to Confession.
- Respect each other’s property.
- Remember we are guests here.
- Get your questions answered about discernment and priesthood.
- Be attentive during the presentations and talks.
- Pick up after yourself.
- Meditate on Sacred Scripture each day.
- Commit yourself to growing in holiness.
- Enjoy yourself and have fun.
Why do I need a Plan of Life?

Our Blessed Lord promises us that the road to sanctity and eternal happiness is hard. However, even though it is hard, your desire is all God needs from you so that He can give you the strength to get on and stay on that road which leads to the greatest amount of peace, happiness, and contentment which this life can offer. Our Lord calls us to begin by simply sanctifying our lives in the little things we do every day, in our relationships with our families, business associates, and our friends. Our struggle for holiness requires growth in prayer and love of the sacraments, to deepen our relationship with him.

There are well-defined steps that we take toward holiness. We must start out on our spiritual journey slowly with simple prayers and devotions, step by step. As we become stronger and more sure of ourselves and confident of God’s loving affection, we can increase our steps gradually until we can run toward Him. Just as an architect has a design for his building, we have to have a design to help us reach God, our final goal. We could call it our “Plan of Life.”

There are certain advantages to following a Plan of Life:

- A plan gives constancy and regularity to one’s efforts in developing and deepening the spiritual life.
- With a plan, there is less danger of being lazy and wasted time.
- With a plan there is less danger of falling away from spiritual practices.
- A Plan of Life forces one to be attentive to the duty of the moment
- With a plan it is much easier to see God in the “ordinary” activities of the day.

Without a plan our spiritual progress may suffer:

- we may lose much valuable time
- fall into the habit of indecision
- neglect our duties
- fulfill our duties carelessly and haphazardly
- develop the spiritual defect of inconstancy or faithlessness
My Plan of Life

1. Begin each day by making the Morning Offering:
   O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer you my prayers, works, joys and
   sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy
   Sacrifice of the Mass, in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of the Holy Father and
   for the intention of (your intentions).

2. Take a couple of minutes around the middle of the day to stop and talk to God.

3. Each night before you go to bed make an examination of conscience, asking the
   Holy Spirit to enlighten you as to how you have loved today.
   Then pray the Act of Contrition:
   My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to
do good I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend,
with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
   Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

4. Find some time during the day to pray at least one decade of the Rosary.

5. Never miss Sunday Mass and go to Daily Mass whenever you can.

6. Make a good confession once a month.

7. Try to make a Holy Hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament each week.

8. Set aside 10-15 minutes for Spiritual or Scriptural reading and meditation doing
   Lectio Divina. See page 40.

9. Practice the Presence of God. See page 44.

10. Do at least one work of charity and mercy each day.
    Do something kind for another person. It must be a selfless act, one in which your only
reward is loving in the name of Jesus Christ.
Making Decisions as a Son of the Father

There are decisions – and then there are DECISIONS!! We make decisions every day and most are of little or no consequence. What we wear or eat are decisions that matter little. But there are other decisions that affect the future course of our life. Those decisions are vital and we must make them after a determination arrived at after serious consideration.

Our personal vocation in life is one such decision. It demands from us a serious discernment because this decision calls for a lifetime commitment. Who will I share the rest of my life with? Is Church ministry a value to me? What are my values in life? Is God calling me to the priesthood or religious life?

There are several steps to making an important life decision. Most important is to know that a life altering decision needs to be made. It is essential to be alert to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, especially in crucial times. In any decision, you must consider your options, be attentive to the process, and to your feelings.

As you consider all the options available to you, it is good to write down the pros and cons of the various options. While not an especially formal process, it is an important step, because it places the options clearly before you. After writing down the pros and cons, ask yourself the possible consequences for each option or how each might fit into your life’s goals and plans.

No decision can be made without recourse to prayer. Prayer is a necessary and vital component in any Christian decision-making process. Simply ask God for guidance. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the ability to be open to the promptings of the Spirit. Asking for wisdom and the openness to do God’s will may allow your heart to be open to whatever may be encountered along the way.
The ultimate goal of a decision is to take some concrete action. And this is where you cannot be afraid to move on to the steps necessary to make your decision a reality. Over thirty-seven times in the New Testament we hear God’s word say to us: “Do not be afraid.”

When a decision is finally made and acted upon, a sense of true peace will prevail over you. Peace is the ultimate gift of a good decision – a peace no one can take from you.

### 10 Ways to Seek God’s Will

You will often be faced with difficult decisions at home, at work, and in deciding your vocation in life. It is not possible to make such decisions without seeking God’s guidance and help! Christians use the word discernment to refer to the process of choosing the best action, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Here are some ways to approach a decision with Christian discernment:

- Pray about it. Ask God for the grace to make a good decision.
- Put it in writing. Clearly state the decision you want to make.
- Do your research. Collect solid information and talk over your discernment with a spiritual director.
- Consider your options. List the pros and cons and the relative weight of each.
- Use your imagination. Imagine what benefits and problems might result.
- Tune into your feelings. God may be speaking through your attractions and desires.
- Make your decision and offer it to God. Ask God to help you live it.
- Look for fruits of the Spirit. Watch for virtues like charity, peace, patience, and joy.
- Stay open. Be willing to make adjustments as you live out your decision.
- Persevere. Make discernment a part of your daily spiritual life.
Simple Steps to Decision Making

Like seeking God’s will, these steps may prove helpful to you in discerning your personal vocation in life. Remember, prayer and spiritual direction are important means of arriving at an understanding of God’s will for your life!

- Clearly define the choices that lie before you.
- Make a list of the pros and cons of each choice.
- Take some quiet time and pray with the list.
- What motives are drawing you to choose one choice over another?
- Are all your motives in line with the Gospel, the truth of Jesus Christ?
- Speak with a spiritual advisor, a priest.
- Are you now experiencing peace with the choice you made?
- If not, share your experience with a trusted friend and ask for some input.
- Take some additional time to pray asking the Holy Spirit for guidance.
- When the right decision comes, you will experience peace and joy.

Prayer of Abandonment

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you
with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.

Charles de Foucauld
On Vocations

A vocation is all about love. A vocation is a life of love in a concrete, particular form because love is always concrete and particular. A vocation begins with His Love for you. In that love for you He is calling you to a particular form of life. This love involves first His total gift of Himself to you, and then in response, your total gift of yourself to Him. After all He tells us in the Gospel according to St. John, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (Jn. 15:16). His choice for you is what makes a vocation different from an “occupation” or a “career”. You can choose an occupation or a career for yourself, but a vocation (from the Latin verb vocare, “to call”) is HIS choice for you in which He invites you to undertake for love of Him. Often we are taught to ask, “What do I want to be when I grow up?” or “What life will I choose?” The better way to think is, “What does Jesus want for me?”, “What life will bring Jesus the greatest glory?” and ultimately to say, “I want what Jesus wants.”

A vocation is the concrete life He has chosen for you, and for which has specifically created you. He is God and therefore knows which life that will be the best way to bring about your salvation, your happiness, and His greatest glory. His call will completely fulfill you as a man and a father. A vocation means to be sent by Jesus on a mission to help Him bring His salvation to the world, and so will call for much love, heroism, and sacrifice on your part. He loves you and has chosen you. His love gives you the ability to love Him in return. The key to discovering your vocation is first to allow Jesus to show His tender love to you. This love will make you capable of loving Him in return.

As you can see, it is vital that you find your vocation. Your fulfillment, your happiness, and ultimately your salvation, can depend on your acceptance of the mission that Jesus has chosen for you. Moreover, other people’s salvation will depend on you giving your full “Yes” to Jesus in your vocation.
Basic Steps of Discernment

The following are the basic steps of vocational discernment. These steps, however, are not steps that are taken and finished. We are always engaging these steps at deeper levels, even after saying “Yes” to our vocation. Sometimes these steps are going on at the same time, and there is always more work we can do at each step.

**STEP 1: Know that He has created you for a specific mission in this world.**

The Lord has loved you into being, and since the moment of your conception He has had a plan for your life. He has created you totally unique. There is no one else in the world quite like you, and he wanted you to be here in this world. You are not an add-on, an extra, an afterthought, or luggage in this world. You are essential, indispensable, and important. Jesus Christ has created you and you alone for some specific mission, and wants to reveal it to you.

Jesus loves you so much that He invites you to help him save the world. Of course He alone is the Savior, but He opens up His life to us that we too may share in His mission of salvation. He is calling you. He is calling you to help Him in His salvation of the world. This is what we mean by vocation. So the first step in discerning your vocation is to understand that God has created you out of love and in His love invites you to share in His work of saving the world.

**STEP 2: Accept His love and His choice for you**

The second step in discerning the vocation is to open yourself to the Lord’s love. He told His apostles and now He is saying to you: “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you.”

In order to hear His call we have to receive His love. He asks you to accept His love in spite of your past mistakes, your weaknesses, your ignorance, your confusion…in spite of everything. He wants your heart to overflow with His Love. Your task is to be open and receive. Without God’s grace nothing good happens in this world, and so we need to receive His grace. His grace enables us to respond and say “Yes” to His call.

Let Him free you so that you can say “Yes” to His choice for your life. His choice for you is far better than any choice you can come up with yourself. After all, He made you. He knows you better than you know yourself. He wants to make you happy and fulfilled, and knows that only by doing His will can we be free, happy, fulfilled, and at peace. As the great poet Dante wrote, “In His will is our peace.” This is often the step that is most challenging to even the faithful Christian. To say: “Yes” to God without conditions is to put our lives radically at His disposal. When we say, “Not my will but Your will be done,” we are handing over to Him our plans, our ideas, our goals, our very selves. This can be frightening, but it is only in His Will that we will find peace in this life and in the world to come.
Basic Steps of Discernment… continued

His Presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament is a primary way in which we encounter and accept His love and then give ourselves in return. In every Mass, He invites us to unite ourselves to Him in His Sacrifice on Calvary. In the Liturgy of the Word, He cuts us with His Word from Holy Scripture which is “sharper than any two edged sword”, so that He can pour His very self into us. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist we see the Word become Flesh before our very eyes, and then receive Him into our flesh in Holy Communion. In every Mass, we join our Blessed Lord in His act of sacrificing Himself for the salvation of the world, and receive from the altar His very Body and Blood. The Mass is the primary place where this giving and acceptance of His love happens. To find your vocation, going to Mass faithfully and often is extremely important.

STEP 3: Make yourself available to listen to the Lord

If a vocation is a calling from God, then we must attune ourselves to His Voice so that we can hear His call.

PRAYER

Prayer is how we primarily listen to the Lord’s Voice. Oftentimes we know we should pray, but don’t know how or how to even get started. If you don’t know how to pray, don’t worry. The Lord longs to be with you in prayer and will help you. He has already helped us through His Church by showing us the primary ingredients to a life of prayer. The first is liturgical prayer. Liturgical prayer is the public prayer of the Church, the greatest expression of which is Holy Mass. All of the Sacraments, like Confession, are liturgical prayer. Other examples of liturgical prayer are the Liturgy of the Hours, sometimes called the “Divine Office” and Eucharistic Adoration. We also need to develop habits of personal prayer, especially meditation (e.g. lectio divina). Prayer which honors Our Blessed Lady is indispensable for finding your vocation. The Church and the saints for centuries have strongly recommended the prayer of the Rosary.

Attuning ourselves to the Voice of the Lord also means becoming aware of the obstacles to hearing His Voice. Sin and noise are the two major obstacles which get in the way of hearing His Voice.

SIN

Sin is perhaps the most obvious obstacle because sin means turning away from Him. Thus sin can never be seen as just the breaking of rules. Sin harms and can even destroy our relationship with the God who created us, hung on the Cross for us, and who is calling us to our mission.
Basic Steps of Discernment… continued

In discernment, sin is like mud that gets in our spiritual eyes and ears making us blind and deaf to the Lord.

To answer God’s call in life we must be free, and being free to say “Yes” entails being freed from our sins. We are not born free nor can we become free on our own. Only Jesus can free us. Freedom from sins is accomplished primarily through the Sacrament of Confession. You will never know your vocation and be able to respond generously and freely to God without receiving the Sacrament of Confession regularly. It is strongly recommended that during discernment you should go to confession at least every two weeks and never less often than once a month. Not only does this great Sacrament forgive sin but it also pours sanctifying grace into your soul. This sanctifying grace is Jesus’ own divine life. Being saturated with sanctifying grace will go a long way in discovering your vocation.

A very good exercise during discernment is a General Confession. Making a General Confession can greatly aid the acceptance of forgiveness and allow Jesus to help us put the past to rest. This practice is especially recommended by one of the Church’s greatest spiritual directors, St. Francis de Sales, and is entirely distinct from general absolution. A General Confession is a spiritual exercise in which one goes through his entire life and confesses every sin he can remember. The purpose is not to re-forgive those sins or beat oneself up about them. (Once a sin is forgiven it is always forgiven.) Rather the exercise helps one to let go of the past and to trust Jesus even more deeply. It usually takes about an hour and so it is advisable to set up an appointment with one’s confessor in advance.

After we have allowed Him to free us from mortal or serious sins, then we have the ongoing work of dealing with venial sins and our attachments to sin. Attachments to sin are those desires to sin even if we don’t follow through on the evil act. It’s wishing you could get away with it. St. Francis de Sales likens attachment to sin as the Israelites in the desert who sometimes longed for the life of Egypt (especially the melons and “flesh pots”, that is, decent food) even though it was the place of their slavery. Those attachments, even if they don’t spawn sin, keep us back spiritually. Those things though seemingly small, keep us from being totally attached to Jesus and His beautiful Will.
NOISE

Noise is another obvious obstacle. We live in a world of noise. Often when we come to discern we are already immersed in noise: habits of watching a lot of television, idle conversations with others, video or computer games, listening to music all the time, etc. Rarely do we have silence (exterior or interior) in our day. In fact when we are silent we can start to get fidgety or even begin to freak out. St. Ignatius of Loyola, the spiritual master of discernment, said: “It’s true that the voice of God, having once fully penetrated the heart, becomes strong as the tempest and loud as the thunder, but before reaching the heart it is as weak as a light breath which scarcely agitates the air. It shrinks from noise, and is silent amid agitation.” Therefore, if you want to know your vocation, begin to develop habits of silence. The first way to develop silence is to limit your time on television, video and computer games, the internet, and using music as incessant background noise. I think a good rule of thumb is that one should not spend more than two hours a day total on those activities. The only way to do this is TURN IT OFF. Those things are not evil in themselves, but without using them with the virtue of moderation, they create spiritual static in our hearts and dull our spiritual sensitivity. The second way to develop silence is to develop habits of quiet prayer, reading (especially the works of our spiritual tradition), and just thinking and pondering.

STEP 4: Cooperate with Him in Clearing away obstacles to free you to say “yes”

Step three deals with beginning to attune ourselves to His Voice. But even after we know of His love and choice for us, and have begun to attune ourselves to His Voice, we may soon realize that we are not completely free to give ourselves to Him. Perhaps there are things inside us that make us hesitate or even pull away from His call. So as we consider His love and choice for us, we must also consider, “Am I free to say ‘Yes’ to Him?” What keeps us from giving our entire selves over in love to Him?

PAST HURTS

Past hurts can be complicated and complicating in the discernment process. Sometimes our sins are not the problem, but the sins of someone else who has hurt us. Past hurts can impair our ability to trust, and saying “Yes” to Jesus requires a lot of trust. These past hurts can take the form of some sort of abuse, the neglect or absence of a father or mother, rejection by a girlfriend, etc. It can be a rough and brutal world out there. Past hurts not only hurt our ability to trust, but they can also interfere with one’s ability to receive love and to give love in return. Past hurts have a
Basic Steps of Discernment… continued

way of creating an environment of anger and fear in one’s life. Past hurts can be difficult to for-
give, and any lack of forgiveness prevents us from giving ourselves over completely to Jesus.
We may find forgiveness difficult because we haven’t yet dealt with the anger we have about it.
The good news is that Jesus is conqueror of sin and death, and longs to heal anyone who has
been hurt so that they can receive His love and give love in return. It doesn’t matter what has
happened, Jesus declares loudly to us in Revelation: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev.
21:5).

Practically, a few things can be done. First, have confidence in Jesus who comes to free you and
make things new in your life. I would suggest finding a priest you can trust and open up the pain
to him. Just talking through it privately with someone trustworthy can bring an enormous
amount of healing, and he can pray with you and offer counsel. I often suggest that the person
make a list of people with whom he has “unfinished business” and then write a letter to that per-
son, which of course they won’t send. The letter will contain what that person did and the bad
impact it had on his life. This exercise helps to get the hurt and the anger out so that Jesus’ love
and forgiveness can be poured in, thereby making the heart more liberated to forgive and to say
“Yes” to Jesus. Sharing such letters with that trustworthy priest can bring even more healing.

FEAR

Fear inhibits our complete gift of self to Jesus in love. The fear I’m talking about is not the awe
and wonder of holy fear, but rather a crippling fear. Crippling fear is never from God, but rather
from the devil, and we are asked to resist it and allow Jesus to cast it out of us. A person cannot
discern in fear. The fears can be varied and many: “I hear Him knocking at the door of my heart,
and I’m scared to say ‘Yes’ to Him.” “I’m afraid to move away from home and my family.”
“Will I be happy as a priest?” “I’ve done too many terrible things to be a priest.” “My parents
want grandchildren and they won’t have any if I become a priest.” “What will be left of me if I
give myself totally over to Him?” “My friends think I’m crazy for thinking about it.”

Jesus says over and over again, “Be not afraid!” Our late Holy Father, John Paul II echoed this
line frequently, and Pope Benedict has continued it, because it is so needed. We live in a world
of fear. St. John tells us, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1Jn. 4:18).
Jesus casts out fear; He can put fears to rest. He can do this when together with Him we face
them with courage and bring them to prayer. I would suggest sitting before the Blessed Sacra-
ment and simply list the fears on a piece of paper. Then go over that list with Him in prayer and
ask Him to conquer them in you. I would also suggest discussing these fears with a confessor,
spiritual director, or sister.

Dealing with sin, past hurts and fear will free us and purify our love for Him so that His voice
can begin to resonate deep within our hearts. It will help to clear stuff away so that we can begin
Basic Steps of Discernment… continued

to see our radiant, risen Lord Jesus with our vocation in His hands. When we hear His voice and fill our eyes with His presence before us, we will be in a position to say, “Yes, Lord Jesus. I say ‘Yes’. Be it done unto me according to Your Will. Yes Lord, send me.”

**STEP 5: Give yourself entirely to Christ in Love – Be Holy!**

Then the next step is to respond to that love with all that we are. We seek to give ourselves entirely to Jesus. Receiving His love and striving to get ourselves back to Him in love is called a personal relationship with Jesus. In order to understand the meaning of your life and what you are supposed to do with your life requires a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Another way of putting it is to ask yourself, “Do I know Jesus, or do I only know about Him?” It is in this relationship with Him as Lord, as Redeemer, and as His intimate friend where we can hear His call to us. Many have found that reading *My Other Self* and *I Believe in Love* (see page 96) really helped them to understand and develop that personal relationship.

Loving Jesus means to strive after holiness. Holiness is our first vocation which was given to us at Baptism. Holiness means to live the life of God here and now. Within this call to holiness emerges the more specific call of the state of life in the Church: priesthood, religious/consecrated life, or marriage. The life of holiness involves prayer (contemplating God) and virtue (living God’s life) and asceticism (opening up oneself to God’s life).

**SACRAMENTS**

The Sacraments give us sanctifying grace. This is God’s own power and life at work within us. The Sacraments communicate God’s own life to our souls. In discernment we focus especially on the Sacraments we can receive more than once: Confession and Holy Communion. It is vitally important during discernment that one receives Holy Communion as often as possible. Daily communion is ideal. Confession, as mentioned above, is essential and needs to be more than once a month. It can be especially helpful to go Confession to the same priest so that he gets to know your soul and can offer more specific advice.

**PRAYER**

Prayer is our vital, daily, and intimate contact with the Lord. It entails the lifting of our hearts and minds to Him who is with us throughout the day. Prayer is more about listening than speaking to Him, but it involves both. A man must be praying if he wants to know his vocation. Be devoted to developing a habit and daily routine of prayer. Only committed, daily prayer which includes Mass, Confession, the Rosary, and
Basic Steps of Discernment… continued

Scriptural meditation leads to one’s vocation. Eucharistic Adoration, Lectio Divina with Holy Scripture, the Rosary, and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy are all great examples of prayer. But the most important thing about prayer is to JUST DO IT.

A personal relationship is built upon personal prayer. Therefore you must make time in your day to be with Him exclusively and not just when it is convenient. We make time for friends and important people, and there was no one else who is a better friend or more important person in your life than Jesus Christ.

VIRTUE

Virtue is a habit of doing good. It comes from the Latin word vir meaning “man” and is also used to convey “manliness” or “power”. Virtue is a habit, that is, a virtue is not something we do now and again, but it is something that we do regularly, even without thinking about it. Part of the life of virtue is that we strive to live according to His commandments, and to develop habits that will help us keep His commandments. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.”

ASCETICISM “MAKING SACRIFICES”

Asceticism helps to open up our human nature to receive the Lord’s life. Asceticism also sharpens our spiritual senses. To love means to give yourself and giving ourselves in love involves sacrifice. When two people love each other they do things for each other and make sacrifices for one another. Sacrifices are not made just for the sake of “giving up” things, but are gifts given out of love. In its most basic sense asceticism means thwarting one’s own will in order to embrace the Lord’s Will.

Asceticism means curbing our earthly desires (pleasure, things, my own way, etc.) in order to open up our spiritual desires (prayer, good works, etc.). The most important sacrifice to offer the Lord is the sacrifice of one’s will of doing good when we don’t feel like doing good. This type of sacrifice can take the form of doing one’s chores around the house with a smile, taking on an extra chore, or helping a brother with his homework. The sacrifice can mean letting a brother or sister have his or her way or allowing him or her to play with or use one of your possessions. Every time we resist temptation and avoid sin we are practicing asceticism. Resisting temptation can be quite painful, yet offering that suffering to the Lord with love is very pleasing to Him. Always remember, the more hidden the asceticism is, the more effective it is. A good way to begin practicing asceticism is unplugging from all the noise mentioned above and limiting one’s time with TV or computer games. It is important
to remember that asceticism is not an end in itself. Asceticism is only good insofar as it opens us up to love and leads us to be more loving to Jesus and our neighbor. It’s also important to remember that we don’t do ascetical works to earn Jesus’ love or grace, we do it to accept more deeply His love and grace that He already offers. Asceticism will help to sharpen our sensitivity to Him and His Voice.

**STEP 6: Begin to distinguish the “four voices of discernment”**

In the process of discernment we can become aware of four voices, and learning to distinguish them from one another helps tremendously in discernment. The four voices are the Lord’s, our own, the world’s, and the devil’s. By attuning ourselves to the Lord’s we can begin to tell these other voices from each other, which is why steps 1-5 are important. Those steps attune us to the Voice of the Lord. It is not always easy to tell these voices apart from one another, therefore discernment requires time, patience, struggle, and perseverance. Confusion, frustration, and sometimes even outright rebellion can be part of the discernment process. Nevertheless Jesus tells us, “Be not afraid. I am here.” His love can conquer everything, and if we open ourselves to the power of His grace, we will come to find our vocation. Jesus’ desire to tell us is infinitely greater than our desire to know. We only need confidence in Him.

**THE VOICE OF THE LORD**

The Lord’s Voice is that which is communicating His constant and unfailing love to us. We hear His Voice in His Divine Revelation, both in Holy Scripture and in Holy Tradition, and in the Magisterium of His Church. We hear His Voice urging us to do good in our actions, to trust in Him, to sacrifice out of love. Discouragement and confusion are never the voice of Jesus even when we sin. His voice always communicates confidence and hope in Him. His Voice is always saying, “I love you no matter what.” His Voice is also challenging because He is always calling us to a deeper conversion to Him.

With regard to your vocation, you can be sure that He is calling you, as a man, to the vocation of the priesthood, consecrated life (religious life or consecrated virginity in the world) or marriage. His Voice is never deceptive, nor does He play games. Therefore, you can be confident that to whichever vocation He calls you, He will also give you the graces to accomplish it and the desire to do it. Sometimes we are tempted to think that Jesus will call us to a life that we do not want or cannot accomplish. This is not the Voice of Jesus. Within His call lies all the graces and desires to live that vocation.
Basic Steps of Discernment… continued

THE VOICE OF ONESELF

Our own voice is expressed in the deep down desires of our heart. Part of growing up is becoming aware of who we are and what are the deep desires of our heart. Hopefully as a young man you have a desire to be heroic, a desire to change the world, a desire to love and serve the Lord Jesus with all that you are. However, it is not always so easy. Sometimes our deepest desires are in conflict. Our own sinfulness, that part of ourselves that is still under the dominion of Satan can clamor loudly. Sometimes our voice is in conflict with the Voice of the Lord. Sometimes the conflict can lie in choosing between two good things: “I want to be a priest, and I want to be married.” Our voice always stands in need of more conversion.

Your truest self is those desires which have been placed there by Jesus and are in harmony with the desires that Jesus has for you. One way to become attune to your own voice is to become aware of what you think about when your mind is free. When you have a moment to yourself, what do you think about? Is there something that comes to mind often or even constantly? That is a beginning indication of your own voice. After becoming aware of what you think about during the day, ask Jesus and yourself: “Why do I think about those things? What is the motivation behind those things?”

THE VOICE OF THE WORLD

The voice of the world is a voice that is under the dominion of the devil, and thus could be considered an extension of the voice of Satan. The voice of the world calls us to put our trust in the things of this world: prestige, money, fame, relationships, to be a famous rock star, to become important, to get a big house, expensive car, money-making career. It is the voice we hear in advertising, on TV shows, and in much of the music on the radio. The “noise” that is mentioned above is part of the voice of the world. This voice tempts us to forget about Heaven, our salvation, and the Lord’s call in our life. It tries to drown out the Voice of Jesus and His love.

THE VOICE OF THE DEVIL

The voice of the devil is that voice that is always trying to lead us away from Jesus and to remain slave to him. His voice always tells us to doubt the Lord’s goodness and not to trust in Him. It is the voice that says that “I know more than He does.” It is the voice that tells us to say, “No” to Jesus. The most obvious example of the voice of the devil is the temptation to sin, but he can be very cunning, and as St. Paul says can appear as an angel of light. If the devil cannot get us to listen to sin, he then will try to get us to choose something good, but which is not the good that Jesus wants for us. In other
words, the devil’s voice can try to make us choose a lesser good over the greater good that Jesus has for us. Always remember that the devil is a liar and a murderer and can be very cunning. In the discernment process it can be confusing to figure out whose voice is whose. Sometimes there is so much confusion in the heart because we have not yet been able to distinguish the Lord’s voice from one’s own or the devil’s.

Great progress is made in finding your vocation when you can begin to distinguish these four voices with regard to the vocational choice. By turning away from and ruling out the voices of the world and the devil, greater clarity and less confusion are gained. One is ready to make the free choice of the specific vocation when the Voice of the Lord sounds the one vocation and your own voice echoes the same vocation.

For the most part, we cannot distinguish these voices very well without the help of a spiritual director. You may find that a regular confessor (going to the same priest every time you make your confession) can also help you distinguish the voices. A spiritual director is one (usually a priest) who is familiar with the spiritual life and who also leads a life of conversion and prayer in his vocation. By finding a spiritual director and meeting regularly with him, you can go a long way in recognizing and distinguishing the four voices so that you can choose whatever the Lord’s Voice is saying to you.

By following these steps, you will be able to go a long way in finding your vocation. The important thing is to keep at it and not give up on any of the steps, and to have patience with the process. Keep giving it over to the Lord and it will happen. I also suggest that you begin to pray one “Hail Mary” each day to Our Lady asking her to help you discover and say “Yes” to your vocation. It’s a small prayer, but I’ve found it to be very powerful.
Am I called to enter seminary?

Many are called but few choose to answer! Do you believe God may be calling you to serve Him as a priest in the Catholic Church? This is a question that you may be trying to answer as you experience these Quo Vadis Days. Your time is spent well if you are trying to listen for the voice of God as you discern your personal vocation.

You may be looking for a great sign from God that priesthood is definitely what He has in mind for you. But God works in strange and mysterious ways. He has already told us in the Scriptures that “My ways are not your ways and my thoughts are not your thoughts”. God often leads us in subtle ways and through mysterious signs. While we may want more clarity, God gently leads us in ways that are imperceptible. Who can truly discern matters of the heart?

A man who thinks God might be calling him to be a priest should consider seminary. The seminary is the best place to truly discern God’s Will for your vocation.

The decision to enter the seminary is not a final decision to become a priest! But the seminary is equipped with the personnel and tools necessary to clarify and deepen your discernment of God’s Will.

First and foremost, the seminary will give you the time necessary to decide if priesthood is your true vocation in life. It is a good testing ground. For men who have graduated high school, seminary lasts for eight years. For those who graduated from college, a pre-theology program can last from one to two years, depending upon the needs of a particular candidate. Following a pre-theology program, a young man will spend another four years studying graduate theology leading to a Masters degree in Divinity.

The aim of the seminary is the formation of body, mind, and spirit. To this end, the seminarian in formation will study Catholic Theology, Sacred Scripture, Church History, Canon Law, Moral Theology, Ascetical Theology, pastoral counseling, and other subjects.
Am I called to enter seminary?... continued

Along with these academic subjects, the seminary will continue to assess the candidate through the discernment process by prayer and spiritual direction. The seminarian will have the opportunity for daily prayer and meditation, Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, days of recollection, and yearly retreats. Each seminarian will be assigned a seminary spiritual director who will help him listen more closely for God’s voice and be led to a decision whether the priesthood is truly one’s lifelong vocation.

The seminary also provides opportunities for the building of the body through sports and recreation. The candidate will come to understand the goodness of community and fraternal support and the value of being a “team player” which are vital to living well the priestly lifestyle.

Most importantly, the seminarian is expected to pray. He is taught to pray liturgically and privately. In short, the candidate is taught how to accomplish his life’s work: to become like Jesus!

Your time spent in the seminary is never wasted. If priesthood is your vocation, it will provide the foundation you need to live a truly wonderful life as God’s servant. If you discern that priesthood is not your vocation, you will have received an excellent education and formation, and then continue as a more faithful Christian to discern where God is calling you.

Thou Art a Priest Forever
J. B. Henri Lacordaire, OP

To live in the midst of the world with no desire for its pleasures…
To be a member of every family yet belong to none…
To share all sufferings;
To penetrate all secrets;
to heal all wounds…
To go daily from men to God to offer Him their petitions…
To return from God to men to offer them His Hope…
To have a heart of fire for charity and a heart of bronze for chastity…
The Holy Eucharist and Vocations

Reverend John A. Hardon, S.J.

It is impossible to exaggerate the close relationship between the Holy Eucharist and vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

This is only to be expected once we realize that every vocation is a special grace from God, and the greatest source of grace we have is the Eucharist as Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion.

Faith tells us that Christ is really present on our altars, that He really offers Himself in the Mass, and that we really receive Him in Holy Communion. In each case, the Living Christ is now inspiring men and women to give themselves to Him with all their hearts and follow Him in the extension of His Kingdom.

The Eucharist, therefore, is the best way to foster vocations. This means that persons who attend Mass, receive Communion, and invoke Christ in the Blessed Sacrament obtain light and strength that no one can claim.

The Eucharist is also the best way to recognize vocations. Show me a man or woman devoted to the Eucharist and I will show you a person who is an apt subject for the priesthood or the religious life.

The Eucharist is finally the infallible way of preserving one's vocation. This is especially true of devotion to the Real Presence. Is it any wonder that saintly priests and religious over the centuries have been uncommonly devoted to the Blessed Sacrament? They know where to obtain the help they need to remain faithful to their vocations. It is from the same Christ Who called them and Who continues to sustain them in His consecrated service.

Vocations begin with the Eucharist; they are developed through the Eucharist; and they are preserved by the Eucharist. All of this is true because the Eucharist is Jesus Christ, still on earth, working through men and women whom He calls to share His Plan for salvation.
Tips for Prayer

Choose a time
- Make it a definite time dedicated only to prayer, an appointment with God.
- Try to make it the best time for prayer that you can find.

Choose a Place
- It should be a place free from distractions
- It should be a private place

Enter into Prayer
- Ask for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to teach you how to pray (talk and listen to God).

Examine your conscience and repent of your sins
- Lay aside anxieties, problems, battles. Don’t allow them to dominate your time with God.

Recall to mind and assent to the basic truths of revelation
- God created you out of love and loves you always
- God sent Jesus to give us life
- Jesus died and rose, conquering sin and death
- Jesus promised to be with us and to send us the Holy Spirit
- Jesus intercedes for us in heaven
- Jesus is coming again in glory
- Consciously say “YES” to these truths each day.

Intercede with Faith and Trust
- For our daily bread: pray for the world, the church, your family, friends, and yourself
- For forgiveness: As you forgive others
- For strength for the day and its trials
- For discernment in your personal vocation
- For protection from all evil

Before Leaving Prayer, ask yourself
- What God has said to you; What God has shown you; What you know you should carry into the day and remember so your prayer will bear fruit.
God Speaks in Silence

The human soul seeks union with God. This union is accomplished through Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who took upon Himself human flesh and nature, and gave us entry into the very heart of God. If we are to foster the awe, reverence, and adoration through which we may know the Word of Christ, than we must love and foster, and never fear silence and stillness in our lives.

From silence comes the Word.
From silence God spoke and created the world.
From silence He spoke to Mary
and took up a dwelling place in her womb.
From silence He sent His Holy Spirit at Pentecost
to lead the Church.
Meditative quiet is neither favored
nor fostered in our culture.
Yet there is no getting around the simple fact that
only in stillness do we learn
to listen with the interior ear.
Only in stillness can we build
the habit of listening,
a habit that, when impeded by the jangle of noise,
can never develop.
Only in stillness do we calm down enough
to sense the Lord’s presence.
Only in stillness do we find out that the Lord loves us
and that we are made to love Him.
Silence is not a den of terror;
it is rather the place where we fall in love.
Ignatius of Loyola was the youngest of eleven children in a noble family of Spain. As a young adult, his goal in life was to achieve fame and fortune. At the age of thirty, he was seriously injured in a battle. During the months of his recovery, he had the opportunity to examine his life and read about the saints. Ignatius never did anything halfway. Once he realized that God was calling him, he devoted all his energy to discerning God’s will and then doing it. In search of what he ought to do, Ignatius encountered setbacks, closed doors, and even imprisonment. He was convinced that God could be found in all things, and was guided by an inner peace that comes from knowing one is doing the will of God.

Ignatius developed the Spiritual Exercises, a practical guide for those who want to live a truly Christian life, and shared them with his companions. Ignatius called his companions the “Company of Jesus.” Today they are known as the Society of Jesus. Besides the three traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, members of the Society of Jesus take a fourth vow of obedience to the Pope.

**Ignatian Examen**

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, was noted for his practical approach to spiritual matters. He encouraged his followers to use an orderly process each evening to reflect on their day and how they had experienced God in it. He called this an “examen,” or examination of conscience, but he did not want his followers to focus only on their sins. You can use this method to discern how God is directing your life.

Pray for light. Ask God to help you see what God wants you to see in your experiences and encounters each day.

Review your day. Take a careful look back over the course of the day. Stop to say thanks for the gifts you received. Pause to notice the feelings that surface.

Choose a feeling. Focus on a feeling that caught your attention, and pray about it. Use your own words of praise or petition, whatever fits for you.

Imagine what tomorrow will bring. Invite God to be with you in the day ahead.
Ignatian Gospel Contemplation

Imagination is a wonderful thing. Through it you can discover possibilities, break down barriers, solve problems, and discern your personal vocation in life.

The power and beauty of the human imagination was not lost on Saint Ignatius of Loyola. He developed a method of prayer that uses the imagination to immerse the person who is at prayer, into a story from the Scriptures. With this method you visualize in your mind the details of the Gospel story. As it comes to life in your imagination, you are drawn to a personal and real encounter with Jesus in the present moment.

Here is a suggested format to follow for Gospel Contemplation:

1. Prepare yourself for prayer by assuming a comfortable position and allowing yourself to become silent. Select a passage from the Scriptures with which to pray. It is usually best to begin with the Gospels, because the details and story line are especially suited to this method. With some experience you will be able to spot other passages in the Scriptures that also work well.

2. Read the passage through once, paying special attention to the characters and the concrete details: What does this place look, feel, smell, and sound like? Who is there? What action unfolds? What words are spoken? You may wish to reread the text several times to absorb all the details.

3. Next, enter into the story in your imagination, just as if you were there. Employ your senses to allow the details of the story to come alive. Listen, taste, feel, smell, and see all that you can. Either be yourself or imagine yourself as one of the people in the story. Allow the story to unfold in your imagination without changing any of the essential details from the Bible passage.

4. As you experience the story, pay careful attention to all your reactions, all that you are feeling and thinking.

5. Respond to this experience in prayerful conversation with Jesus.

Remember! The Scriptures are the “living Word” of God. Those who pray with this method have very real encounters with Jesus, and find that in the experience, God touches them and enlightens them. They are comforted, healed, and challenged by the living Christ when they meet Him through the doorway of imagination.
How to make a Holy Hour

The following advice is from Fr. Benedict Groeschel and his book *Praying with the Saints in the Presence of Our Lord*:

This series of simple steps are based on a method of St. Teresa of Avila, who said she was afraid to go into prayer without a book in her hands. If St. Teresa used a book, we can hardly do better than to follow her lead.

**Step 1**
Collect your thoughts in an act of remembrance and adoration of the One with whom you are about to speak. We need to break the rapidly flowing stream of consciousness that has accompanied us through the day and brought us to the threshold of the chapel where Christ awaits us in His mysterious sacramental presence. Simply put, you have to stop and remind yourself that you are going to pray—you are going to speak with Jesus Christ, your Lord and Redeemer, present in His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, as He was at Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and as He now is in eternal life and glory. The first step of real devotion is to be deeply aware that Christ is present to you, that He knows you and cares about you.

To stop the flow of everyday thoughts, it is helpful to kneel in adoration, and to take some deep breaths that help to calm us down and to repeat inwardly, “I am here with my Savior and my God,” or some similar expression of the awe we ought to experience in His presence. After all, we are talking to God. One should spend as much time as one needs to do this. To be effective, it really takes several minutes. Frankly, I think that those who minimize the importance of kneeling simply lack the experience of awe.

At the end of this step, taking a couple of minutes of complete silence is helpful, but this should be discontinued if the mind begins to wander and be filled with distracting thoughts. The end of the period of silence should be a fervent appeal to the Holy Spirit to give us the grace to pray well and in union with Christ.

**Step 2**
Now find a prayer or meditation from scriptures or some other book of devotions. Or better, keep your Bible with you if it is marked with quotations that you like.

Take time to find the quotation that fits your need at the moment. This should be a matter of what catches your attention and is based on your need in the situation that you have been enduring this day.
Holy Hour… continued

Read the quotation a few times, savor it, and let its meaning fill your mind. Compare the truth or sentiment of the quotation with your present mood, need or state of mind. For example, if you are anxious about some specific thing in your life, many quotations from the psalms will be helpful to you. For instance, Psalm 107, from verse 4 to verse 9, gives us an image of God feeding the troubled soul and satisfying the soul’s hunger and thirst. This obviously can be related easily to the experience of receiving Holy Communion.

Step 3
Allow the meaning of the quotation or prayer to sink into your mind and heart. This may not feel very elevating, and it may be very silent. Let the quotation sink in quietly. Don’t be afraid to take some time just allowing the words to enter into your mind and heart.

Step 4
Then, in your own words and thoughts, speak to Our Lord, recalling His presence with such sentiments as awe, joy, gratitude, sorrow for sin, trust. Don’t be afraid to express fear, disappointment, frustration, and confusion. This is part of the purification we must sometimes enter into in the presence of the Savior of the World.

Sentiments can be best expressed in very simple individual phrases like the following:

- Jesus, I adore You, Son of God.
- Jesus, I am so grateful to You.
- Jesus, I am filled with joy that You are with me.
- Jesus, I hurt very badly.
- Jesus, what went wrong?
- Jesus, why did I fall and fail?
- Jesus, I am hurt and angry.
- Jesus, I don’t understand.
- Jesus, increase my faith.
- Jesus, be with me in my troubles.
- Jesus, keep me with Your cross.
- Jesus, don’t leave me.
- Jesus, be with those I love and care about.

These are just a few of the sentiments we might express. Obviously, there are hundreds of different ones. Remember that you can say anything to Jesus Christ in such an intimate moment. As you come to an end of such expressions, see if you can put all your feelings and
experiences into a simple prayer, even a prayer without words. Then, if there is time left, begin Step 2 again. This time, perhaps you should seek another scripture quotation, perhaps a psalm of praise like 149 or 150; or if it is a difficult time, perhaps a psalm of repentance like Psalm 51. You can also seek for another prayer in this manual or some similar devotional book.

**Step 5 Ending a Holy Hour**

As loyal disciples of Christ, we always ought to end our prayer with some resolution of charity, some decision to let Christ operate in our lives, so that each day it may be more and more true that “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). We should think of some realistic action that we should take to show our love for Jesus by serving His brothers and sisters for whom He died. What we do to others we do to Him. To act in a way that is realistically united with His life of grace, we must proceed from a Christian motive and do things in a way that reflects His Gospel example and teaching. We never do this perfectly, but we can pray and struggle to do it better.

I came long ago to suspect any Christian prayer or experience that does not lead to Christ-like action. “If you love me, keep my commandments…. As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me . . . I was hungry and you gave me food” (Jn 14:15; Mt 25:40; Mt 25:35). The honesty of prayer can be judged by the actions and struggles of grace as we surrender to the call of the Holy Spirit sent into our souls by our Blessed Master to teach us all that we need to know.

I always spend the last few moments of this time with Christ, asking the help and protection of His Mother and our Mother. I also address a few saintly friends already in the Kingdom of God and ask them to pray for me. And, finally, I greet my guardian angel, that mysterious celestial citizen whom God gave me when I started out on this brief human experience. I almost always leave the presence of Our Lord refreshed or at least better prepared for whatever the day may bring.

Give me the Eucharist or let me die. 

_—St. Peter Julian Eymard_

The church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic Adoration. Jesus waits for us in this Sacrament of love. May our adoration never cease. 

_—Pope John Paul II_

I know I wouldn’t be able to work one week if it were not for the continual force coming from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. In our society we begin our day with Mass and Holy Communion and we end it with one full hour of Adoration. We have permission from the different bish-
ops to expose the Blessed Sacrament. All of us know that unless we believe and can see Jesus in the appearance of bread on the altar, we will not be able to see Him in the distressing disguise of the poor. Therefore, these two loves are but one in Jesus. -Bl. Mother Teresa

Do you want the Lord to give you many graces? Visit Him often. Do you want Him to give you few graces? Visit Him rarely. Do you want the devil to attack you? Visit Jesus rarely in the Blessed Sacrament. Do you want him to flee from you? Visit Jesus often. Do you want to conquer the devil? Take refuge often at the feet of Jesus. Do you want to be conquered by the devil? Forget about visiting Jesus. My dear ones, the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament is an extremely necessary way to conquer the devil. Therefore, go often to visit Jesus and the devil will not come out victorious against you. -St. John Bosco
Lectio Divina

Reading.
Reading in the monastic tradition involved placing the divine word on the lips. It was a focusing and centering device. One would gently read a selection from the Bible, and when a thought, line, or word stood out and captured the reader’s attention, he or she would stop there and dwell on that text, carefully repeating it over and over. At each distraction one would simply return to this repetition. He or she would stay with that same text until it dried up, and would then move on with the reading until finding another engaging text.

Meditation.
Once the word of God is on the lips and in the mouth, one begins to bite and chew it; one begins to meditate on it. To meditate means to ruminate, to chew the word, dwelling at leisure on a morsel to extract the meaning of the text. Every word of Scripture has meaning for you. Every text speaks of Christ and His relationship to the one praying. One does not work hard at this prayer, but simply keeps listening to the words being repeated, letting them suggest their own images, reflections, intuitive thoughts. One ponders and perceives the hidden lessons in the word of God in such a way that wisdom for life is learned. Meditation seeks to acquire the mind of Christ. One slowly begins to see what the scriptures are saying.

Prayer.
“Oration” or prayer is the response of the heart to the word of God we have heard addressing us through the Scriptures. It is petition, it is affective conversation with sentiments of love, it is resolution to grow in the virtues of Christ, it is compunction of heart for one’s sins, it is silent company-keeping, it is the loving gaze.

Contemplation.
Here God takes the soul’s thirst and feeds its hunger. God lifts the one praying above the normal meditative self into the sphere of experienced transcendence. Here the Spirit prays in the human spirit. The love of God is no longer abstract, but concretely poured into the receiving self. One can see oneself being loved and loving in return. We are speaking of pure gift at this point.
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This Year’s QVD Theme

Amas Me?  
Do You Love Me?

*John 21: 15 - 19*

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."
Sentire Cum Ecclesia

Spiritual growth through “Thinking with the Church”

The following are qualities that the Church looks for in candidates for the Sacred Priesthood. To be open to God’s call, you should foster these qualities in your daily life.

Have a great devotion to the most Holy Eucharist. Attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as often as possible. Foster a love for adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament by attending periods of Adoration and Benediction.

Develop a deep and abiding love for the person of Jesus Christ in His Passion, Christ in glory, and Christ in His sacramental mysteries.

Devote a significant time daily to prayerful reading of the Sacred Scriptures. You should allow the Word of God to form your spirituality and devotion.

Develop a profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Recall that she was always attentive to God’s will and was open and docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Cultivate a friendship with God’s friends, the saints, by reading and meditating on their lives.

Have a great love and respect for the Pope and bishops, and adhere to the authentic teachings of the Church’s Magisterium. Pray daily for the Pope and the Bishops, especially your own bishop.

Understand the need for daily repentance and conversion of life. Frequent the Sacrament of Penance on a weekly or monthly basis. Engage often in works of self-denial.

Have a great love for the Cross of Christ. Recall that the Cross prepares us for the eternal weight of glory.

Develop a serious commitment to daily prayer and be regular in your prayer time.

Do a daily work of charity and be involved in concrete work for the materially and spiritually poor.

Seek out and find a good spiritual director who will assist you in discerning God’s call in your life and help you spiritually prepare to respond.
The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

The holiest and most necessary practice in the spiritual life is that of the presence of God. It consists in taking delight in and becoming accustomed to His divine company, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly with Him all the time, at every moment, without rule or measure; especially in times of temptation, suffering, aridity, weariness, even infidelity and sin. We must continually apply ourselves so that all our actions, without exception, become a kind of brief conversation with God, not in a contrived manner but coming from the purity and simplicity of our hearts.

During our work and other activities, even during our reading and writing, no matter how spiritual - and, I emphasize, even during our religious exercises and vocal prayers - we must stop for a moment, as often as possible, to adore God in the depths of our hearts, to savor him, even though in passing and stealthily. Since you are aware that God is present to you during your actions, that he is in the depths and center of your heart, stop your activities and even your vocal prayers, at least from time to time, to adore him within, to praise him, to ask his help, to offer him your heart, and to thank him. Nothing is more pleasing to God than to turn away from all creatures many times throughout the day to withdraw and adore him present within. Moreover, this turning inward imperceptibly destroys the self-love found only among creatures. In the end, we can offer God no greater evidence of our fidelity than by frequently renouncing and scorning creatures in order to enjoy their Creator for a moment. This exercise gradually destroys the self-love only found among creatures. Turning to God frequently rids us of self-love without our even realizing it.

This presence of God is the soul’s life and nourishment, which can be acquired by the Lord’s grace. Here are the means: a great fidelity to the practice of his presence and to the fostering of this awareness of God within, which must always be carried out gently, humbly, and lovingly, without giving in to any disturbance. We must take special care that this inner awareness precedes our activities somewhat, that it accompanies them from time to time. We must not get discouraged when we forget this holy practice, for all that is needed is to calmly take it up again; once the habit is formed we will find contentment in everything.

This practice of the presence of God is very helpful for mental prayer, for it will be easier to remain calm during mental prayer when the mind, not allowed to take flight during the day, is kept faithfully in God’s presence.

Since all of life is full of dangers and hazards, it is impossible to avoid them without God’s constant help. We cannot ask him for this help if we are not with him. We cannot be with him
unless we think of him often. We cannot think of him often except by a holy habit of keeping ourselves in his presence, asking him for the graces we need at every moment.

Nothing can comfort us more in life’s trials and sufferings than this intimate conversation with God. Practiced faithfully, all physical illnesses will be easy to bear. God often permits us to suffer in order to purify our souls and to make us remain with him. Practiced faithfully, all physical illnesses will be easy to bear. If we are with God, and want him alone, we are incapable of suffering. We must therefore adore him in our infirmities, offering him our sufferings from time to time, asking him lovingly, as a child does his father, to be conformed to his holy will, and for the help of his grace. These short prayers are very appropriate for the sick and are an excellent remedy for pain.

We do not always have to be in church to be with God. We can make of our hearts an oratory where we can withdraw from time to time to converse with him there. Everyone is capable of these familiar conversations with God. A brief lifting up of the heart is enough, a brief remembrance of God, an act of inner adoration, even though on the run. These prayers, short as they may be, are very pleasing to God.
Common Prayers

The Sign of the Cross

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

The Lord’s Prayer (Our Father)


OUR FATHER, Who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen.

The Hail Mary


HAIL, MARY, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.
Common Prayers

The Apostles Creed

Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, Creatorem caeli et terrae. Et in Iesum Christum, Filium eius unicum, Dominum nostrum, qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria Virgine, passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus, et sepultus, descendit ad inferos, tertia die resurrexit a mortuis, ascendit ad caelos, sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris omnipotentis, inde venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos. Credo in Spiritum Sanctum, sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam, sanctorum communionem, remissionem peccatorum, carnis resurrectionem, vitam aeternam. Amen.

I BELIEVE in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty: from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The Minor Doxology (Glory Be)


GLORY be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now, and will be forever. Amen.
The Angelus

The Angelus is traditionally recited morning (6:00 a.m.), noon and evening (6:00 p.m.) throughout the year except during Paschal time, when the Regina Coeli is recited instead.

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. And the Word was made Flesh. (Bow head or genuflect).
R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.
The sun begins her journey West
   Across the morning Skies,
   And as she passes every land
   The holy Priest will rise.

   When Vested for the Ancient Rite
   At dawns of endless days,
   He bows to kiss the Altar where
   The Sacred Mass he prays.

   And in those grace full hands of his
   From Heaven high above
   He cradles there the Son of God,
   The Father's gift of love.

   With hands so beautiful and blest
   No honor can surpass
   This holy one who with the sun
   Does rise to say the Mass!
Priest’s Vesting Prayers—Latin

AD MANUUM ABLUTIONEM
Da, Dómine, virtútem mánibus meis ad abstergéndam omnem máculam; ut sine pollu-tióné mentis et córporis váleam tibi servíre.

AD AMICTUM
Impóne, Dómine, cápiti meo gáleam salútis, ad expugnándos diábólicos incúrsus.

AD ALBAM
Deálba me, Dómine, et munda cor meum; ut, in sǽnguine Agni dealbátus, gáudiis pér-fruар sempitérnís.

AD CINGULUM
Præcíngere me, Dómine, cíngulo purítátis, et exstíngue in lumbis meis humórem libídinis; ut máneat in me virtus continéntiae et castítátis.

AD STOLAM
Redde mihi, Dómine, stolam immortalitátis, quam pérdidi in prævaricatióne primi paréntis: et, quamvis indígnus accedo ad tuum sacrum mystérium, mérear tamen gáudium sempitérnun.

AD CASULAM
Priest’s Vesting Prayers—English

WASHING OF THE HANDS
Give virtue, O Lord, to my hands, that every stain may be wiped away, that I may be worthy to serve you without defilement of mind or body.

THE AMICE
Place, O Lord, on my head the helmet of salvation, that I may overcome the assaults of the devil.

THE ALB
Purify me, O Lord, from all stain and cleanse my heart, that, washed in the Blood of the Lamb, I may enjoy eternal delights.

THE CINCTURE
Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity, and quench in my heart the fire of concupiscence, that the virtue of continence and chastity may remain in me.

THE STOLE
Restore to me, O Lord, the state of immortality which was lost to me by my first parents, and, although unworthy to approach your sacred mysteries, grant me, nevertheless, eternal joy.

THE CHASUBLE
O Lord, you said, “My yoke is sweet and my burden light,” grant that I may carry it so as to obtain your grace. Amen.
Prayer of Intention—Latin

FORMULA INTENTIONIS ANTE SANCTAM MISSAM

Ego volo celebráre Missam, et confícere Corpus et Ságuinem Dómini nostri Iesu Christi, iuxta ritum Sanctæ Románæ Ecclésiæ, ad laudem omnipoténtis Dei totiúsque Cúriæ triumphántis, ad utilitátem meam totiúsque Cúriæ militántis, pro ómnibus qui se commend-avérunt oratió nibus meis in gènere et in spécie, et pro felíci statu Sanctæ Románæ Ecclésiæ. Amen.

My purpose is to celebrate Mass and to make present the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the rite of the Holy Roman Church to the praise of our all-powerful God and His assembly in the glory of heaven, for my good and the good of all His pilgrim Church on earth, and for all who have asked me to pray for them, in general and in particular, and for the good of the Holy Roman Church. Amen.

May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us joy and peace, amendment of life, room for true repentance, the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit, and perseverance in good works. Amen.
Notes - *Quo Vadis* opening talk
Notes - How to Discern
Notes - How to Discern
Notes - Interior Life
Notes - Interior Life
Notes - Priesthood and the Cross
Notes - Priesthood and the Cross
Notes - I am Not Worthy
Notes - I am Not Worthy
Notes - Transformation of the Priest
Notes - Transformation of the Priest
Notes - Sequela Christi
How to go to Confession

“Your sins are as a grain of sand by comparison with the huge mountain of God's mercy.”
—Saint John Vianney

“O God, have mercy on me a sinner.”
“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”
“Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven…”
“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Luke 18:13
John 1:29
John 20:23
Matt. 5:48

How to go to Confession

- Before entering the confessional, pray to God the Holy Spirit for His light and His grace.
- Examine your conscience.
- Be sorry for your sins; try to have the perfect sorrow of love.
- Make a firm resolution not to sin again, to avoid the near occasions of sin.
- In the confessional, make the sign of the cross with the priest.
- Say to the priest: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It's been _______ weeks/months/years since my last confession and these are my sins.”
- Confess your sins openly and candidly. Make sure you mention all mortal sins and, as best you can, the number of times each was committed. When you are through, say “I am sorry for these sins, and all the sins I cannot now remember.”
- Listen to the advice of the priest. Feel free to ask him any questions about the faith that you are not sure about, such as whether or not something is a sin. The priest will then give you a penance.
- Say the Act of Contrition when the priest asks you to.

Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

- After leaving the confessional, promptly do the penance the priest gave you.

Prayer before Confession

O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, worthy of all my love, I humbly present myself before You. Look upon me with merciful eyes and help me to be reconciled to You by a good confession. But as I can do nothing if You do not help me, I implore You in Your tender mercy to enlighten me, that I may know all my sins and detest them with my whole heart.
How to go to Confession… continued

O Jesus, ever flowing fountain of compassion, I approach You to cleanse me from all my sins. O Divine Physician heal my soul. O Infinite Love, enkindle the flames of Your Love in my soul that it may love nothing but You. May this Confession bring about in me an entire change in my life so that I may be fully reconciled to You.

Mother of God, you are so charitable to sinners who desire repentance, assist me to make a good Confession. My Guardian Angel, help me to discover the sins I have committed. My Patron Saint and all you Saints of Heaven, pray for me that I may bring forth worthy fruits of repentance. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving after Confession
Merciful Lord, with a pure heart I thank you for taking away my sins. Let your Holy Spirit guide my life so that my soul may bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Renew my desire to be your faithful friend and servant, increase my loving dependence on you. And grant me that joy and peace of heart which comes from doing your holy will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Final Prayer after Reconciliation
Thank you God for once again proving to me Your endless generosity in forgiving my many sins and offenses. I rely on Your grace to heal and strengthen my weak human nature, so that I may serve you more faithfully from this day on. I am determined that my life shall reflect the increase of grace You have given me by this Sacrament. Accept my sorrow, and my renewed love for You in reparation also for the offenses of all my loved ones, my friends, and those of all men. Through the saving grace of our Redeemer, may we all place ourselves totally at Your service. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.
Prayer before Examination of Conscience

Come Holy Spirit into my soul. Enlighten my mind that I may know the sins I ought to confess, and grant me your grace to confess them fully, humbly, and with a contrite heart. Help me to firmly resolve not to commit them again. O Blessed Virgin, Mother of my Redeemer, intercede for me through the Passion of Your Son, that I may obtain the grace to make a good confession. All you blessed Angels and Saints of God, pray for me, a sinner, that I may repent from my sins, and that my heart may be forever united with yours in eternal love. Amen.

The Commandments

I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

- Do I strive to love God with my whole heart, mind, soul, and strength? Do I give Him the priority in my life that He deserves as my Creator and Lord or rather do I make compromises on my love for God for the sake of pride, pleasure, or the avoidance of a necessary sacrifice? Do I spend time in prayer daily?
- Have I had any direct involvement with the occult, witchcraft, wicca, ouija boards, séances, tarot cards, new age crystals, fortune telling, or the like? Have I put faith in horoscopes?
- Have I received Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin?
- Have I abused the Sacrament of Reconciliation by deliberately lying to the priest or deliberately choosing not to confess a mortal sin?
- Have I publicly denied a truth of the faith out of concern for the respect and opinion of others? Have I doubted or denied my faith?
- Have I read books against the Catholic Faith?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- Have I always treated the holy name of God with the greatest possible reverence and awe?
- Have I deliberately cursed or shown contempt for or ridiculed God, Sacred Scripture, the Church, Mary, the saints, or sacred places or things? Did I cause scandal by doing this in the presence of others?
- Did I curse or swear? Do I use profane language?
Examination of Conscience… continued

**Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.**
- Have I deliberately missed Mass on a Sunday or Holy Day of obligation without a serious reason such as illness or lack of transportation?
- Have I deliberately come late or left early from Mass without a good reason?
- Do I try to keep Sunday as a day of rest and relaxation by avoiding unnecessary work?
- Have I deliberately allowed my children to miss Mass without a serious reason?
- Did I omit my Easter Duty? Did I omit my yearly Confession duty?
- Was I easily distracted at Mass?

**Honor your father and your mother.**
- Do I honor, respect, and obey my parents?
- Have I deliberately harmed my parents by word or by deed? Have I spoken badly of them in the presence of others?
- Have I neglected my family responsibilities?
- Do I respect and obey my legitimate superiors?
- Have I separated or divorced civilly without consultation according to the mind of the Church?

**You shall not kill.**
- Have I intentionally harmed anyone?
- Have I encouraged or helped someone to have an abortion?
- Have I attempted suicide or given deliberate consent to the idea? Have I neglected my spiritual, physical or mental health or tried to harm myself?
- Have I abused drugs or alcohol? Have I gotten high or drunk?
- Have I led anyone to sin through bad example or through direct encouragement?
- Have I gossiped, made fun of, or harmed someone’s reputation by my words?
- Have I harbored grudges or refused to forgive someone who hurt me?
- Have I refused to help someone who was really in need?
- Have I been angry, resentful, or kept hatred in my heart?
- Have I failed to correct my transgressions through charity?

**You shall not commit adultery.**
- Have I engaged in any kind of sexual activity with anyone of either sex (includes prolonged kisses, passionate touches or any use of another person as an object to obtain sexual pleasure)?
- Have I indulged in pornographic magazines, videos, or internet websites?
- Have I masturbated or fornicated?
- Have I looked lustfully at someone or used impure speech in speaking of another? Have I led others to impure thoughts or actions by my bad example?
- Do I avoid laziness, gluttony, idleness, and the occasions of impurity?

**You shall not steal.**
- Have I stolen or accepted stolen goods?
- Have I deliberately destroyed the property of others?
- Have I cheated anyone of what I owe? Do I pay my debts promptly?
- Have I cheated on my taxes?
- Do I gamble excessively?
- Do I share what I have with the poor and the Church according to my means? Am I stingy?
Examination of Conscience… continued

- Have I returned or made equal restitution for anything obtained immorally?

**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**
- Have I lied? Have I sworn falsely? Have I gossiped?
- Have I plagiarized or been academically dishonest?
- Have I revealed secrets or confidential information without good reason?
- Have I ruined anyone’s reputation by spreading lies or maliciously revealing their faults and sins?
- Am I critical, negative, or uncharitable in my talk? Am I sincere?

**You shall not desire your neighbor’s wife.**
- Have I deliberately and consciously entertained sexual thoughts about anyone besides a spouse?
- Do I guard my imagination and senses?
- Have I watched shows, plays, pictures, or movies that contain impure scenes with the deliberate intention of being aroused by them? Am I responsible about what I read?
- Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations?

**You shall not desire your neighbor’s goods.**
- Am I envious or excessively desirous of the possessions, abilities, talents, beauty, or success of others?
- Have I been sorrowful over another’s good fortune? Have I been happy when someone was hurt?
- Am I moody, gloomy, sad, or sour?
- Do I work, study, and keep busy to counter idle thoughts?
- Is my heart set on earthly possessions or on the true treasures in Heaven?
Through reflection upon Mary, we can also reflect upon the mystery of vocation – of being called by God – which is at the center of the Catholic life.

Mary’s last recorded words in the Gospels are: “Do whatever he tells you,” which form her instructions to the waiters at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2:5). These words sum up Mary’s singular role in the history of salvation; Mary is the unique witness who, from the moment of the Incarnation, always points beyond herself to her Son. And because her Son in the flesh is also the incarnate Son of God, by pointing us to her Son, Mary also points us to the heart of the Trinity.

Contemporary Catholic theology has developed this insight in intriguing ways that give a rich texture to the Church’s Marian piety. The Church in every age is formed in the image of the great figures of the New Testament. The Church of proclamation and evangelization, for example, is formed in the image of Saint Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles. The Church of contemplation and mystical insight is constantly being formed in the image of the apostle John, the beloved disciple. The Church of authority is formed in the image of Saint Peter, to whom Christ gave the keys, the power to bind and loose, and the parallel injunction to “strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32). And the Church of discipleship – which is the basis of everything else – is formed in the image of a woman, Mary, who is the first of disciples and thus the mother of the Church.

How? Because it is in Mary’s fiat – “Be it done unto me according to your word” (Luke 1:38) – that we discover the pattern or form of all Christian discipleship. Mary’s fiat makes possible the incarnation of the Son of God, whose redeeming and sanctifying work in history continues in the Church through its proclamation, contemplation, and authority. Mary is the first disciple of the Son she bore and nursed and raised. Because all Christians are grafted on Christ in baptism, Mary is the mother of the Church, the mystical body of Christ extended in history. Through Mary’s fiat, we glimpse one of the primary lessons of discipleship, a lesson which takes a lifetime to learn: we are not in charge of our lives – God is in charge of our lives. To know that is to be liberated in the truest sense of human freedom. To know that is to be set free from the restlessness that besets every human heart in every age. To enter into the mystery of the Blessed Virgin Mary is to take our first steps into the spiritual discipline of trust and true discipleship.
The Cure of Ars: Patron Saint of Parish Priests

“...Set your heart on what pertains to higher realms where Christ is seated at God’s right hand. Be intent on the things above rather than on things of earth.”

In a world that is often turned upside down, these words of Saint Paul to the Colossians are as difficult to live today as they were in the days of his preaching. Paul was reminding the Colossians of the vanity of chasing after worldly things we heard about in the first reading. He was also echoing the meaning of today’s parable of the man who grows rich for himself instead of growing rich in the sight of God. We live in the midst of a society and a culture that knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

In our communion with the saints, God constantly gives us examples of faithful women and men who have not lost sight of the things of God in the midst of their own godless generation. Let us look to one man who truly set his heart on the realm of Christ and continues to be a model for our own age.

John Vianney lived an extraordinary life as a simple parish priest. The deepest mystery of his pastoral success is rooted in the fact that he loved people, as did Jesus Christ, and in his love suffered with them. Over and over again he proved himself to be a faithful follower of the Good Shepherd.

The Vianney family lived in Dardilly, France, and John was the fourth of their six children. The religious piety of the Vianneys was passed along to their children and young John was particularly captivated by the Catholic faith. Material poverty was well known to John and his family. He had only a few months of formal education in childhood before he had to work and help support his parents and family. What he lacked in intellectual ability he certainly made up in religious fervor.

John Vianney was five years old when the reign of terror in Paris was exiling or murdering the Catholic clergy and religious. He received his First Communion at a time when the troops of the French Revolution passed through his neighborhood and closed his parish church. It was dangerous to be a devout Christian, but even more dangerous to want to become a priest. But it was to the priesthood that John Vianney felt called.
The Cure of Ars … continued

It was the example of a holy priest that helped John Vianney discern his vocation. This same priest also helped prepare young John for studies in the seminary. Lacking much intellectual ability, John found studies hard, especially the study of Latin. Because his Latin was hopeless, John was dismissed from the seminary on several occasions. His old priest friend and mentor took John Vianney under his wing and tutored him once again in Catholic theology and finally presented John to the bishop for Ordination. The Bishop examined John’s theological knowledge and finally ordained him to the priesthood at the age of twenty-nine.

Young Father Vianney was assigned to a mission church in Ars, some distance from Lyons. It was to be his only assignment for the next 42 years. His approach to priestly ministry was the Gospel formula of prayer and fasting to which he added tireless work. His brother priests laughed at him because he felt honored to be the parish priest in the poorest and most neglected parish in the diocese. But John Vianney honored God and Church by the tremendous love he had for both.

Ars had for some time been just a mission of a neighboring parish, and the few who came to church were mostly elderly women. Gradually the pastor’s influence was felt. Sunday work stopped, drunkenness ceased, the bars began to close, and the dance halls were shut. Within ten years the town was transformed, and stories of remarkable conversions and cures began to attract Catholics far and wide. Saints and sinners began to come to him in great numbers seeking his counsel and advice. But even more importantly they came to make a good confession and be reconciled with God.

Saint John Vianney literally wore himself out in serving the faithful and especially being available for confession. Yet he felt incompetent because of his seeming ignorance. But the Church of his day needed saintly priests more than brilliant ones. “If you want the whole diocese to be converted,” he once remarked to his bishop, “then all the parish priests must become saints.” His own life was the best example of what one holy priest can do.

Life was never easy for the Cure of Ars. For 34 years he battled the devil that attacked him nightly in dreams and visions. He bore the scorn of his brother priests for over 10 years because of their jealousy over his pastoral success. He was even the victim of malicious lies and calumny but was eventually cleared of all accusations. In the end, his goodness and authentic holiness overcame the religious indifference of the people. He was able to win many souls to Christ and the Church. John Vianney died on August 4, 1859. Exhausted from years of faithful priestly service, he died as he lived – with his heart set on the realm of heaven. John Vianney was canonized a saint in 1925 and was made patron and model of parish priests in 1929.
We see in Saint John Vianney a man of holiness. He made it easier for others to believe in God -- by the way he lived his daily life.

He was a man who knew the meaning of suffering. It is said that the very heart of love is suffering and Saint John Vianney loved much. In his compassion for people, Father Vianney lived a strict ascetic life. He did so in order to open people’s hearts for the grace of God.

Saint John Vianney knew the value of prayer. His days and nights were taken up in that loving union of hearts which forms true prayer. As he himself said: “Prayer is nothing else but union with God.” That union was evident in his lifestyle, his ministry, his preaching, and his personal life. Prayer was also the foundation of his simple sermons that spoke so eloquently of God’s love and mercy for His people.

He was a man of perseverance. John Vianney would not look back or turn back from the way God marked out for him. In the face of many obstacles, he persevered in his studies, in his ministry, in the confessional, and in counseling the thousands who came to him constantly seeking advice. He understood that he only planted the seed, it was God who watered it and finally made it bear fruit.

Saint John Vianney reminds all of us, priests and people, to remember our priests in prayer. In their service to God and His Church they too can go through some hard times in which they feel the cross of Christ: times when their ministry achieves nothing; times when too much is demanded of them.

As patron and model, let us continue to ask God, through the intercession of Saint John Vianney, to grant us many and holy priests after the heart of Christ Your Son. May our priests never become discouraged under the weight of the cross and be tempted to abandon the ministry that brings the Church life, light, and truth.
My children, we have come to the Sacrament of Orders. It is a Sacrament which seems to relate to no one among you, and which yet relates to everyone. This Sacrament raises man up to God. What is a priest! A man who holds the place of God -- a man who is invested with all the powers of God. "Go, " said Our Lord to the priest; "as My Father sent Me, I send you. All power has been given Me in Heaven and on earth. Go then, teach all nations. . . . He who listens to you, listens to Me; he who despises you despises Me. " When the priest remits sins, he does not say, "God pardons you"; he says, "I absolve you." At the Consecration, he does not say, "This is the Body of Our Lord;" he says, "This is My Body."

Saint Bernard tells us that everything has come to us through Mary; and we may also say that everything has come to us through the priest; yes, all happiness, all graces, all heavenly gifts. If we had not the Sacrament of Orders, we should not have Our Lord. Who placed Him there, in that tabernacle? It was the priest. Who was it that received your soul, on its entrance into life? The priest. Who nourishes it, to give it strength to make its pilgrimage? The priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God, by washing that soul, for the last time, in the blood of Jesus Christ? The priest -- always the priest. And if that soul comes to the point of death, who will raise it up, who will restore it to calmness and peace? Again the priest. You cannot recall one single blessing from God without finding, side by side with this recollection, the image of the priest.
Do You Have What it Takes?

Whenever God calls a person to a certain state in life, He also gives that person the gifts and talents necessary to live out that state. One of the ways you can discern if God is calling you to the priesthood is to reflect upon the qualities necessary to live a priestly lifestyle.

Here are some of the qualities of a potential priest:

**Spiritual**
- is committed to and passionate about the Catholic faith
- has a love for the living Word of God and seeks to live the Gospel in daily life
- participates actively in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass regularly with love and devotion
- has a growing personal commitment to private prayer
- frequents the Sacrament of Penance
- identifies with the Church and Her mission

**Personal**
- demonstrates a generosity of spirit and private integrity
- is committed to community, family, and the Church
- knows the importance of and capacity for asceticism, selflessness, and discipline
- lives a responsible and independent life
- possesses an attraction for the goodness of life and its joys and sorrows
- demonstrates emotional balance in life
- understands and lives the moral demands of Christian existence
- has a deep appreciation of human sexuality
- believes God has called him to live a life of chastity and celibacy
- understands the necessity of being a “team player”

**Academic**
- possesses sufficient intelligence to complete higher education
- exhibits an eagerness to learn and enjoys school and academic pursuits
- understands the importance of lifetime learning
- believes that the quest for truth is one of the greatest human quests

**Ministerial**
- recognizes the importance of authority and institution
- sees the sacred within family, Church, and tradition
- has an eagerness for the prophetic and a sympathy for the marginalized
- enjoys serving the needs of others
- understands the growing demands of social justice
- has a love for the poor and those who live on the fringes of society
- is focused on the Kingdom of God – stretching from this life to the next
Ordination Promises

Made to the Bishop at Diaconate

In the presence of God and the Church, are you resolved as a sign of your interior dedication to Christ, to remain celibate for the sake of the kingdom and in lifelong service to God and mankind? (promise of perpetual celibacy)

Are you resolved to be ordained for the Church’s ministry by the laying on of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit? (This question establishes the freedom of the Candidate)

Are you resolved to discharge the office of Deacon with humility and love in order to assist the bishop and the priests and to serve the people of Christ? (pledge of fidelity)

Are you resolved to hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, as the Apostle urges, and to proclaim this faith in word and action as it is taught by the Gospel and the Church’s tradition?

Are you resolved to maintain and deepen a spirit of prayer appropriate to your way of life and, in keeping with what is required of you, to celebrate faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours for the Church and for the whole world? (obligation to pray the Breviary daily)

Are you resolved to shape your way of life always according to the example of Christ, whose body and blood you will give to the people? (promise to keep growing in gospel values and lifestyle)

Do you promise respect and reverence to me and my successors? (The promise of obedience is essential to a priestly lifestyle.)

Made to the Bishop at Priestly Ordination

Are you resolved, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge without fail the office of priesthood in the presbyteral order as conscientious fellow workers with the Bishops in caring for the Lord’s flock?

Are you resolved to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously as the Church has handed them down to us, for the glory of God and the sanctification of Christ’s people?

Are you resolved to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith?
The Priest is a Man of Prayer

The priest must be first and foremost a man of prayer. Personally he is a man in union with God through the intimacy of a deep personal relationship with God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As an ordained minister of the Church, the priest represents Jesus Christ and therefore, the priest’s most important prayer is to re-present the sacrifice of Jesus during the Holy Mass.

As a man of prayer, the priest images Jesus Christ to his parish family and becomes for them a living icon of Christ’s abiding love for His people. The parish expects and relies on the priest to offer a sacrifice “holy and acceptable to God.” The Parish looks to the priest to lead them in prayer, personally and officially, not only at Holy Mass, but also at parish meetings, functions, wake services, etc. He must therefore be a man accustomed to speaking with God in the intimacy of his heart, since the priest cannot give to others what he himself does not have.

The priest develops the habit of prayer through his daily recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours (Breviary) and the time he spends in private prayer and meditation. This personal prayer is essential to the priesthood because the priest could not adequately bring others into contact with Christ without first knowing Him. An intimate relationship with Jesus through prayer is the very essence of holiness and priestly ministry.

The Priest is also a Prophet

Prophets are envoys of God who are called to speak to others in God’s name. They challenge their hearers to interpret life’s events in light of God’s revealed truth. From the earliest days of Christianity, people have come to Jesus through the faithful preaching of the gospel. Today, preaching is still one of the primary duties of the priest. It is usually from the pulpit that Catholics receive their information about the faith and their challenge to live it in daily life.

Priests who can set the world on fire with love of God are a great treasure for the Church. A prophetic priest will understand the truth as revealed by God and will be able articulate that truth from the pulpit. A courageous prophet will also never be afraid to challenge people to recognize that sin destroys life and love. The priest will also recognize that it is not easy to put one’s faith into words. As Pope John Paul II said: “The church faces a particularly difficult task in her efforts to preach the Word of God in all cultures in which the faithful are constantly challenged by consumerism and pleasure-seeking mentality.”
What is a Priest?... continued

A priest, through his words and his example, will teach people how Christ’s life and gospel are relevant to our times and also teach his people how to live gospel values.

The Priest is a King

A priest lives his life for others. He shares the mission of Jesus as Priest, Prophet, and King. As a king, the priest must serve others and not rule over them. The priest is one called to serve and not be served after the example of Jesus.

A priest must be first and foremost God’s servant. He must serve the needs of his parish family and the Church with all his strength. He brings the love and strength of Christ into the school, the hospital room, the prison, the ghetto…wherever God’s people are and especially wherever they suffer, the priest is there.
What is a vocation?
First, all are called to holiness, rejecting sin and loving God with our entire heart, body, and soul. Within this universal call to holiness, God creates each person for a specific purpose, reason or mission. This is our vocation; a vocation is a gift from God, a plan or “calling” from our heavenly Father. A vocation is God's invitation or calling to each individual to love and serve Him and His Church in a particular state or way of life.

Do I have to do what God is calling me to do?
Remember, God loves you better than you love yourself. He created you and formed you with your unique gifts, talents, and abilities. God knows what will make you truly happy. In embracing and generously responding to your vocation, you will find a greater happiness, peace, and joy than you can find on your own. Your happiness depends on answering His call.

What about what I want to be or do with my life?
In God’s infinite love for you, He has given you the gift of freedom. True freedom is doing what we ought, meaning what is right and according to God’s will. The world gets things mixed up sometimes, teaching us that freedom is doing whatever we can or want to do. This misguided understanding of freedom actually enslaves us making us prisoners of our own selfishness. God wants us to discover real joy by using our freedom to respond to God with courageous and generous lives. He made us and knows what will make us happy.

Can I be happy in my life if I don’t follow the vocation Jesus invites me to embrace?
If someone does not follow the vocation our Father created for him to fulfill, they can attain a certain degree of happiness in this world and still attain salvation. However, they will not be as happy or blessed as they might have been had they followed their proper vocation. Rejecting our vocation affects others also (What if your parents never said yes to each other? What if the priest who has had a great impact on your life said no to Jesus?). This is why it is so important that everyone discern his or her particular vocation prayerfully and responsibly. Of course, there are trials and tribulations in every vocation. To become a priest or consecrated religious does not take away all suffering. But there is great joy in laying down one's life for Christ. Your vocation is Christ's gift to you; how you respond is your gift to Him and yourself.
Questions on Discernment… continued

How do I know what my vocation is?

Jesus tells us, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Mt 7:7). Pray every day, asking God to reveal or show you his plan for you, your vocation. Make sure you pray correctly. Do not ask yourself, “What do I want to do with my life?” That is using our freedom selfishly. Rather, we should pray as Jesus taught us in the perfect prayer “The Our Father” -  *Thy will be done!* May God’s will be done in my life!; this is the prayer we must pray. You should be thinking and asking: "Jesus what have I been created for?  How have I been created to love You?” Pray and listen for the answer! Listen with your heart, not just your head. Seek guidance from the Church, the Bride of Christ, to help you hear and respond to God’s voice. *We need the wisdom and guidance of Holy Mother Church* to assist us. This process is called discernment.

What are the possible vocations through which I might be called to follow Christ?

Many people are called to the married state of life while others are chosen to be priests, consecrated religious men and women, or deacons. Some people are committed to remain single, yet still living a life of generous self-giving to the Church. Remember: It is normal to desire marriage and family. Just because you have this desire does not exclude the possibility that you have a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. For a priest, the desire for a spouse is fulfilled as he marries his Bride, the Church. His desire for fatherhood is abundantly fulfilled, as he becomes a spiritual father of God’s holy people.
Questions on Discernment… continued

If I decide to enter the seminary to "give it a try" am I committed for life?

Certainly not! The seminary is where real discernment, trying to hear God’s voice revealing our vocation, begins. Sometimes, the only way to really know if you have a vocation to the priesthood or religious life is to actually enter the seminary. During that time of formation, God’s will for you becomes clearer. The goal of the seminary is to help you discern God’s will. A seminary rejoices when a man discerns that he is not called to priesthood and leaves to serve the Church in another vocation. Those precious years spent in formation are a benefit to you spiritually even if you discover that you are not called to be a priest or consecrated religious. That time will definitely help you hear God’s voice and find your vocation.

Priests and consecrated religious are very holy; I’m not. Should I enter seminary?

There is one mission all people have in common; we are all called to be holy. Holiness, becoming more like Jesus, is a lifetime endeavor for every person in every vocation. Give God a chance to work on you. With God all things are possible, even you becoming holy! Jesus’ first words in His public life give us the formula for holiness: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15). Christ is calling you to holiness right now. Reject sin by frequenting the Sacrament of Penance monthly, receive our Lord in the Most Holy Eucharist, adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament by making visits to Church outside of Mass and pray daily, especially meditating on Holy Scripture. You will be amazed at the good things Jesus can do in and through you.
The Priesthood and Celibacy

The Roman Catholic Church requires that her priests be celibate. It is the practice of perfect continence by priests and bishops ordained for service in the Church. Celibacy has a long tradition and is the normative discipline for all Catholic clergy. In fact, the Church will only call to Holy Orders those men who believe they already have the gift of celibacy.

Celibacy is not just a law in the Roman Catholic Church; it also has a deeply understood spiritual significance for priestly life and ministry. The Second Vatican Council’s “Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests” asserted: “Perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven was recommended by Christ our Lord. It has been freely accepted and laudably observed by many Christians down through the centuries as well as a feature of priestly life. For it is at once a sign of pastoral charity and an incentive to it as well as being in a special way a source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world.” (No. 16)

In its essence, the priesthood does not demand celibacy. However, the centuries have proved that celibacy is in harmony with the priesthood and its origins are grounded in apostolic tradition. Priests identify themselves with Christ, Who was celibate. They dedicate the whole of their lives to the service of the Lord and His Church. Celibacy enables the priest to focus entirely on building up the kingdom of God here and now.

The gift of celibacy enables priests to cling to Christ with undivided hearts and dedicate themselves more freely to His service and to the service of their brothers and sisters. In this way priests become signs in this world of the Church’s union with the Lord. Unmarried priests also remind the world of the Kingdom of God where in resurrected glory there “shall not be marriage or giving in marriage.”

To live a celibate life, the priest must look to Christ as the ideal, eternal priest. This identification should permeate the priest’s whole being. Just as Christ remained celibate and dedicated His life to the service of His Father, a priest accepts celibacy and consecrates himself totally to the Lord’s mission. This total gift of self is a sign of the Kingdom present among us.

Through celibacy, the priest bonds himself and his life to the Church. He is better able to be a minister of the Word of God, listening to that Word, pondering its depth, living it, and preaching it with whole-hearted conviction. He is the minister of the sacraments, and, especially through the Mass, acts in the person of Christ, offering himself totally to the Lord. Celibacy also allows the priest more freedom and flexibility in fulfilling his pastoral ministry.

Throughout the Church’s teaching on celibacy, three important dimensions must be kept in mind. First, celibacy involves freedom. A man called to Holy Orders freely accepts the
Questions on Discernment… continued

obligation of celibacy. Secondly, celibacy involves sacrifice, and a sacrifice is an act of love for Christ and His Church. In essence, the celibate priest is wedded to Christ and His Church.
Thirdly, celibacy requires the grace of God to be lived faithfully. The gift of celibacy does not just keep one’s physical desires under control or enable us to live as bachelors; this gift is being able to say “yes” to the Lord each day and live the example of His life.

Christ is always willing to accept and strengthen the sacrifice you will to make for Him -- and the Church needs the generosity of your heart as a priest. Be not afraid to make the total sacrifice of yourself out of love to serve the Lord and His Church.

Thoughts on Priestly Celibacy from John Paul II

It is important to point out that there are profound theological reasons supporting the discipline of celibacy. The encyclical Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, published in 1967 by my venerable predecessor Pope Paul VI, synthesizes them as follows: (cf. nn. 19-34)

First and foremost there is a Christological motivation: as Mediator between the Father and the human race, Christ remained celibate so as to dedicate Himself totally to the service of God and men. Those whose fortune it is to share in the dignity and mission of Christ are called to share also in this total gift of self.

Then there is an ecclesiological motivation: Christ loved the Church, offering Himself entirely for her sake, in order to make her a glorious, holy, and immaculate Spouse. By choosing celibacy, the sacred ministers themselves manifest the virginal love of Christ for the Church, drawing forth the supernatural vigor of spiritual fruitfulness.

Finally, there is an eschatological motivation: at the resurrection of the dead, Jesus said, “They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matthew 22:30). Priestly celibacy proclaims the arrival of a new dawn of salvation, and in a way it anticipates the fulfillment of the Kingdom as it sets forth its supreme values that will one day shine forth in all the children of God.

-Excerpted from Rise Let us Be on Our Way! Pp. 141-142
More Questions about Priesthood

What does a priest do?
A priest is ordained to be an “alter Christus” (another Christ) in the midst of God’s people. He is configured to the very person of Christ to continue the Lord’s mission and ministry in the world. The priest does this primarily through the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass and through preaching the Word of God. He enables people to encounter Jesus through the celebration of the other Sacraments: baptizing, reconciling sinners through Penance, attending the sick through Anointing, and celebrating love through Matrimony. As a priest, he is the servant-leader of God’s people in the midst of parish life. He is an administrator, teacher, counselor, and friend to the poor. He cares for people, as Jesus did, in their daily needs and struggles. To sum it up: “A priest is called to be all things to all people.”

Is it easy to become a priest?
In all honesty the answer must be “No, it is not easy to become a priest.” A man who wants to become a priest must go to college for four years, with at least two years of philosophical training. After graduating college, he must go to a major seminary for another four years to earn a Master’s degree in Divinity. After high school, a man goes to school for another eight years before becoming a priest. Just to think of so many years of education and formation can be discouraging. But remember, God always gives us the grace to do what He asks us to do!

What do priests do for recreation and fun?
If you remember that priests are human beings, you will understand that recreation and fun are a necessary part of life. As men, priests need to exercise their bodies and recoup their energy through healthy outlets. A priest can do anything he wants for recreation, as long as it is consistent with the Christian life. Some priests love sports and play them regularly. Others enjoy movies, plays, music, and reading good books. Some even like to hunt, fish, hike, and every other imaginable recreation. There are many forms of recreation that bring refreshment of strength and spirits after expending energy through pastoral ministry. Most priests have some sort of hobby that gives them pleasure and relaxation.
Questions on Priesthood… continued

Do priests get paid?
Most people in the world engage in some career to earn a living. Careers allow people to be creative and earn a paycheck. Priests do not get paid in the sense of worldly careers. Because a priest does not have a family and because he lives a relatively simple life, he does not need a lot of money. Priests do, however, receive a monthly salary which give them means to buy their necessities, purchase and maintain an automobile, take a vacation, buy clothing, and do normal recreational activities. A priest’s monthly salary is small because the church provides free room and board, and most priests usually have minimal expenses because they try to live simple lives. Like the disciples before us, is Christ calling you to be one of His priests?

Are you being called to the Priesthood?

Are you responding to our heavenly Father’s voice today?
How do you know if He is calling you?
How do you know to what He is calling you?

If you are being called to serve the Church as a priest, you will see visible signs of this calling in the following areas:

- Human - you are someone whom others trust and turn to, you draw people around you closer to Christ.
- Spiritual - you have a lively and personal love for Jesus Christ and the Church, the people of God, you desire to courageously serve Christ
- Intellectual - you have the capacity and desire to learn and grow in your understanding of Jesus Christ, the Church and our world and culture.
- Pastoral - you have a desire to care for God’s holy people, by serving them as the Good Shepherd. You make a difference in people's lives through your witness to Christ.

If you recognize these qualities or their potential in yourself or others, maybe The Father is calling!

Are You being called by the Father to be a priest?

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Are you being called ...continued

Take this quick discernment quiz to find out! Answer "yes" or "no" to the following questions:

1. Does the idea of becoming a priest keep coming back time and time again even though you thought you had moved on in your life and forgotten about it?

2. Do you feel called to give more, to be more?

3. Does your relationship with God sustain you, enliven you, invigorate you in such a way that you want to share His Truth and Love with others?

4. Do you desire to courageously and selflessly give all to Christ, to cast out into the deep and follow Him, wherever He calls you?

5. Do you long for more than what “the world” teaches us to strive for – money, sensuality, power, self-indulgence and comfort at any cost?

6. Do you have a sneaking suspicion that you are on the brink of a major life decision?

7. Are you afraid to tell friends and family that you are thinking about the priesthood?

8. Does the idea of becoming a priest excite you and at the same time frighten you because you feel "unworthy?"

9. Have you ever felt your heart move as a priest celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and thought what it would be like to stand at his place at the altar?

10. Have others encouraged you to consider the priesthood?

If you answered "yes" to two or more of these questions, contact the Vocations Office.
Our Holy Father’s Priestly Vocation Prayer

**HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI**

**FOR THE 43rd WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

7 MAY 2006 -FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

O Father, raise up among Christians abundant and holy vocations to the priesthood, who keep the faith alive and guard the blessed memory of your Son Jesus through the preaching of His Word and the administration of the Sacraments, with which You continually renew Your faithful.

Grant us holy ministers of Your altar, who are careful and fervent guardians of the Eucharist, the sacrament of the supreme gift of Christ for the redemption of the world.

Call ministers of Your mercy, who, through the sacrament of Reconciliation, spread the joy of Your forgiveness.

Grant, O Father, that the Church may welcome with joy the numerous inspirations of the Spirit of Your Son and, docile to His teachings, may She care for vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life.

Sustain the Bishops, priests and deacons, consecrated men and women, and all the baptized in Christ, so that they may faithfully fulfill their mission at the service of the Gospel.

This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary, Queen of Apostles, pray for us.
Pope John Paul II on his Priestly Vocation

"I am often asked, especially by young people, why I became a priest. Maybe some of you would like to ask the same question. Let me try briefly to reply. I must begin by saying that it is impossible to explain entirely. For it remains a mystery, even to myself. How does one explain the ways of God? Yet, I know that, at a certain point in my life, I became convinced that Christ was saying to me what he had said to thousands before me: 'Come, follow me!' There was a clear sense that what I heard in my heart was no human voice, nor was it just an idea of my own. Christ was calling me to serve him as a priest.

"And you can probably tell that I am deeply grateful to God for my vocation to the priesthood. Nothing means more to me or gives me greater joy that to celebrate Mass each day and to serve God's people in the Church. That has been true ever since the day of my ordination as a priest. Nothing has ever changed this, not even becoming Pope." (Los Angeles, USA, September 14, 1987)

"The priestly vocation is essentially a call to sanctity, in the form that derives from the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Sanctity is intimacy with God; it is the imitation of Christ, poor, chaste and humble; it is unre- served love for souls and self-giving to their true good; it is love for the church which is holy and wants us to be holy, because such is the mission that Christ has entrusted to it. Each one of you must be holy also in order to help your brothers pursue their vocation to sanctity." (Rome, Italy, October 9, 1984)

"Your wish to become priests, or at least your wish to discover if you are really called. And so the question is a serious one, because you have to prepare thoroughly, with clear intentions and an austere formation." (Rome, Italy, October 13, 1979)

"His calling is a declaration of love." Your response is commitment, friendship, and love manifested in the gift of your own life as a definitive following and as a permanent sharing in his mission and in his consecrations. To make up your mind is to love him with all of your soul and all of your heart in such a way that this love becomes the standard and motive of all your actions. From this moment on, live the Eucharist fully; be persons for whom the Holy Mass, Communion, and Eucharistic adoration are the center and summit of their whole life. Offer Christ your heart in meditation and personal prayer which is the foundation of the spiritual life." (Valencia, Spain, November 8, 1982)

"The world looks to the priest, because it looks to Jesus! No one can see Christ; but everyone sees the priest, and through him they wish to catch a glimpse of the Lord! Immense is the gradeur of the Lord! Immense is the grandeur and dignity of the priest!" (Rome, Italy, October 13, 1979)

"Called, consecrated, sent. This triple dimension explains and determines your conduct and your lifestyle. You are 'set apart;' 'segregated,' but not 'separated.' What would separate you, would be to forget or to overlook the meaning of the consecration that characterizes your priesthood. To be but one more in your profession, in your lifestyle, in your way of living, in your political obligations, would not help you to fully carry out your mission. You would betray your own faithful who want you to be priests through and through." (Valencia, Spain, November 8, 1982)
## Books and Writings on the Priesthood

### From the Magisterium:

- Vatican Council II. *Presbyterorum ordinis*
- Pope John Paul II. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*

Related to magisterial teaching:

### From the Tradition:

- Garrigou-Lagrange, Reginald. *The Priest in Union with Christ*
- Gregory the Great, St. *On Pastoral Care*, Ancient Christian Writers, no. 11 (Mahweh: Paulist, 1994).
- Ligourí, St. Alphonsus. *The Dignity and Duties of the Priest* (Rockford: TAN, 1927).
- Marmion, Abbot Columba. *Christ, the Ideal of the Priest*.

### From Contemporary Thought:

- Cholij, Roman. *Clerical Celibacy in East and West* (Fowler-Wright).
- Dubay, Thomas. “And You are Christ’s”: The Charism of Virginity and the Celibate Life (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987).
Books and Writings … continued


__________. *They Followed His Call: Vocation and Asceticism* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986).


**Literary:**

__________. *Under Satan’s Sun*, tr. J.C. Whitehorse (Bison, 2001).


Cronin, A.J. *The Keys of the Kingdom* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1941).

__________. “The Hint of an Explanation” in *Short Stories* (Penguin, 19??).


__________. *Father Malachy’s Miracle: a heavenly story with an earthly meaning* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1931).


Shusako, Endo. *Silence*.

Books and Writings … continued


Books and Writings on the Spiritual Life

Augustine. Confessions.
Boylon, Dom Eugene. This Tremendous Lover.
Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection. The Practice of the Presence of God.
Chautard, Jean-Baptiste. The Soul of the Apostolate.
Ciszek, Walter. He Leadeth Me.
d’Elbee, Jean. I Believe in Love.
De Caussade, Jean. Abandonment to Divine Providence.
De Sales, Francis. Introduction to the Devout Life.
Finding God’s Will for You.
Treatise on the Love of God.
Seeking Spiritual Direction: How to Grow the Divine Life Within,
Groeschel, Benedict. Spiritual Passages.
Guardini, Romano. The Lord.
Hardon, John. Retreat with the Lord.
John of the Cross. The Dark Night of the Soul.
Kemptis, Thomas A. Imitation of Christ.
Kreeft, Peter. Prayer for Beginners.
Marmion, Dom Claude. Christ the Life of the Soul.
Monfort, Louis De. True Devotion to Mary.
Pierlot, Holly. A Mother’s Rule of Life: How to Bring Order to Your Home and Peace to Your Soul.
Ratzinger, Joseph. Co-workers of the Truth: Meditations for Every Day of the Year.
Scupoli, Lorenzo. Spiritual Combat.
Sheed, Frank. To Know Christ Jesus.
Sheen, Fulton J. The Life of Christ.