

RE-GIFTED

Universal Call to Holiness

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

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

Life Night at a Glance

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

Mass Announcement

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

Environment

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

GATHER *20 Minutes*

Welcome and Introductions (5 min)

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

"Unwrapped" Game (10 min)

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

Re-gifted Skit (5 min)

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

The skit can be found on pages 18-19.

PROCLAIM *10 Minutes*

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Teaching (10 min)

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

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

CATECHISM REFERENCES:

2013-2014

2028

2813

SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 5:48

Psalms 63

1 Thessalonians 4:3

BREAK 25 Minutes

Semester Small Groups

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

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

Semester Small Groups (25 min)

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

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

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

SEND 20 Minutes

Recap (2 min)

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

Self-Gift of the Eucharist (3 min)

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

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

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

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Eucharistic Adoration (15 min)

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

Making it Work

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

Community Connection

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

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TEACHING

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

What it is

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

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

Psalm 63:1
Confessions, 1.1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lumen Gentium, V (39)

1 Thessalonians 4:3

Matthew 5:48,

CCC 201

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Jesus tells his disciples, “be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.” What is holiness? Being like God! “Thus it is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society.”

How it's done

We live out our lives in this world. This is not profound, though it is often overlooked. Your life, my life, our neighbors' lives are lived together and in society. Through our holy living, we can promote a better society. Now, we may not be accustomed to running around giving of ourselves and spreading holiness like a St. Francis would, but we can train ourselves to be better. How?

“This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in *the art of prayer*...We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: ‘Lord, teach us to pray!’ Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends: ‘Abide in me and I in you’.”

Prayer is one of the foundational elements of holiness and of knowing God. Prayer is essential to be able to love Him and to serve Him. It is the first step in answering the **universal call to holiness**.

As the Christian life develops, a deeper and more intimate relationship emerges between the individual and the Holy Trinity. As this relationship deepens, new experiences will occur. In any friendship, the longer two people are friends, the stronger and more cherished the friendship becomes. An intimate knowledge develops between the two persons, which is unique to their relationship. This is similar to our relationship between our Lord and us. As we continue to pursue Him, He continues to deepen our hearts and strengthen our wills.

Jesus calls each of us, “not because of their works, but according to His own purpose and grace.” We are made holy by God and in our, “Baptism of faith [we] truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way [we] are really made holy.” Because of this grace, we are made like God—we become an image of the Trinity. In this way, Christ shows us that the way to discipleship is in

Matthew 5:48

CCC 201

Lumen Gentium, V (40.2)

CCC 2013

Novo Millennio Ineunte, 32

Luke 11:1

John 15:4

CCC 2014

Lumen Gentium, 40.1

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

How it's lived

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

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

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

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

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

CCC 2813

1 Corinthians 6:11

CCC 1324

Gaudium et Spes, 24

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

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

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

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SKIT

Characters:

Youth Minister

Core Member

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

SCENARIO:

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

YOUTH MINISTER

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

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

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

CORE MEMBER

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

Excuse me, (youth minister name)

YOUTH MINISTER

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

CORE MEMBER

Yeah, I took your Bible on purpose.

YOUTH MINISTER

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

CORE MEMBER

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

(hands youth minister the wrapped gift)

YOUTH MINISTER

(opening gift)

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

CORE MEMBER

(smiling)

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

YOUTH MINISTER

(surprised and laughing)

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

(Thumbs through it and becomes increasingly upset)

CORE MEMBER

Do you like it?

YOUTH MINISTER

Where did you get this Bible? It seems familiar.

CORE MEMBER

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

YOUTH MINISTER

Uh huh...

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

(Hands the Bible to the Core Member)

CORE MEMBER

(reading very quickly)

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

YOUTH MINISTER

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

CORE MEMBER

(with a large smile)

Um.....Maybe?

YOUTH MINISTER

I can't even believe you!

CORE MEMBER

(sucking up)

It's the thought that counts, right.

YOUTH MINISTER

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

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CHECKLIST

Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

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

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

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

Environment _____

Introductions _____

Unwrapped Game _____

Re-Gifted Skit _____

Eucharistic Adoration _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

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

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

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

Teaching _____

Re-Gifted Skit Characters (2)

Week of the Life Night:

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

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

Create environment and collect needed supplies.

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

Day of the Life Night:

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

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

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

