

# What Is My Vocation?



**Student Edition**



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# What Is My Vocation?



**Student Edition**

## ***Discipleship in Jesus Christ***

*As baptized Catholics, we are all called to be followers of Christ,  
and from this calling we discover the individual path God invites  
us to follow in our lives.*

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## *Vocation Prayer*

*Lord Jesus,  
Make me your disciple,  
With your joy fill me,  
By your love form me,  
In your hope lead me,  
Show me the vocation that you desire for me,  
The path to love and follow you.  
Amen.*

# Called to be Disciples of Jesus Christ



## WHAT IS CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP?

Everyone wants to do something great with their life. We want our lives to be meaningful, to make a difference, perhaps to be heroic. Maybe you want to be great in sports, science, music, or acting. The truth is, God also wants you to be great. He created you to be great and gave you all the gifts and talents you need to become

great. He not only created you to be great, He also created you to become a saint and be with Him in Heaven.

God invites each of us when we are baptized to become followers of Jesus Christ. Someone who follows Jesus Christ is a Christian **disciple**. Being a Christian disciple means forming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by getting to know Him, becoming more like Him, and sharing our faith with others.

Christian **discipleship** is the most important part of being Catholic. When you are baptized as a Catholic Christian, it is the beginning of a life that you will live in friendship with Jesus Christ, learning more about Him and becoming more like Him. We can pretend to be Christians just by saying we are, but to be a true Catholic means to be a real Christian disciple of Jesus Christ.

## HOW CAN I FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST?

The disciples in the Gospel were able to follow Jesus from town to town and listen to His teachings. Today, Jesus is not walking around in our towns but He is still here with us. The only way we can follow Him is if we know how to find Him. We can find Jesus in four main ways: by speaking to Him in daily prayer, by participating in the worship of God at Mass, by receiving the sacraments often, especially the **Eucharist** (Holy Communion) and **Reconciliation** (Confession), and by seeing Him in other people.

Following Jesus is something you can do right now. You can imitate Him in your thoughts, words, and actions. You can imitate Him when you play sports, listen to music, or make friends, as long as you do it the way Jesus would have done it. By doing this, you are already doing great things with your life and growing in holiness.

The first heroes of the Christian faith did not need to say that they were Christians. Everyone knew they were Christians because they lived their lives in a special way. Ask yourself: do people know that I am a Christian disciple by the way I live?

### Christian Disciple:

Someone who follows Jesus Christ by trying to be like Him in everything they do.

**Christian Discipleship:** living as a Christian disciple.



## GO AND CHANGE THE WORLD

A Christian disciple realizes that a living faith is the key to a truly happy life. Living our faith leads to our happiness because it leads us closer to God. If it leads us to God, it can lead others to God as well. This is why our Catholic faith is a treasure to be shared with other people, so that they can be happy too. The twelve **Apostles** were the first to spread Jesus' message throughout the world. Jesus said to them, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19).

Looking out at the world, we can see, as the Apostles did, that there are many people who are unhappy or suffering because they do not know Jesus Christ. In addition to knowing Jesus through prayer and the sacraments and imitating Him in our words and actions, we must also be willing to share our Catholic faith with other people, as the Apostles did. God knows that young people can do good things but we will only be ready for greatness if we practice it now by living as Christian disciples in our own homes, in school, and at play. Jesus is calling you to a special relationship right now and only you can choose to accept it.



*In the name  
of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the  
Holy Spirit*

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. There are over 60 million Catholics and many other Christians living in the United States. What would our country be like if every Christian was serious about being a disciple of Jesus Christ? What would your community be like?
2. What are some ways we can live as true Christian disciples in our everyday lives, trying to live as Jesus taught us, to love God and love neighbor?
3. What are some ways that we can share our Catholic faith with other people? If we meet someone who does not know Jesus Christ, what could we tell them about our experience of being a Christian disciple?

### VOCABULARY

Disciple  
Discipleship  
Eucharist  
Reconciliation  
Apostle

### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- Write about one good thing you can do at home, at school, and at play to live more like a disciple of Christ. How would doing this show others that you want to be like Jesus?
- What do you think is the greatest challenge in trying to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How can you meet this challenge as a Christian disciple?



# Discipleship Prayer

by St. John Gabriel Perboyre, C.M.<sup>1</sup>

*O my Divine Savior*

*Transform me into yourself.*

*May my hands be your hands.*

*May my tongue be your tongue.*

*Grant that every faculty of my body may serve  
only to glorify you.*

*Above all, transform my soul and all of its powers, that  
my memory, my will and my affections, may be the  
memory, the will and affections of you.*

*I pray you to destroy in me all that is not of you.*

*Grant that I may live but in you, and by you, and for  
you, and that I may truly say with St. Paul,*

*“I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me.”*

*Amen.*



# God Calls Us to a Specific Vocation in Life

## A VOCATION IS A CALL FROM GOD

God created each one of us for a specific purpose, and gave each one of us a mission to fulfill in our lives, just like He gave His Son. He has a plan for us to be happy, known as a **vocation**, and if we follow this plan, it will lead us to be saints with Him in Heaven.

Our vocation is an invitation from God to follow the best path for our lives, the one that will lead us to true happiness on Earth and to become saints in Heaven. But how does God know what is best for us, what will make us happy, especially if we are not even sure of that ourselves?

God is the one who created us. Long before you were born, when He created the world, He knew you. One of the psalms in the Bible says:

*You wove me together in my mother's womb; I praise you, for I have been sketched wonderfully – awesome are your works! Even my soul you deeply know, and my frame was not hidden from you, I who was made in secret, who was skillfully made...my days were lined out before one of them ever was. How precious are your plans for me, O God, how great their beginnings!* Psalm 139:13-15, 16-17

When God created you, He knew your name, what color your eyes would be, and whether you would be short, quick, smart, funny, or shy. He knew what would make you happy, what would make you holy, and what part you would play in the history of the world. After all, He designed you to be just the way you are, and He did it for a reason.

God does not think of our vocation randomly. The vocation we are called to best fits how God made us. He considers not only what will make us happy, but also how we can improve the world around us. God sets apart a special mission just for you, and only you can fulfill your vocation. No one else is capable of completing the plan God designed especially for you.

It is important to remember that God will not force you to do anything. A vocation is not a set of orders; it is an invitation, a suggestion God makes and hopes that you will respond to it. This invitation from God will include a specific way of life that will make you the most happy: either a single life, a married life, a religious life, or a priestly life. We cannot invite ourselves to a specific way of life. It is God who invites, and it is up to us to respond.

Because our vocation is the way to our greatest joy and deepest fulfillment in life, God wants us to know what this plan is. If you ask Him, He will help you discover it when He knows you are ready.

*Vocation:  
A plan that God invites us to live that will lead to our happiness on Earth and eternal life with Him in Heaven.*



*God makes each person for a specific vocation*

## GOD CALLS EACH PERSON DIFFERENTLY

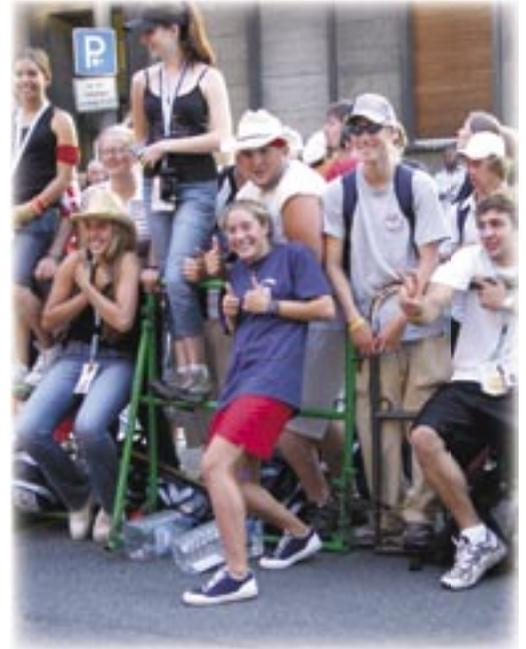
God is always with us. He is always there to guide us in our lives, even when we do not realize it. He calls to us throughout our lives. We must listen intensely, with our hearts, and pay attention to what He could be trying to tell us. God's call is like a constant whisper, trying to get our attention and guide us to the kind of life He is calling us. He might speak to us in prayer, or through our experiences and desires, or He may choose to speak to us through other people like our parents, a priest, a teacher, or a friend.

God calls each of us in a different way and at a different time in our lives. Some people know what God is calling them to do when they are still very young. There are priests who knew they were meant to be priests from the time they were in the first or second grade. For other people, the understanding of their calling may be slower and take a long time. It may come as a growing awareness of the plan God has for them. Other times a calling may become clear in a sudden moment, as if you had your hands over your ears and then removed them to discover a call that was there all along. Each one of us will hear our call to a vocation in life in a unique way. It's a matter of listening, of paying attention to what God is asking you to do with your life.

Married people often have similar experiences. Many people describe realizing their vocation to marriage at a very young age. Many young people first hear God calling them to be parents while caring for their younger sisters and brothers or babysitting other children. Throughout our life experiences, the voice of the Lord whispers in our ear to give us a growing awareness of the vocation He created for us.

Your parents, teachers, priests, or other people who know how to hear God's voice are good people to talk to about your vocation, especially if they are already living their own vocation.

## God's Call:



*Different times  
Different ways  
for  
Different people*

**Religious  
Vocation**

**Married  
Vocation**

**Single  
Vocation**

**Priestly  
Vocation**

## HEARING THE CALL

To hear God speak to us, we need to learn to be silent and listen. The prophet Elijah was told by the Lord to wait on a mountain, for the Lord would come and speak to him.

*A great and strong wind rent the mountains,  
and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but  
the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an  
earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and  
after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire;  
and after the fire a still small voice. (1 Kings 19:11)*

The voice of the Lord was in the tiny whisper. That is why we must give God the opportunity to speak to us in the silence of our souls.



## HOW WILL YOU RECOGNIZE GOD'S CALL?

When the time comes, you will know that your vocation is the right one because it will fit who you are; it will complete your life, fill you with joy, and match your gifts and abilities. That does not mean that it will be the easiest path, or that it will be the one that you always thought you would take. God often surprises us, and His plans are not necessarily the ones we had in mind, but the day He taps you on the shoulder and points the way, you will know it, and you will have to make a choice.

Once you understand where God is calling you, you must ACT. You cannot hesitate because you are waiting for a better time, or because you are afraid. Have faith, believe that God will guide you down the right path, open your heart to Him and do not be afraid to say "Yes" to God's invitation.

*"Each Christian vocation comes from God and is God's gift... whose purpose is to build up the Church and to increase the kingdom of God in the world."*

—Pope John Paul II<sup>2</sup>

### VOCABULARY

Vocation

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Consider this passage from the Gospel: Mark (10:17-27). Why did the young man come to Jesus? Was Jesus inviting him to something? How did the young man respond? Why did he respond this way and how did he feel afterwards?
2. What are some different kinds of callings that a person could have in life? Think of someone you know who is doing something good with their life.
3. Why would you want to know your vocation in life? Why would you want to fulfill it? Are there any reasons that you would not want to know or fulfill it? If you do not follow God's plan for you, whose plan will you follow?



### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- How does the following scripture passage from Isaiah (43:1) make you feel about your own relationship with God and your own vocation in life? "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine."
- What are some distractions in your daily life that make it harder to listen to God? What can we do to set aside these distractions and spend time focused on God?

## Vocation:

*A plan that God invites us to live that will lead to our happiness on Earth and eternal life with Him in Heaven.*

Sr. Margarita Ramirez is a sister of the religious order called the Oblates of Jesus the Priest. When she was young, she used to walk past the church everyday on her way home from school. One day, she felt she wanted to visit Jesus, who she knew was in the tabernacle in the form of the Blessed Sacrament (Holy Communion). Even though she only stopped a moment, she knew that Jesus was waiting there for her, and she spoke to Him in prayer for a while. She decided to stop and visit Him more often. She spoke to Him in prayer like she would speak with any other friend: talking to the Lord, then taking time to listen. One day when she was 15 years old, she realized Jesus was asking her, Margarita, to spend the rest of her life with Him. She was surprised, but at the same time it seemed to make sense. She felt a great joy and realized at that moment that God was calling her to be a religious sister. At first, her family would not let her do it, and even tried to keep her from becoming a religious sister. After a while, they noticed that all she really wanted was to follow Jesus as a religious sister. Eventually she was able to follow her vocation, and Sr. Margarita has been full of joy living as a religious sister ever since. Have you ever visited Jesus in the tabernacle? Do you ever speak to Him in prayer?

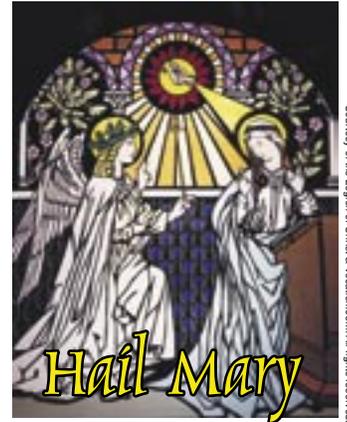


*Sister Margarita  
of the Oblates of  
Jesus the Priest*

# Discovering a Vocation

## JESUS HELPS US DISCOVER OUR VOCATION

It is Jesus Christ who “brings to light (our) exalted vocation”. What allows a Christian disciple to hear and understand their God-given vocation is a lived relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with you, to be your friend by listening and talking to you. The three main ways Christ speaks to us are through daily personal prayer, through the Church, and through the people and experiences in our daily lives. These things strengthen our relationship with Jesus and make it easier to hear His voice and discover our vocation.



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## WHY DOESN'T GOD JUST TELL US DIRECTLY?

Mary had a special vocation to be the Mother of God, and so God sent an angel to call her to this vocation. However, God does not usually send angels to call us. Instead, he uses other ways to speak to us. He speaks to us when we pray, especially when we pray in silence or in Church. He speaks when we receive the Sacraments, especially during Mass and Confession. We hear him when we serve others, whether it is our family, friends, grandparents or those who are sick or poor.

Luke 1:26-38

God calls us to live our vocation but He does not force us to follow it. He wants us to choose our vocation freely. For example, if your mom comes to your room and says, “Do you want to come and help me with the dishes?” you would feel like you had to say yes whether you like it or not. You are not really free to choose, because you feel like you have to obey, even if you hate doing the dishes. However, if you walked past the sink full of dirty dishes, you might freely choose to help your mom wash them. Even if you do not like doing dishes, you would feel good because you chose to do something good on your own. Your mom would be grateful because she would know that you did it because you love her, not because you had to. In the same way, God wants us to freely choose to follow a vocation because we love him, not because we have to do it.



Prayer is a conversation with Christ

## PRAYER: GOD SPEAKS TO US AND WE SPEAK TO HIM

Prayer is a two-way communication with God. It should be a real friendship where we talk to God throughout the day, especially in the morning when we rise, before meals, and when we go to bed. Sometimes we forget to pray except when there is a crisis or when something wonderful happens and we want to thank God. Other times people fall into the trap of telling God what they think He wants to hear.

## Monologue



## Dialogue



When you pray, it is not so important to say big words like “Omnipotent God.” Just like any friendly conversation, say what is in your heart. God knows us better than we know ourselves, so we must be honest and sincere when we pray. Tell him your troubles and desires, thank and praise Him for who He is and what He has given you, and tell Him about the different things that happened in your day. Pray about what is truly important to you. This way of praying invites God to be part of the important concerns of your life.

Like a conversation with a friend, we need to have a dialogue with God, not a one-way conversation when we pray. It is important to listen for God’s response if we want Him to guide us along the right path.

However, it is not as easy as talking on the telephone to hear the voice of God. In time, as we sit with God for moments of silence, we can begin to notice God’s presence, to sense God’s guidance at some times more specifically than others. It can be a clear thought that pops into your head and makes you realize what you are supposed to do. Sometimes it is more like a hint of what would be good for you to do. Many times it seems like your own thoughts, but it may be God talking to you through your conscience. However, even if we do not get immediate answers to our prayers, the important thing is to spend time with God and have a close friendship with Him because He is the source of our vocation. Jesus taught us that “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).



**You have  
12 new e-mails...**

## OTHER WAYS OF COMMUNICATION

Since God wants to show us our vocation in a way that will bring us closer to Him, He uses many different ways to get the message across. We have to be aware of these ways so that we can hear God’s messages. Otherwise, it will be much more difficult to know what He is trying to tell us.

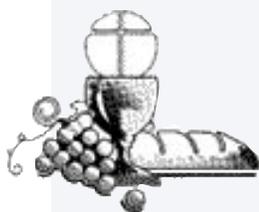
In the Gospel, Jesus tells us how to pray: “Go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:6). He is not telling us to hide, but He knows that when we are quiet and not worrying about what everyone else thinks, we can hear what God is trying to say to us.

# How does God communicate?

**The Pope, Bishops, Priests, and Religious** – The Church, especially through the Pope, continues to guide God’s people on earth. When the Pope speaks about our faith and morality, it is Jesus speaking through him. Jesus promised this to Peter, our first Pope, when he said “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” (Luke 10:16). God also guides us in our local diocese under the guidance of the bishop and in our parish communities, looked after by our parish priests and religious sisters and brothers, and lay ministers. They are there to teach us and give us advice on how to grow in our relationship with Jesus.



**The Sacraments** – The sacraments are visible signs that God is present among us. They give us the graces we need to live our discipleship. They change us in visible and invisible ways. One example of a radical change brought about through the sacraments is the life of Charles de Foucauld, who was from a rich family and lived a wild life. He fell into serious sin and did not go to church for ten years. One day he went up to a priest who was in the confessional and said, “Come out, I want to talk to you about a problem.” The priest responded “No, come in; I want to talk to you about your sins.”<sup>3</sup> Charles went to Confession and immediately after his confession he was shocked to feel God in him in a powerful new way. He felt the joy of finding Christ, changed his life, gave away his wealth, became a priest and moved to Africa to teach the people in the desert about Jesus. In this example, we see clearly how honest and frequent reception of the Sacraments deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ.



**The Bible** – “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.” (1 Thes 2:13). The words of the Bible were inspired by God and given to us through its authors. Since the words come from God, no matter how many years pass, they will continue to speak to all people and give them inspiration, guidance and consolation. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are especially important, because they will help you learn more about Jesus and what He taught so that you can grow even closer to Him.



**People in our lives** – God places people in our lives to help us. Our parents, teachers, priests, friends and neighbors can inspire us to live better lives, and if they have a good relationship with God, they can help us become closer to Him. Often trustworthy family members and friends have the ability to see God working in ways that you may not have noticed before. It helps to speak to them about how God might be calling you.

The Old Testament tells us that when the prophet Samuel was a young man, he heard a voice call his name while he was asleep, but he did not know who it was. Samuel ran to Eli the priest, who was in the next room, and said, “Here I am.” Eli said, “I did not call you, go back to sleep.” Three times this happened. Finally, Eli said, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” (1 Sam 3:10). When Samuel did this, he discovered that it was God calling out to him with a special message.

**Helping others** – When we help others, we share in the love that God has for all people. This is also a very powerful way that God speaks to us. Someone who helps the sick may discover that God is asking them to be a doctor or nurse, and someone who teaches others about Jesus may discover that they can serve God as a missionary. If you enjoy helping in the parish, maybe God is calling you to work in parish ministry. Serving others out of love for God prevents us from becoming selfish and opens our hearts to God’s plan for our lives.



**Joy and Suffering** – God is always with us, even in the most ordinary days of the week. When something great happens, we are more likely to remember that God has given us a gift, and we thank him. However, God also works in us during times of difficulty and suffering, to help us grow and become better. The times when we are hurt or ill, when we are disappointed, or even when we lose someone we love can be opportunities to grow closer to God and to open our hearts to His will. There are many things that are out of our control, and only by trusting in God can we survive the most difficult times.

### **LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!**

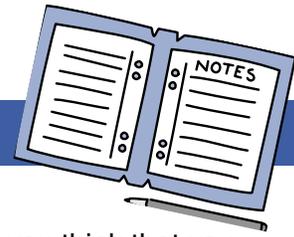
1. What are some moments or places that we can pray?  
How does prayer help us to hear God speak to us?
2. Who are some people we can talk to about our vocations?  
When can we speak to them?
3. Are there things that have happened to you that have helped you to see how God is working in your life?



Courtesy of The Institute of Jesuit Sources

**St. Ignatius of Loyola** was once a young soldier, who was full of pride and had no time for God. During a battle, a cannon ball shattered his leg and he had to spend a long time in bed recovering. To pass the time, he read the only books that were available: *The Life of Christ* and *The Lives of the Saints*. In his suffering, Ignatius became less concerned with the things of the world that had previously filled his mind. He became more open to God, and heard the voice of the Lord calling him in a way he had not recognized before. With the courageous examples of the saints to inspire him, Ignatius turned his life over to God, became a priest, and founded a group of religious priests and brothers called the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits.

## Write about it!



### Journal options:

- When do you pray? How do you pray? How much time do you think that you should listen, and how much time should you talk so that your prayer is a dialogue with God? Write 3-5 things that you can do to pray better and hear God better.
- Write your own personal vocation prayer (3-6 lines) asking God to help you discover your vocation.



## Prayer for Guidance

by St. Teresa of Avila<sup>4</sup>

*Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by you, always follow your plans, and perfectly accomplish your holy will.*

*Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of my life, I may do whatever you require of me.*

*Help me respond to the slightest prompting of your grace so that I may be your trustworthy instrument for your honor.*

*May your will be done in time and in eternity by me, in me and through me.*

*Amen.*

---

The Bible says, “The Lord searches all hearts and understands all the mind’s thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let Himself be found by you” (1 Chr 28:9). God wants you to find Him. Be honest with Him. Have patience. If you look for Him with trust and sincerity you will find Him.

---

# The Vocation to Single Life



## CALLED TO DO GREAT THINGS

Now that you know what a vocation is, as well as what you can do to discover yours, we can begin to discuss the different kinds of vocations. Every person has a unique path; however, we can group vocations into four major categories: **single life**, married life, priestly life, and religious life.

There is one vocation that we all live at some point in our lives, even if it is only for a short time while we prepare for another vocation. This is the single life. This way of life, whether temporary or lasting one's whole life, is much more than just waiting for something to happen. Single people are called by God to do great things and to become saints.

You too  
can be  
a saint!

## THE SINGLE VOCATION: PREPARED FOR GOD'S CALL

A vocation is something that you choose because you have found your greatest joy living in that certain way. In marriage, the priesthood, or the religious life, a person promises before God to live a certain way for the rest of their lives.

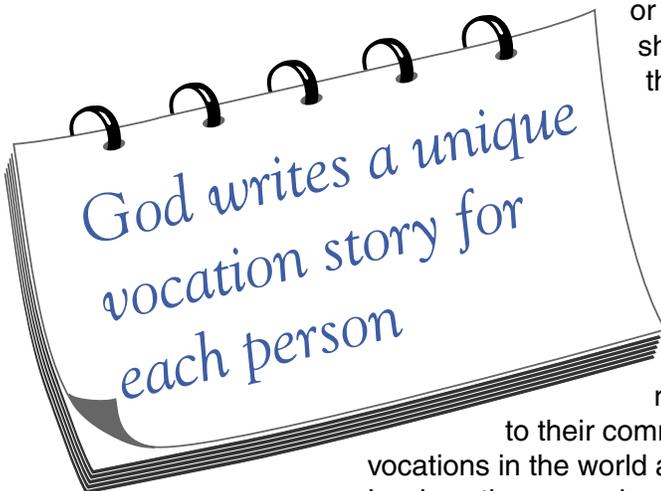
Single life is different because it can be either a stage of life that a person will live until God calls them to another vocation, or a permanent vocation for those who will remain single their whole lives. Some people choose to remain single because of the desire to serve others in the world.

Since everyone is single for at least some part of their lives, our time as a single person should be spent preparing ourselves for what God might ask of us in the future.

Men and women who are called to be married should focus their single lives on forming themselves to become a good spouse for someone. Those who are called to the priesthood or the religious life can prepare themselves by shaping their lifestyle to prepare themselves for their vocation.

Those people who are called to be single for their entire lives must also be prepared to do God's will. Single people have a special freedom to serve God and others while they are single. Other vocations do not have the same special freedom. Married people are committed to taking care of a family, priests are responsible for serving the Church, and religious brothers and sisters have obligations

to their communities. Single men and women live out their vocations in the world and have a unique opportunity to serve the Lord anytime, anywhere and with their whole hearts. They are like a special task force that can be sent wherever God needs them.



**Question:**  
How did Jesus show his unselfish love?

**Answer:**  
Jesus showed unselfishness by giving everything He had to other people: He gave time when He listened and talked with people, He gave cures to sick people, He gave teachings to people who did not know about God, and even when He was tired Jesus did not stop serving others.

## SELFISH VS. UNSELFISH

While a person remains single, they have the opportunity to offer more of their talents and time in generous service to others just like Jesus did. If a single person does not make the effort to serve others, they can be tempted to serve only themselves and use their talents selfishly.

By being unselfish we grow in our ability to love and be loved. Being selfish, on the other hand, limits our ability to love and our ability to be loved. Selfishness makes us shallow of heart, and can make us feel isolated. Single people should find ways that they can serve others so they do not become selfish. Some of the ways a person's talents and time may be shared are:

**Professionally** in the workplace or at school, by acting honestly, fairly, and generously

**Personally** by offering sincere friendship to others or being a good role model for nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters

**Spiritually** by going to Church every Sunday and praying daily for others

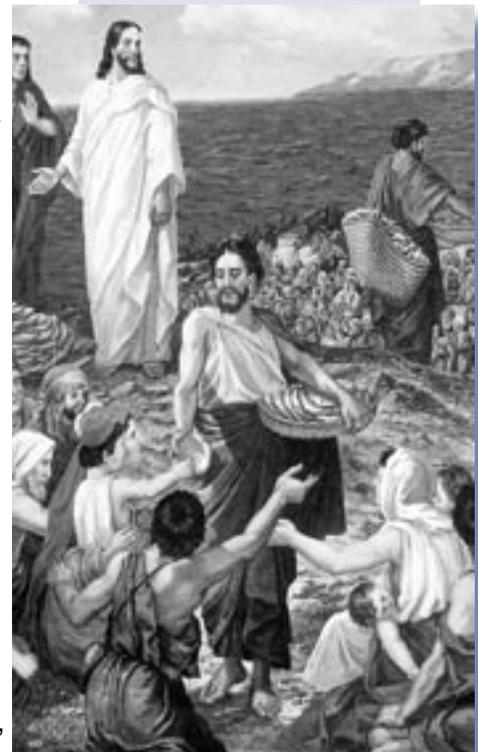
**Apostolically** by giving time working for the Church as the Apostles did, visiting the sick and teaching about the Faith

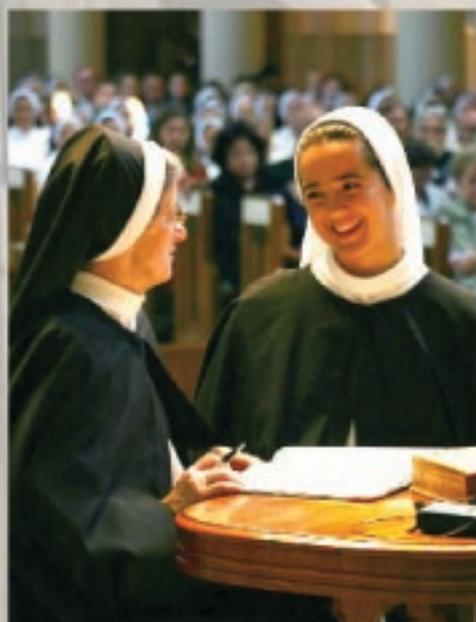
**Materially** by helping the poor and needy and not becoming too concerned about material things

## A SPECIAL MISSION IN THE CHURCH

Being part of a family teaches us how to love others. A single person may appear to be alone, "but no one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family to everyone."<sup>5</sup> In the Church, a person can find many ways to serve this community. Priests, religious, married people, and single people can all help in the parish, in various professional and voluntary positions including:

- Religious Education Teachers who teach children about the Catholic faith
- Pastoral Associates who help organize the liturgy, church music, caring for the sick, supporting the poor, instructing new adult Catholics (RCIA), etc.
- Catholic School Teachers who teach faith and knowledge to the next generation of young Catholics
- Volunteers who work in soup kitchens, homeless shelters, young adult groups, choirs, and evangelization missions

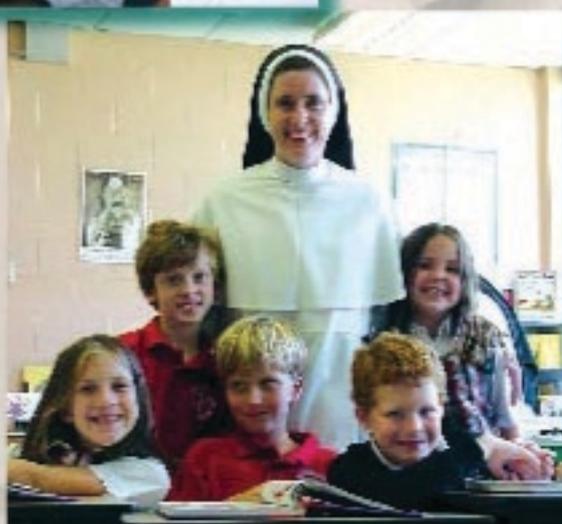




# What Is My Vocation?



Teacher Edition





# What Is My Vocation?



Teacher Edition

## Discipleship in Jesus Christ

As baptized Catholics, we are all called to be followers of Christ, and from this calling we discover the individual path God invites us to follow in our lives.

**Nihil Obstat:** Reverend William H. Woestman, O.M.I., J.C.D.  
Censor Deputatus  
October 14, 2005

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Vicar General  
Archdiocese of Chicago  
October 17, 2005

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# Vocation Curriculum Preparation

## Items to Prepare Before You Begin Teaching this Curriculum

- **Student Vocation Journals**

As part of the curriculum, students are to keep a journal. Students can use a spiral notebook or create a journal by binding 20-30 sheets of plain paper together, with a creatively drawn colored paper cover. Student Journals should be created beforehand (perhaps as an art project) so as not take class time away from the presentation of lesson material. Students should have their journals prepared and ready to use prior to beginning the curriculum.

- **Schedule Speakers: Priest, Seminarian, and Religious Sister**

Speakers are an important part of this curriculum. It is recommended to schedule the speakers before beginning the curriculum. To facilitate your planning, the speakers correspond to the lessons as follows: Priest in Unit II, Lesson 3; Seminarian in Unit II, Lesson 5; Religious Sister in Unit III, Lesson 4. For help in scheduling or more information on this key element of the curriculum, refer to page \_\_\_.

- **Obtain Free Vocation Publications**

Some of the activities in Units II and III require vocation publications that you may obtain for free upon request. Ordering these free publications is strongly recommended. In addition to being a good source of information for the students, they are also a good source of information and visual aids for teachers. Please note for your planning that these publications take about 2 weeks to arrive. Ordering information can be found on page \_\_\_.

- **Research Online Vocation Resources**

This vocation curriculum has a corresponding web site, [www.WhatIsMyVocation.com](http://www.WhatIsMyVocation.com), which features many resources that a teacher would find helpful. This is particularly important for teachers who are unable to find a priest, seminarian, or religious sister to speak to the students. The web site will feature suitable substitutes for this key element of the curriculum. Some resources that can be used in this regard are listed on the following page. Other helpful web sites with information and testimonies are listed in the lessons where they can be used.

# Vocation Curriculum Preparation

## Ordering Free Publications and Other Resources

### • Information for Ordering Free Vocation Publications

The following is a list of free vocation publications that are useful resources for teaching about vocations. Keep in mind that many of them take several weeks to arrive, so they are best ordered before beginning the curriculum.

1) **VISION Vocation Guide** is useful for many of the Optional Activities in Unit III. It is published annually by TrueQuest Communications on behalf of the National Religious Vocation Conference. Teachers can order free Vision magazines from their web site [www.visionguide.info](http://www.visionguide.info) or by calling the toll free number (800)-942-2811.

2) **A Guide to Religious Ministries** is published by The Catholic News Publishing Company and can be ordered on line at [www.religiousministries.com](http://www.religiousministries.com) or by contacting them directly using the information on the right.

A Guide to Religious Ministries  
210 North Avenue  
New Rochelle, NY 10801  
914-632-1220  
[info@religiousministries.com](mailto:info@religiousministries.com)

3) **The CMSWR Vocations Directory** is published by the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious. You can order it by calling 202-832-2575 or by mail or e-mail using the information on the right.

CMSWR  
P.O. Box 4467  
Washington, D.C. 2001-0467  
[vocations@cmswr.org](mailto:vocations@cmswr.org)

4) **¡OYE! Magazine** is a Spanish-language vocation magazine published by Claretian Publications that reaches out to the Hispanic community. It can be ordered online at [www.oyemagazine.org](http://www.oyemagazine.org) or by using the information on the right.

¡OYE! Magazine  
205 West Monroe Street.,  
Chicago, Illinois 60606.  
1-800-328-6515

### • Vocation DVD's

The following DVD's are very good resources for teaching vocations, but are especially useful for those teachers who are unable to find speakers to visit the classroom for Unit II Lessons 3 and 4 and for Unit III Lesson 4:

1) **Fishers of Men** is a 18-minute DVD that was produced by Secretariat for Vocations & Priestly Formation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It includes various testimonies from priests and seminarians. The cost of the DVD is \$3.30 (plus \$5.50 shipping and handling) and can be ordered online through <http://www.usccb.org/vocations/> or by contacting them using the information on the right.

TV Access  
641 North Avenue  
Glendale Heights, IL 60139  
Phone: 1-800-944-9134  
E-mail: [orders@tvaccess.com](mailto:orders@tvaccess.com)

2) **You Could Make a Difference** is a 17-minute DVD distributed by the USCCB featuring the stories of two priests and three sisters. For more information on this DVD see the page on the USCCB web site: <http://www.usccb.org/vocations/makeadifference/index.shtml> USCCB Communications Department. The cost of the DVD is \$10.00 and it can be ordered by printing and filling out an order form available online and mailing it to the address on the right.

USCCB Communications  
Department  
Vocations Video  
3211 4th St., NE  
Washington, DC 20017-1194

3) **Other Resources.** The National Coalition for Church Vocations (NCCV) web site ([www.nccv-vocations.org](http://www.nccv-vocations.org)) has a variety of vocation resources available. The Knights of Columbus also offer three dvd's on the vocations of marriage, the priesthood, and the religious life. The cost is \$3 to cover shipping and handling. Contact information is on the right.

Knights of Columbus  
Department of Fraternal  
Services  
1 Columbus Plaza  
New Haven, CT 06510-3326

## Introduction:

All baptized Christians are called to know, love and serve God; to be disciples of Jesus Christ. This vocation curriculum can help you teach your students about our common vocation of discipleship. From this universal call to holiness and discipleship spring all other specific vocations. Although this curriculum has an intentional focus on the vocations of priesthood and religious life, it also includes material on the vocations of marriage and single life.

As with all curriculums, we rely on the artistry of the teacher in presenting the material to achieve the proposed objectives. May the Holy Spirit work through your teaching so that many vocations to priesthood and religious life are awakened, and all your students are drawn closer to the Lord as Christian disciples.

## OVERVIEW

**Unit I** defines and explains what a vocation is: beginning with the universal call to live as Christian disciples, then explaining God's personal, unique call for each one of us and discussing how we can discover God's call. Unit I then discusses the vocations of single life and marriage.

**Unit II** focuses on the vocation of the priesthood and the process of preparation for priesthood in the seminary. As part of this unit, the class hosts two speakers: a priest and a seminarian.

**Unit III** focuses on the vocation to the religious life and the process by which a person joins a religious community. As part of this unit, the class hosts a religious sister.

## LESSON FORMAT

**Title:** the theme for the day

**Vocation Prayer:** a prayer recited by the class every day

**Objective:** what students will learn in the lesson

**Introduction:** sets up the material for the day

**Lesson Development:** the body of the lecture material

**Discussion:** allows the teacher to interact with students and to encourage involvement with and response to the material. Discussion Questions are provided at the end of the Lesson in the **Let's Talk About It!** section.

**Summary:** reviews the main ideas of the lesson

**Homework:** consists of daily journal entries and other assignments found in the **Let's Write About It!** section.

**Teacher Notes/Supplemental Material:** additional information or suggestions for the teacher.

## KEY ELEMENTS

These five Key Elements constitute the heart of this Vocation Curriculum:

- 1) Prayer: daily Vocation Prayer (and optional Weekly Prayer Service)
- 2) Lesson Material presented by Teacher
- 3) Teacher -Student Discussions with activities
- 4) Student Journals
- 5) Speakers: Priest, Seminarian and Religious Sister

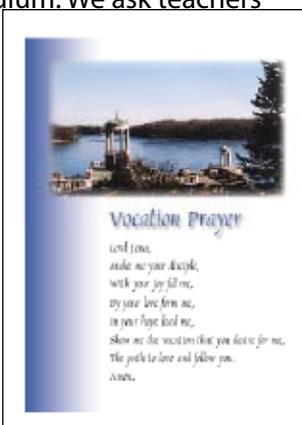
The following are descriptions of each Key Element:

### 1) PRAYER

Prayer is communication with God. Without it no one can grow in their spiritual life or in the joy of Christian discipleship. Students need to be encouraged to pray for God's guidance in discovering their specific vocation to marriage, single life, priesthood, or religious life.

Prayer is a key part of this curriculum. We ask teachers to begin every day with a class recitation of the following Vocation Prayer:

Lord Jesus,  
Make me your disciple,  
With your joy fill me,  
By your love form me,  
In your hope lead me,  
Show me the vocation that you  
desire for me,  
The path to love and follow you.  
Amen.



A full-page version of the Vocation Prayer is provided in both this edition and the Student Edition.

The optional activity **Adopt a Seminarian/Adopt a Sister** includes a prayer service. This may be prayed at regular intervals during the course of the curriculum and periodically after the Vocation Curriculum is completed.

### 2) LESSON MATERIAL

Each lesson includes an ample amount of material. The Teacher and Student editions are designed to help the teacher present the material creatively and effectively, while offering several options and resources for doing so.

The Teacher Edition features suggested questions, comments, and explanations alongside the lesson material that can be used as an aid in presenting the material. These are simply suggestions that the teacher may opt to use.

Although the Curriculum is divided into fifteen lessons, teachers may decide to extend the curriculum over more than fifteen class periods. Teachers may choose to explore the lesson material in greater depth, or to incorporate activities and resources that will further illustrate the material in the curriculum.

However, because of the amount of material in each

lesson, if the class is frequently sidetracked or dwells too long on particular areas, there is a risk that some of the material will be sacrificed or that the curriculum will lose its focus. As an aid to teachers with time constraints, each lesson includes an optional time line. These time lines can be used or adjusted at the teacher's discretion.

### 3) TEACHER-STUDENT DISCUSSIONS

This curriculum is designed to give the students substance in the form of the lesson material presented, then to engage them in discussions about it. For this purpose, there are two or three discussion questions at the end of each lesson which serve as both a valuable review of the material and a starting point for the class discussion. These are found in the *Let's Talk About It!* section of the lesson.

Classes that have used this curriculum in the past have shown that this discussion approach works very well, to the surprise and delight of many teachers. The discussions give the students an opportunity to explore and express their thoughts on the material, making it more concrete and personal, and less abstract.

Teachers are asked to be open to the students' attitudes on the priesthood and religious life. While never condoning disruptive, disrespectful behavior or comments, teachers are encouraged to help elicit a free sharing of the opinions and thoughts of the class. Otherwise, discussions may become limited to what that students feel the teacher wants to hear. Students should not feel like the teacher will think badly of them for sharing an opinion that is not held by the teacher. However, teachers should challenge in a positive way any ideas or opinions that are contrary to the teachings of the Church. The teacher's artistry in facilitating these discussions will help open the minds and hearts of their students to discovering their unique vocation, and give them tools to speak about their faith.

### 4) STUDENT VOCATION JOURNALS

Students will be asked to write short reflections to journal questions in almost every lesson. Journal questions are listed at the end of each lesson in the *Let's Write about It!* section. The Vocation Journals help students further reflect on the lesson material and apply it to their own lives. Journaling allows the students more time to form their thoughts, and provides an outlet for the students who may not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts openly with their peers. The Vocation Journals preserve the students' thoughts, opinions and feelings.

Due to the personal nature of the journals, we recommend that the students not be graded based on the subjective expressions of their own vocation, nor on the quality or content of the student's writing, but rather on the basis of honest completion of the assignment, so that the students' personal reflections are not compromised. The teacher may inform the class that the journals will be graded only on each student's earnest and respectful attempt to complete the assignments. Students will then be free from the pressure of trying to get the "right answer" in order to please the teacher.

### 5) SPEAKERS

Speakers are an important part of this curriculum. Teachers are asked to schedule a priest, a seminarian and a religious sister to speak to the class during the course of this curriculum. In meeting and hearing from an actual priest or religious sister, students are better able to visualize what it means to pursue these ways of life in a way that personal testimony uniquely offers.

The speakers are positioned to effectively follow the lessons introducing the priesthood, the seminary and the religious life. This gives the teacher and class the opportunity to ask the speaker any questions which may have arisen in the previous class discussions. The personal witness of the speaker can help bring to life the topics and material previously covered.

We recommend requesting local parish priests and religious sisters from your school, parish or community, to speak to your class. The ongoing presence of a familiar priest or religious sister is often a catalyst for future vocational reflection and consideration. Students will be reminded of the speaker's personal witness when they encounter them. Finally, a local priest or sister are readily accessible to students who may wish to initiate a conversation about their potential vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Seminarians that may already be assigned to your parish can be easily requested as speakers. If no seminarians are available in your parish, please contact your diocesan Vocation Director to help schedule seminarian speakers. The Vocation Director and Vocation Office may also be able to assist in locating priests and religious sisters for you to schedule as well.

Outlines for each speaker's presentation as well as a list of *Frequently Asked Questions* are available for each visit, on pages \_\_, \_\_, and \_\_.

### 6) ASSESSMENT

Student grades are based on completion of the journals, participation in discussions, and optional homework. Additionally, teachers may choose to assign homework or give quizzes based on the vocabulary in each lesson, but we ask that these assignments not take away from the time required to teach the lesson material.

## Vocation Prayer

The *Vocation Prayer* is an important part of this curriculum. It invites Jesus Christ to be at the center of the vocation process, speaking to the students' souls just as the lesson material speaks to their minds.

Take a moment to introduce the *Vocation Prayer* to the class.

Each class period should begin with the recitation of the *Vocation Prayer*. If space and circumstance allow, ask students to stand for the prayer. Also, if possible, have the students face a crucifix, or other image of Jesus.

Begin and end the *Vocation Prayer* with the Sign of the Cross.



## Vocation Prayer

*Lord Jesus,  
Make me your disciple,  
with your joy fill me,  
By your love form me,  
In your hope lead me,  
Show me the vocation that you desire for me,  
The path to love and follow you.  
Amen.*

### Optional Discussion:

Take the time to make sure the students understand what the prayer says. If necessary, engage the students in a short discussion (no more than five minutes) on the first day to explain the prayer and field any questions they have.

You may choose to take up this discussion after Unit I Lesson 2, which introduces and defines the term "vocation."



# Unit One Planner

Lesson	Title	Special Preparations / Materials Needed	Major Concepts	Teaching Steps	Extra Resources/ Activities
1	Called to be Disciples of Jesus Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Bible (optional)</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christian Discipleship</li> <li>• How do we follow Jesus?</li> <li>• How do I share Jesus with others?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question Board</li> <li>• Class Resolution</li> <li>• Sharing the Faith</li> <li>• Discipleship Box</li> </ul>
2	God Calls Us to a Specific Vocation in Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Bible (optional)</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define vocation</li> <li>• Individual vocation</li> <li>• God reveals our vocation to us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit Jesus in the Tabernacle</li> <li>• Talents, Gifts, and Aspirations</li> <li>• Common Vocation and Specific Vocation</li> </ul>
3	Discovering a Vocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Bible (optional)</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovering a Vocation</li> <li>• Prayer as Dialogue</li> <li>• Ways God communicates with us.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Stories from the Bible</li> <li>• Prayer Activities</li> <li>• Pope, Bishops, Priests, and Religious</li> <li>• The Sacraments</li> <li>• Bible Resources</li> </ul>
4	The Vocation to Single Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Bible (optional)</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the vocation to the single life</li> <li>• Selfish vs. unselfish</li> <li>• Serving the Church</li> <li>• Chastity and Modesty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becoming a Good Spouse</li> <li>• Additional discussion material</li> <li>• Interview a single person</li> <li>• Lay Organizations</li> <li>• People who work in the parish</li> </ul>
5	The Vocation of Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Bible (optional)</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The vocation of marriage</li> <li>• A visible sign of God's love</li> <li>• Sacrament, sacred bond</li> <li>• The Domestic Church</li> <li>• Deacons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulletin Board Ideas</li> <li>• Additional discussion material: Marriage Vows</li> <li>• Additional journal options</li> <li>• Interview a Deacon.</li> </ul>

# Lesson Planner

## Unit One : Lesson One

### Overview:

This lesson introduces one of the central themes of the book: Christian discipleship (i.e. following Jesus Christ) as the common calling of all baptized Christians. This discipleship is lived out in our every day lives.

This concept is central to understanding the concepts presented in later lessons and to the understanding of what a vocation is.

### Objectives:

- To define the terms “disciple” and “discipleship”
- To understand that every baptized Christian is called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- To understand that we follow Jesus by means of prayer and the sacraments, and by imitating Him in our lives.
- To understand that as Christian disciples, we must share our faith with others.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	2
• Introduction	2
• Section 1: What is Christian Discipleship?	5
• Section 2 : How can I follow Jesus Christ?	5
• Section 3 : Go and Change the World	5
• Discussion: Let’s Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Vocabulary:

Teacher’s Note : The vocabulary list consists of words that may be unfamiliar to some of the students, but that they should all be familiar with by the end of the lesson. Definitions can be found in the lesson material, and in the Glossary.

Disciple  
Discipleship  
Eucharist  
Reconciliation  
Apostle

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Vocation Journals  
**IMPORTANT :** these journals should be prepared prior to the first lesson. See page \_ for instructions.
- Bible (optional)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)

### Extra Material for Teachers

Below is a bullet-point summary of the material at the end of the lesson

### Notes:

- See page \_\_
- Catholic students, non-practicing Catholic Students, and non-Catholic students.

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- 1 Bible passage
  - 4 passages from the CCC\*
  - 1 passage from Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*.

### Optional activities:

- See page \_\_
- Question Board
  - Class Resolution
  - Sharing the Faith
  - Discipleship Box
  - Bulletin Board Ideas

\* CCC is the standard abbreviation for the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is usually followed by the number of the paragraph to which the citation refers. For example: (CCC 167) means a quote is from paragraph 167 of the CCC.

# Called to be Disciples of Jesus Christ

Unit One: Lesson One



## WHAT IS CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP?

Everyone wants to do something great with their life. We want our lives to be meaningful, to make a difference, perhaps to be heroic. Maybe you want to be great in sports, science, music, or acting. The truth is, God also wants you to be great. He created you to be great and gave you all the gifts and talents you need to become

great. He not only created you to be great, He also created you to become a saint and be with Him in Heaven.

God invites each of us when we are baptized to become followers of Jesus Christ. Someone who follows Jesus Christ is a **Christian disciple**. Being a Christian disciple means forming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by getting to know Him, becoming more like Him, and sharing our faith with others.

**Christian discipleship** is the most important part of being Catholic. When you are baptized as a Catholic Christian, it is the beginning of a life that you will live in friendship with Jesus Christ, learning more about Him and becoming more like Him. We can pretend to be Christians just by saying we are, but to be a true Catholic means to be a real Christian disciple of Jesus Christ.

## HOW CAN I FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST?

The disciples in the Gospel were able to follow Jesus from town to town and listen to His teachings. Today, Jesus is not walking around in our towns but He is still here with us. The only way we can follow Him is if we know how to find Him. We can find Jesus in four main ways: by speaking to Him in daily prayer, by participating in the worship of God at Mass, by receiving the sacraments often, especially the **Eucharist** (Holy Communion) and **Reconciliation** (Confession), and by seeing Him in other people.

Following Jesus is something you can do right now. You can imitate Him in your thoughts, words, and actions. You can imitate Him when you play sports, listen to music, or make friends, as long as you do it the way Jesus would have done it. By doing this, you are already doing great things with your life and growing in holiness.

The first heroes of the Christian faith did not need to say that they were Christians. Everyone knew they were Christians because they lived their lives in a special way. Ask yourself: do people know that I am a Christian disciple by the way I live?

**Christian Disciple:** Someone who follows Jesus Christ by trying to be like Him in everything they do.  
**Christian Discipleship:** Living as a Christian disciple.



Unit One: Lesson One

1

to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

## Section Two: How can I follow Jesus Christ? (5 minutes)

Read the section aloud. At the end of the section, ask:

**Q:** What are the main places that we can find Jesus Christ?

**A:** 1.) prayer 2.) mass 3.) the sacraments 4.) by seeing Him in other people.

**Q:** Is Jesus only with us when we are in Church? When else is He with us?

**A:** Answers will vary.

**Then say:** Jesus is everywhere and He is always with us. Jesus is with us when we are with our friends, at school, and on the weekends.

## Unit One Lesson One

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

## Introduction: (2 minutes)

*Teacher's note: Questions and suggestions provided in this margin can be used to introduce and reinforce the lesson material. Use them to help move through the lesson material, but be careful not let them sidetrack the discussion or otherwise take time away from covering the lesson material.*

You can begin the lesson by asking:

**Q:** Does anyone know why God created us?

**A:** God calls us to seek him, to know him, to love him and to share in his own life (CCC 1).

**Q:** Does God care what we do with our lives?

**A:** Yes, because he loves us and he wants us to be happy with Him on earth and in Heaven.

**Then say:** This lesson is going to speak about the plan that God has for each and every one of us.

## Lesson Development

### Section One: What is Christian Discipleship? (5 minutes)

Begin reading the lesson aloud. After the second paragraph, ask:

**Q:** "What is a Disciple?"

**A:** Someone who believes in and follows Jesus Christ.

**At the end of the section you can ask:**

**Q:** Where else have you ever heard the word 'disciple'?

**A:** In the Bible, to refer to Jesus' followers.

**Q:** Have you ever considered yourself a disciple of Christ? Why or why not?

**A:** Answers will vary.

**Then say:** As Catholics, we are all called

## Section Three: Go and Change the World (5 minutes)

Begin the section by saying:

Part of being a Christian Disciple is sharing our faith with others and bringing them closer to God.

Then ask:

**Q:** In what way are we like the twelve Apostles?

**A:** We are called to share our faith with those around us.

*Teacher's note on Summary: The summary is meant to help the teacher review the main points of the lesson. The teacher may wish to read the summary aloud, or summarize the lesson in their own words, or have the students summarize the lesson aloud in their own words.*

### Summary:

We, as baptized Catholics, are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ who in truth live out our faith every day by praying, worshipping God every week, regularly receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and reconciliation as well as living out each day the great command to "love God and love neighbor." We are to treat others with the same love we would like to be treated with ourselves and to share with others in confidence our faith in Jesus Christ by our deeds and spoken words.

*Teachers Note: The discussion questions are listed below along with possible answers that can be used to encourage the discussion.*

### Let's Talk About It! (10 minutes)

1. There are over 60 million Catholics and many other Christians living in the United States. What would our country be like if every Christian was serious about being a disciple of Jesus Christ? What would your community be like?

*Possible Answers:* Less crime, less violence, safer neighborhoods. More charity, more people helping one

### GO AND CHANGE THE WORLD

A Christian disciple realizes that a living faith is the key to a truly happy life. Living our faith leads to our happiness because it leads us closer to God. If it leads us to God, it can lead others to God as well. This is why our Catholic faith is a treasure to be shared with other people, so that they can be happy too. The twelve Apostles were the first to spread Jesus' message throughout the world. Jesus said to them, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19).

Looking out at the world, we can see, as the Apostles did, that there are many people who are unhappy or suffering because they do not know Jesus Christ. In addition to knowing Jesus through prayer and the sacraments and imitating Him in our words and actions, we must also be willing to share our Catholic faith with other people, as the Apostles did. God knows that young people can do good things but we will only be ready for greatness if we practice it now by living as Christian disciples in our own homes, in school, and at play. Jesus is calling you to a special relationship right now and only you can choose to accept it.



### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. There are over 60 million Catholics and many other Christians living in the United States. What would our country be like if every Christian was serious about being a disciple of Jesus Christ? What would your community be like?
2. What are some ways we can live as true Christian disciples in our everyday lives, trying to live as Jesus taught us, "to love God and love neighbor"?
3. What are some ways that we can share our Catholic faith with other people? If we meet someone who does not know Jesus Christ, what could we tell them about our experience of being a Christian disciple?

### VO CABULARY

Disciple  
Discipleship  
Eucharist  
Reconciliation  
Apostle

### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- Write about one good thing you can do at home, at school, and at play to live more like a disciple of Christ. How would doing this show others that you want to be like Jesus?
- What do you think is the greatest challenge in trying to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How can you meet this challenge as a Christian disciple?

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Unit One: Lesson One

another, especially helping the poor, the elderly, the disabled. More generous people, more sharing of the gifts we have, not only material gifts but talents and skills.

2. What are some ways we can live as true Christian disciples in our everyday lives, trying to live as Jesus taught us, "to love God and love neighbor"?

*Possible answers:* We can live as Christian disciples by respecting our parents, being honest and sincere, not fighting with our siblings, helping others, behaving well at school, studying, not speaking badly of others.

3. What are some ways that we can share our Catholic faith with other people? If we meet someone who does not know Jesus Christ, what could we tell them about our experience of being a Christian disciple?

# Discipleship Prayer

by St. John Gabriel Perboyre, C.M.I.



O my Divine Saviour

Transform me into yourself.

May my hands be your hands.

May my tongue be your tongue.

Grant that every faculty of my body may serve  
only to glorify you.

Above all, transform my soul and all of its powers, that  
my memory, my will and my affections, may be the  
memory, the will and affections of you.

I pray you to destroy in me all that is not of you.

Grant that I may live but in you, and by you, and for  
you, and that I may truly say with St. Paul,

"I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me."

AMEN.

Unit One: Lesson One

*Possible answers:* We can tell others about Jesus, how much He loves us, and how He came to forgive our sins and open Heaven to us. We can tell others about prayer, the sacraments and our own experiences of God's love. We can imitate Jesus in our actions and in the way we treat others.

## Write about it!

Teacher note on Student Journals: For homework on most days, the class is to write a personal reflection on one or more questions.

Remind the students that they should be open and honest in answering the questions, and that they will not be graded based on having a right or wrong answer, but rather on the sincerity with which they complete the assignment.

Ask the class to take out the Vocation Journals they prepared before class. Read through the journal questions aloud and make sure the students understand them. If time allows, you may give them a few minutes in class to begin writing. The assignment can then be completed as homework. It is VERY IMPORTANT that the students do not to lose their journals.

You may want to inform the parents about the journals their children will be keeping, so that they can take an active interest in assuring that the students complete their assignments and do not lose their journals.

Teacher note on Vocabulary: The vocabulary list includes difficult but significant words from the lesson. These words and their definitions can also be found in the glossary. Teachers can use the vocabulary in a variety of ways. The vocabulary words can be reviewed in class, they can be assigned as homework, or they can be used as material for a quiz or game at the end of the Unit.,

## Discipleship Prayer (Optional)

On page 3 you will find a prayer by St. John-Gabriel Perboyre. This can be prayed at the end of this lesson (though not necessarily every lesson). Alternately, it can be assigned or recommended to the students to say the prayer at home as part of their own prayers. Note that some of the language may prove a bit challenging, so you may want to briefly explain what it means.

## Supplementary Material on St. John-Gabriel Perboyre:

Saint John-Gabriel Perboyre was born in France in 1802. He heard a sermon when he was fifteen that inspired him to be a missionary. He joined the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) and was ordained in 1825. He worked in France until 1835, when his desire to work as a missionary was finally granted and he was sent to central China to spread the Christian faith. In 1839, the local government banned Christianity and began to persecute Christians. In September 1840 St. John-Gabriel was betrayed, captured, and martyred by being hung on a cross, then strangled to death.

## NOTES

You may have students who either are not Catholic or whose parents (and consequently the students) do not actively practice their Catholic faith. These students should not be made to feel uncomfortable because of their different faith or current lack of practice. Rather, this lesson should be a positive challenge to all the students (especially baptized Catholics) to pursue their faith. Emphasize that their faith should be something lived concretely in their every day lives, not just an abstract idea.

This lesson should also be a positive challenge for the students of practicing Catholic families never to take their faith for granted.

Jesus is alive and active in our world. This lesson is meant to help all students realize that God is calling them to a deep, abiding, personal relationship with Him. This lesson is not meant to make students feel “judged” or “condemned” for a lack of faith practice, but to encourage and invite them to pursue a better practice of discipleship, and a lived faith no matter what their background.

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

- We are here on earth to seek God, to know Him and to love Him with all our strength (CCC 1).

- The call of all baptized Catholics to live as Christian Disciples is rooted in the “universal call to holiness,” a teaching which was expressed in the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* and was later echoed with great emphasis by Pope John Paul II.

“Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism’; sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection ... If therefore in the Church everyone does not proceed by the same path, nevertheless all are called to sanctity” (*Lumen Gentium*, 32).

- Jesus entrusted his Church on earth with the mission to protect, maintain and profess the faith that has been handed down from the Apostles (CCC 84).

- We become disciples, by conforming our thoughts, words and actions to the mind of Jesus and by following his example (Phil 2:5, CCC 1694).

- In Baptism we enter into God’s family, “born again by water and the Holy Spirit”. We become children of God, which gives our lives a certain character and responsibility (CCC 1265).

- Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28: 16-19).

### • Question Box

This is an excellent activity that can continue throughout the whole curriculum. Set up a box (or bulletin board) where students can deposit questions that come up in class. These questions can be saved and presented to the priest, seminarian, or religious sister that will be visiting the classroom. This is especially useful for any questions that the students may have about their own lives or vocations. It may also be used for any questions that the teacher may have.

### • Class Resolution

Propose a class resolution for the week that will help everyone grow as Christian disciples, for example: say an extra prayer daily for a particular intention, do a daily act of charity towards parents, siblings, classmates, etc. The resolution of the week can be posted on the chalkboard or bulletin board.

### • Sharing the Faith

Challenge the class to make the effort to speak to at least one person about their faith.

### • Discipleship Box

Set up a Discipleship Box (any empty box labeled for the purpose will do) where students can write down on slips of paper moments when they have acted like followers of Jesus Christ. Notes should be kept anonymous. At the end of the week, the teacher can open the box and share with the class examples of Christian discipleship among their peers. The teacher can also opt to post some of these examples on a bulletin board.

### • Bulletin Board Ideas-

The class bulletin board can be a great way to complement the lesson material. The bulletin board can be changed from unit to unit and can include: quotes, scripture passages, questions, vocabulary, or saints from the textbook. Teacher may let students write questions directly on the bulletin board.

A good source for visual aids and bulletin board material are the two vocation magazines *Vision* (English) and *Oye* (Spanish). Another good source is the vocation material put out by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). (See page \_\_\_ for ordering information).

See [www.whatismyvocation.com](http://www.whatismyvocation.com) for more ideas and visual aids.

# Lesson Planner

## Unit One : Lesson Two

### Overview:

This lesson builds on the notion of the shared call of all baptized Catholics to be disciples of Jesus Christ (our common vocation) from Lesson One and introduces the idea of the specific vocation of each individual. The term “vocation” is introduced for the first time as a personal call to a particular way of life that God invites each one of us to live.

This is a simple definition for a complex notion. The lesson material attempts to explain some common questions surrounding it. Explaining this concept is the main point of this is lesson. This concept should be reviewed and explored until it is understood by all of the students.

### Objectives:

- To know what a vocation is and that it comes from God, who created us as we are with this purpose in mind.
- To understand that each person has an individual, unique vocation
- To recognize that God wants to reveal each person’s vocation, and will do so as long as there is a desire and a sincere effort to discover it.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	2
• Section 1: A Vocation is a Call From God	10
• Section 2 : God Calls Each Person Differently	10
• Section 3 : Hearing the Call	2
• Section 4 : How Will You Recognize God’s Call	2
• Discussion: Let’s Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Vocabulary:

Vocation

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Journals
- Bible (for discussion question 1)

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

- See page \_\_
- Talents, Gifts, and Vocation
  - Vocation versus Career
  - Vocation vs Freedom: “Can’t I decide my own vocation?”

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- One passages from the CCC
  - Two Bible passages

### Optional activities:

- See page \_\_
- Visit Jesus in the Tabernacle
  - Talents, Gifts, and Aspirations
  - Bulletin Board idea: Common Vocation and Specific Vocation

# Unit One: Lesson Two

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

## Introduction:(2 minutes)

Begin the lesson by asking:

**Q:** In the Vocation Prayer we just prayed we said “make me your disciple.” Who remembers what the word disciple means?

**A:** A disciple is someone who believes in Jesus Christ and follows Him by living according to His teachings.

Then say:

We are all called to be disciples. This is the common plan God has for all of us, but God made us all different and unique, and he has a unique plan for each of us. Today we are going to talk about that special plan that God has for each of us.

Then ask:

Does anyone know what the word “Vocation” means?

Then say:

Look at the box on the right side of page four.

Have a student read the text in the box aloud. Then say:

Today we are going to talk about this plan and what it means for our lives.

## Lesson Development

### Section One: A Vocation is a Call from God (10 minutes)

Begin reading the lesson aloud. In the second paragraph, after the word “Heaven” pause to review what a vocation is by asking:

**Q:** “Who can tell me what a vocation is?”

**A:** The answer should include three elements:

1. It is a plan for our lives,
2. that God invites us to follow
3. that will lead us to happiness in this life and with Him in Heaven

Then say:

God made your hands to be just they way they are for a reason. He gave some of you have hands that are good for writing and studying, some of you have hands that

## God Calls Us to a Specific Vocation in Life

### Unit One: Lesson Two

### A VOCATION IS A CALL FROM GOD

God created each one of us for a specific purpose, and gave each one of us a mission to fulfill in our lives, just like He gave His Son. He has a plan for us to be happy, known as a **vocation**, and if we follow this plan, it will lead us to be saints with Him in Heaven.

Our vocation is an invitation from God to follow the best path for our lives, the one that will lead us to true happiness on Earth and to become saints in Heaven. But how does God know what is best for us, what will make us happy, especially if we are not even sure of that ourselves?

God is the one who created us. Long before you were born, when He created the world, He knew you. One of the psalms in the Bible says:

*You wove me together in my mother's womb; I praise you, for I have been sketched wonderfully – awesome are your works! Even my soul you deeply know, and my frame was not hidden from you, I who was made in secret, who was skillfully made...my days were lined out before one of them ever was. How precious are your plans for me, O God, how great their beginnings!* Psalm 139:13-15, 16-17

When God created you, He knew your name, what color your eyes would be, and whether you would be short, quick, smart, funny, or shy. He knew what would make you happy, what would make you holy, and what part you would play in the history of the world. After all, He designed you to be just the way you are, and He did it for a reason.

God does not think of our vocation randomly. The vocation we are called to best fits how God made us. He considers not only what will make us happy, but also how we can improve the world around us. God sets apart a special mission just for you, and only you can fulfill your vocation. No one else is capable of completing the plan God designed especially for you.

It is important to remember that God will not force you to do anything. A vocation is not a set of orders; it is an invitation, a suggestion God makes and hopes that you will respond to it. This invitation from God will include a specific way of life that will make you the most happy: either a single life, a married life, a religious life, or a priestly life. We cannot invite ourselves to a specific way of life. It is God who invites, and it is up to us to respond.

Because our vocation is the way to our greatest joy and deepest fulfillment in life, God wants us to know what this plan is. If you ask Him, He will help you discover it when He knows you are ready.

*Vocation:  
A plan that God invites us to live that will lead to our happiness on Earth and eternal life with Him in Heaven.*



*God makes each person for a specific vocation*

4

Unit One: Lesson Two

are good for art or music, some of you have hands that are good for sports. God designed your hands and your whole self to be the way you are for a reason.

Continue reading the lesson aloud. At the end of the sixth paragraph, ask:

**Q:** When someone calls you to invite you to a party, does that mean that you have to go?

**A:** No. You can choose whether to go or not.

**Q:** Do you usually invite yourself to someone else's party?

**A:** No, usually someone invites you.

Then say:

When we say that a vocation is an invitation from God to a follow a plan for our lives, we are free to accept the invitation.

Continue reading to the end of the section.

## GOD CALLS EACH PERSON DIFFERENTLY

God is always with us. He is always there to guide us in our lives, even when we do not realize it. He calls to us throughout our lives. We must listen intently, with our hearts, and pay attention to what He could be trying to tell us. God's call is like a constant whisper, trying to get our attention and guide us to the kind of life He is calling us. He might speak to us in prayer, or through our experiences and desires, or He may choose to speak to us through other people like our parents, a priest, a teacher, or a friend.

God calls each of us in a different way and at a different time in our lives. Some people know what God is calling them to do when they are still very young. There are priests who knew they were meant to be priests from the time they were in the first or second grade. For other people, the understanding of their calling may be slower and take a long time. It may come as a growing awareness of the plan God has for them. Other times a calling may become clear in a sudden moment, as if you had your hands over your ears and then removed them to discover a call that was there all along. Each one of us will hear our call to a vocation in life in a unique way. It's a matter of listening, of paying attention to what God is asking you to do with your life.

Married people often have similar experiences. Many people describe realizing their vocation to marriage at a very young age. Many young people first hear God calling them to be parents while caring for their younger sisters and brothers or babysitting other children. Throughout our life experiences, the voice of the Lord whispers in our ear to give us a growing awareness of the vocation He created for us.

Your parents, teachers, priests, or other people who know how to hear God's voice are good people to talk to about your vocation, especially if they are already living their own vocation.

## God's Call:



*Different times  
Different ways  
for  
Different people*

Religious  
Vocation

Married  
Vocation

Single  
Vocation

Priestly  
Vocation

### HEARING THE CALL

To hear God speak to us, we need to learn to be silent and listen. The prophet Elijah was told by the Lord to wait on a mountain, for the Lord would come and speak to him.

*A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.* (1 Kings 19:11)

The voice of the Lord was in the tiny whisper. That is why we must give God the opportunity to speak to us in the silence of our souls.

Continue reading the lesson aloud. After the fourth paragraph (ending with the word "reason") say:

Everyone hold out your hands with your palms up and look at them. Look at their shape, their size. Look at your palms, your fingers, your fingertips.

Then ask:

Q: Are any two people's hands exactly the same?

A: No each person's hands are unique.

## Section Two: God Calls Each Person Differently (10 minutes)

Begin the section by asking:

Q: If you were at home and you wanted to invite your friend to come over and hang out, what would you do?

A: Call them on the phone and invite them.

Then say:

It's the same with a vocation. God wants to invite you to follow a particular path, so at some point he is going to tell you about it, only He will not use a phone.

Begin reading the section, after first paragraph, ask:

Q: But what if your friend does not answer the phone? That means that either your friend's phone is off, or they didn't hear it ringing because they were busy, or they heard it and they did not pick up. So what do you do?

A: You can either leave a message, or call back later.

Then say:

In a similar way, when God wants to invite you to a vocation, He will call you (except he probably won't use a phone).

The problem is that sometimes we are not listening, other times we can't hear Him because of all the distractions in our lives, and sometimes we do hear Him calling us but we do not respond.

So what does God do? He continues to call us throughout our life and leaves us messages in different ways.

Continue reading the lesson aloud. At the end of section, say:

The most important thing is that when you hear the call, you answer the invitation, because no one else can answer for you.

## Section Three: (5 minutes) Hearing the call

Read the section aloud. At the end of the section ask:

Q: When is a time that we are listening to God?

A: When we pray or times when we are quiet.

## Section Four (5 minutes): How will you Recognize Gods Call?

Begin by asking:

Q: Going back to our previous example, when you call your friend on the phone, what are you hoping they will do?

A: You hope that they will answer the phone and accept your invitation.

Then say:

God is hoping for the same thing when he calls you. He is hoping you will answer and accept his invitation.

Continue reading aloud to the end of the lesson.

### Summary:

As baptized Catholics, we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Pope John Paul II said, "Each Christian vocation comes from God and is God's gift... whose purpose is to build up the Church and to increase the kingdom of God in the world" (*Go in Peace*). Your vocation is a calling, an invitation from God to the way of life for which God created you and it will help you to be truly happy in this life. You might learn what your vocation is very early in life, or you may discover it slowly over time. The point is, God will call you to your vocation. Take the time to listen to what He has to say.

### Let's Talk About It!

1. Using your Bible, read this passage from the Gospel: Mark (10:17-27). Why did the young man come to Jesus?

**A:** He was asking how he could achieve eternal life.

**Q:** Was Jesus inviting him to something? What was He inviting him to?

**A:** Yes, Jesus was inviting him to be a disciple.

**Q:** How did the young man respond?

**A:** He walked away.

**Q:** Why did he respond this way and how did he feel afterwards?

**A:** He walked away because he loved his wealth more than Jesus, and did not want to respond to what Jesus was calling him to do. He walked away sad.

### Then you can ask:

**Q:** Do you think God continued to call the young man afterwards?

**A:** It is possible that God continued to call the young man throughout his life.

**Q:** The young man walked away in sadness, do you think this sadness could have brought him to answer Jesus' call differently later?

**A:** It is possible that his sadness later caused him to change and say yes to Jesus.

2. What are some different kinds of callings that a person can have in life?

**A:** (See the second to the last paragraph on page four) There are four main vocations: single life, married life, religious life, or a priestly life.

*Teacher note: These are the four main vocations, but they can be lived out in many different ways.*



*"Each Christian vocation comes from God and is God's gift... whose purpose is to build up the Church and to increase the kingdom of God in the world."*

—Pope John Paul II<sup>2</sup>

### VOCABULARY

Vocation

### HOW WILL YOU RECOGNIZE GOD'S CALL?

When the time comes, you will know that your vocation is the right one because it will fit who you are; it will complete your life, fill you with joy, and match your gifts and abilities. That does not mean that it will be the easiest path, or that it will be the one that you always thought you would take. God often surprises us, and His plans are not necessarily the ones we had in mind, but the day He taps you on the shoulder and points the way, you will know it, and you will have to make a choice.

Once you understand where God is calling you, you must ACT. You cannot hesitate because you are waiting for a better time, or because you are afraid. Have faith, believe that God will guide you down the right path, open your heart to Him and do not be afraid to say "Yes" to God's invitation.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Consider this passage from the Gospel: Mark (10:17-27).

Why did the young man come to Jesus? Was Jesus inviting him to something? How did the young man respond? Why did he respond this way and how did he feel afterwards?

2. What are some different kinds of callings that a person could have in life? Think of someone you know who is doing something good with their life.

3. Why would you want to know your vocation in life? Why would you want to fulfill it? Are there any reasons that you would not want to know or fulfill it? If you do not follow God's plan for you, whose plan will you follow?



### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- How does the following scripture passage from Isaiah (43:1) make you feel about your own relationship with God and your own vocation in life? "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine."
- What are some distractions in your daily life that make it harder to listen to God? What can we do to set aside these distractions and spend time focused on God?

**Q:** Think of someone you know who is doing something good with their life.

**A:** Answers will vary. (Possible answers: teachers, parents, uncles, aunts, police, firemen, priests, religious sisters and brothers, people who help others, people who help in the parish, etc.)

3. Why would you want to know your vocation in life? Why would you want to fulfill it?

**A:** Answers will vary. (Possible answers: because I want to be happy, because I want to do what God wants)

**Q:** Are there any reasons that you would not want to know or fulfill it? If you do not follow God's plan for you, whose plan will you follow?

**A:** Answers will vary. (Possible answer: because I want to follow my own plan, etc.)

## Vocation:

*A plan that God invites us to live that will lead to our happiness on Earth and eternal life with Him in Heaven.*

Sr. Margarita Ramirez is a sister of the religious order called the Oblates of Jesus the Priest. When she was young, she used to walk past the church everyday on her way home from school. One day, she felt she wanted to visit Jesus, who she knew was in the tabernacle in the form of the Blessed Sacrament (Holy Communion). Even though she only stopped a moment, she knew that Jesus was waiting there for her, and she spoke to Him in prayer for a while. She decided to stop and visit Him more often. She spoke to Him in prayer like she would speak with any other friend: talking to the Lord, then taking time to listen. One day when she was 15 years old, she realized Jesus was asking her, Margarita, to spend the rest of her life with Him. She was surprised, but at the same time it seemed to make sense. She felt a great joy and realized at that moment that God was calling her to be a religious sister. At first, her family would not let her do it, and even tried to keep her from becoming a religious sister. After a while, they noticed that all she really wanted was to follow Jesus as a religious sister. Eventually she was able to follow her vocation, and Sr. Margarita has been full of joy living as a religious sister ever since. Have you ever visited Jesus in the tabernacle? Do you ever speak to Him in prayer?



*Sister Margarita of the Oblates of Jesus the Priest*

Teacher Note: You can use the following example to illustrate the point of the question.

Not wanting to know your vocation is like a kid whose parents ask him to brush his teeth, but who does not want to because it takes too long or tastes weird. Eventually, the kid learns that his parents know better and want what is best for him. He learns that they want him to have good teeth, and not to have cavities, and he understands why he needs to brush his teeth.

The point is that God has our best interest in mind, and as we grow older we gain perspective, self understanding, and God's plan makes more sense. Initially, we may not have enough insight or information to understand God's plan, that's why we find reasons not to follow it. A Christian disciple responds to God's will as Jesus did during His life..

They are attentive to God's plan, instead of stubbornly following their own plan (like the kid who doesn't brush his teeth), and they certainly do not let themselves be pressured or tricked by others into doing what they know is not right.

## Write about it!

1.

Q: How does the following scripture passage from Isaiah (43:1) make you feel about your own relationship with God and your own vocation in life?

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine."

A: Answers will vary. (Students should focus on trusting their lives to God, who as the Creator, knows them intimately.)

2.

Q: What are some distractions in your daily life that make it harder to listen to God? What can we do to set aside these distractions and spend time focused on God?

A: Possible answers - television, video games, listening to music, activities, chores, worries, homework. We can set aside a regular time to speak to God in prayer such as before we go to bed, or when we wake up.

## Vocation Story: Sr. Margarita Ramirez, Oblates of Jesus the Priest.

Teacher or student can read Sr. Margarita's story aloud.

### Teacher's note:

Make sure that students know what a tabernacle is. A tabernacle is a special container made to hold the Eucharist. It has a place of importance in a Catholic church because it houses the real presence of Jesus Christ.

Sr. Margarita's story is just one person's experience. God calls each person differently and at a different point in their lives. Nevertheless, her story is a good example of what was discussed in the lesson. Her story follows the pattern set forth in the lesson for discovering one's vocation.

1. She is a Christian disciple and cultivates a relationship with Jesus through prayer.
2. She is open to God's will and receives her unique and personal call from God through prayer
3. When she hears God's call, she responds to it and finds joy and fulfillment in following this path, despite difficulties along the way.

## Optional Activity: Visit Jesus in the Tabernacle

This vocation story is a good opportunity to explain to the students that Jesus is present in a very special way in the tabernacle, in the Eucharist. Invite the students to make a brief visit to Jesus in the tabernacle the next time they are in Church and speak to Him for a short while (2-5 minutes). They can tell Him about their day, their upcoming soccer game or math test, a sick family member, their worries and their joys, or ask Him to help them discover their vocation and tell Him they want to follow Him as Christian disciples. Tell the students that even if they just stop by to say hello, Jesus is always happy to see them, and waiting eagerly for them to arrive.

The point is for the students for students to become more conscience that Jesus is truly present in the Tabernacle and encourage them to take a few minutes and visit with Him.

This can be proposed as something to do when they go to Church with their family, or alternately, it can be done next time the class is in Church. It is suggested that this activity be done outside of class, so as not to sacrifice covering the lesson material.

**TEACHER NOTE:** Students should understand that the tabernacle is not the only place to pray. Jesus is always listening no matter where you pray, but he is present in a particular way (sacramentally) in the tabernacle. That is why it is a special place to pray.

## FOR TEACHERS

**NOTES****Talents, Gifts, and Vocation.**

Sometimes talents can be confused with a vocation. If you can sing, you may think you have a future as a rock star. If you can write, you may think you will write best-selling novels. If you can run fast, maybe you think you should be a track star. In each instance, God has given you a talent but you must also discover how God wants you to use that talent.

A talent is a gift from God to support you in your vocation. We have an obligation to use our gifts where God needs them most. Most of us have gifts that are not so evident: a compassionate heart, common sense, an adventuresome spirit, a skill for organization. These talents may support, but do not determine, your vocation. It isn't a coincidence that we have these talents and characteristics. They are God given gifts we can use in this life to build up God's kingdom here on earth. Using your gifts for the greater glory of God strengthens our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ who ultimately is drawing us to Himself for our own salvation, to be with Him in Heaven forever.

**Vocation versus Career**

Another key distinction that should be made clear to the students is the difference between a vocation and a career. A vocation, as it is presented in this curriculum, is a call from God to a specific way of life: either to be single, to be married, to be a religious brother or sister, or to be priest. This is different from a career such as doctor, teacher, lawyer, writer, etc. A person's career is a part of their lives within the framework of their vocation. For example, a woman might be both a religious sister and a teacher, or she might be both a married woman and a teacher, but she cannot be both a married woman and a religious sister. Once a person has discovered their vocation, there are many careers which they can pursue as a way of serving God and others.

**Vocation vs Freedom: "Can't I Decide my own Vocation?"**

In a culture that places a great deal of importance on independence and personal freedom, it is easy to mistake the notion of a vocation as God "telling me what to do." In such a culture, it is assumed that an individual is able to decide on his or her own what is best for them. This is one of the biggest obstacles in explaining a vocation to students (as well as adults).

The chief notion in understanding a vocation is that it is an invitation, not a command. God always respects our freedom, and it is our freedom that offers us the greatest opportunity to love Him, not by force, but by choice (like Mary did, like Abraham did). It is an invitation that God extends to us constantly throughout our lives as the best path for our lives. We can choose a different path which may be less suited to us. As for who knows what's best, of course God knows what's best, "Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God" (1 Cor 3:18-19).

**SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL**

- All Christians have a vocation to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. From the moment we are baptized, we share the call to imitate Christ in our daily lives: "The vocation of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of the Father's only Son" (CCC 1877). In addition, we each have a specific mission to fulfill. God gives us a personal mission that is so special that if we do not accomplish it, no one will ever do it. This mission is given to us as a vocation to a specific way of life.
- Jesus spends forty days in the silence of the desert to prepare for his mission (Mt. 4:1-11).
- Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25: 14-30).

**OPTIONAL  
ACTIVITIES****Talents, Gifts, and Aspirations**

Have each student make two columns on a page. On one side they can make a list of their talents, gifts and aspirations in one column, then to pair them with a way that each one can be used to help others, serve the Church, and do God's will.

**Bulletin Board Idea: Common Vocation and Specific Vocation**

In explaining the difference between the common vocation of all people to be Christian disciples and the specific vocation of each person to a particular way of life, it may be helpful to use the bulletin board or chalkboard as a visual aid. This can be done by writing the words "Common Vocation" and "Specific Vocation" in different ways, to show that they are variations of the same concept, a call from God. Alternately, you can draw a diagram with two circles, a large circle labelled "Common Vocation" and within that circle, a smaller circle labelled "Specific Vocation." You might also put a picture of a crowd or group of people in the larger circle, and a single person in the smaller circle.

# Lesson Planner

## Unit One : Lesson Three

### Overview:

This lesson continues to examine the concept of individual vocation with an emphasis on the process of discovering a call and listening to God. The lesson then examines the many ways through which God can speak to us.

### Objectives:

- To know some concrete ways of living discipleship in Jesus Christ that will help us to discover our vocation
- To recognize that a vocation requires a free response from each individual
- To learn that prayer is a dialogue with God
- To discuss several of the ways God communicates with us: through prayer, Sacraments, the Church, other people, the Bible, and the events of daily life

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	2
• Section 1: Jesus Helps Us Discover Our Vocation	2
• Section 2 : Why Doesn't God Just Tell Us Directly?	5
• Section 3: Prayer: God Speaks To Us And We Speak To Him	10
• Section 4 : Other Ways Of Communication	10
• Discussion: Let's Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Journals
- Bible, props for acting out "The Call of Samuel" and other vocation stories from the Bible (optional activity).

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

- See page \_\_
- Different types of Prayer

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- Supplementary material on prayer
  - 4 passages from the CCC
  - 1 Bible passage
  - Online Bible resources

### Optional activities:

- See page \_\_
- Vocation Stories in the Bible
  - Prayer Activities
  - Pope, Bishops, Priests, and Religious
  - The Sacraments

# Unit One: Lesson Three

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

## Introduction: (5 minutes)

You can introduce the lesson by asking:

**Q:** Look at the picture on upper-right of page 8. Who are the two figures in the picture? What is going on in the picture?

**A:** The two figures are the angel Gabriel and Mary. The picture shows the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel spoke God's message to Mary.

Then ask:

Wouldn't it be great if God just used angels to let us know what He wanted us to do? But He doesn't usually do that. Today we are going to talk about the many ways that God has of communicating with us.

## Lesson Development

### Section 1: Jesus Helps Us Discover Our Vocation (2 minutes)

Begin reading the lesson aloud.

At the end of the section ask:

**Q:** What is it that allows us to hear and understand our vocation?

**A:** Our relationship with Jesus Christ.

### Section 2: Why Doesn't God Just Tell us Directly? (5 minutes)

Continue reading the lesson aloud.

Teacher's note: The dirty dishes example is meant to show why God does not usually communicate with us directly with regards to our vocation: in order to allow us to choose freely to draw closer to Him as we discover our vocation.

To freely choose to follow Jesus and to listen closely to Him in prayer allows for a greater love to grow in us.

## Discovering a Vocation

### JESUS HELPS US DISCOVER OUR VOCATION

It is Jesus Christ who "brings to light [our] exalted vocation". What allows a Christian disciple to hear and understand their God-given vocation is a lived relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with you, to be you risen by listening and talking to you. The three main ways Christ speaks to us are through daily personal prayer; through the Church, and through the people and experiences in our daily lives. These things strengthen our relationship with Jesus and make it easier to hear His voice and discover our vocation.



Luke 1:26-38

### WHY DOESN'T GOD JUST TELL US DIRECTLY?

Mary had a special vocation to be the Mother of God, and so God sent an angel to call her to this vocation. However, God does not usually send angels to call us. Instead, he uses other ways to speak to us. He speaks to us when we pray especially when we pray in silence or in Church. He speaks to us when we receive the Sacraments, especially during Mass and Confession. We hear him when we serve others, whether it is our family, friends, grandparents or those who are sick or poor.

God calls us to live our vocation but He does not force us to follow it. He wants us to choose our vocation freely. For example, if your mom comes to your room and says, "Do you want to come and help me with the dishes?" you would feel like you had to say yes whether you like it or not. You are not really free to choose, because you feel like you have to obey even if you hate doing the dishes. However, if you walked past the sink full of dirty dishes, you might freely choose to help your mom wash them. Even if you do not like doing dishes, you would feel good because you chose to do something good on your own. Your mom would be grateful because she would know that you did it because you love her, not because you had to. In the same way, God wants us to freely choose to follow a vocation because we love him, not because we have to do it.



Prayer is a conversation with Christ.

### PRAYER: GOD SPEAKS TO US AND WE SPEAK TO HIM

Prayer is a two-way communication with God. It should be a real life daily where we talk to God throughout the day, especially in the morning when we rise, before meals, and when we go to bed. Sometimes we forget to pray except when there is a crisis or when something wonderful happens and we want to thank God. Other times people fall into the trap of telling God what they think He wants to hear.

Teacher's note: If you think that the students might view washing dishes as something negative or boring, you may opt to use the example of going to the store with your mom.

If your mother asks you to accompany her, you feel obliged to go; but if you freely offer to accompany her, it gives you the opportunity to grow in kindness and to show your mom that you love her and want to help her. Furthermore, when you go to the store, you never know what you will find there. You may discover new things at the store, find things you need or things you enjoy. In this way, it is like a vocation.

### Section 3: Prayer: God Speaks to Us and We Speak to Him (10 minutes)

You can begin the section by saying:

We know that praying is a way of speaking to God. When we pray we praise God, we tell Him about our lives and our intentions, and we ask for His help. But did you know that prayer is also a conversation with God? Did you know that God speaks to us in prayer just as we speak to Him? The next section is going to talk about some of the ways that God speaks to us and how we can learn how to listen.

Monologue



Dialogue



When you pray, it is not so important to say big words like "Omnipotent God." Just like any friendly conversation, say what is in your heart. God knows us better than we know ourselves, so we must be honest and sincere when we pray. Tell Him your troubles and desires, thank and praise Him for who He is and what He has given you, and tell Him about the different things that happened in your day. Pray about what is truly important to you. This way of praying invites God to be part of the important concerns of your life.

Like a conversation with a friend, we need to have a dialogue with God, not a one-way conversation when we pray. It is important to listen for God's response if we want Him to guide us along the right path.

However, it is not as easy as talking on the telephone to hear the voice of God. In times, as we sit with God for moments of silence, we can begin to notice God's presence, to sense God's guidance at some times more specifically than others. It can be a clear thought that pops into your head and makes you realize what you are supposed to do. Sometimes it is more like a hint of what would be good for you to do. Many times it seems like your own thoughts, but it may be God talking to you through your conscience. However, even if we do not get immediate answers to our prayers, the important thing is to spend time with God and have a close friendship with Him because He is the source of our vocation. Jesus taught us that "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).



You have 12 new e-mails...

### OTHER WAYS OF COMMUNICATION

Since God wants to show us our vocation in a way that will bring us closer to Him, He uses many different ways to get the message across. We have to be aware of these ways so that we can hear God's messages. Otherwise, it will be much more difficult to know what He is trying to tell us.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us how to pray: "Go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:6). He is not telling us to hide, but He knows that when we are quiet and not worrying about what anyone else thinks, we can hear what God is trying to say to us.

Unit One: Lesson Three

After reading the second paragraph (ending with "concerns of your life") say:

Consider this example: A friend calls you on the telephone then speaks to you for 20 minutes nonstop before suddenly saying goodbye and hanging up the telephone. You are not able to say one word. This pattern goes on for a long time. How much would your friend know about you if this was the only communication you had? NOTHING! Your friend would not have heard a word you were trying to say. The calls were not true dialogues because your friend was doing all of the talking.

Continue reading aloud. When you reach the end of the section, ask someone to read the box in the lower-right corner of page 9. Then you can ask,

Q: When was the last time you spent time praying on your own, in private, or in silence? This is a kind of prayer that you can do on your own at home or anywhere you can be alone with God and away from distractions.

### Section 3: Other ways of communication (15 minutes)

Begin the section by asking:

Q: Phone calls are not the only way to communicate. Who can name are some other ways that people communicate?

A: (Answers will vary) e-mail, postcard, instant message, fax, text message, notes, letters, airplane with banner, etc.

Then say:

Just as there are many ways to communicate with people, God has many ways of communicating with us: through prayer, through Church and the sacraments, through the Bible, through other people. In the next section we are going to talk about some of the different ways that God communicates with us.

### Teacher Note: Solitude vs Loneliness

People often fill their living or working environment with sound: TV, radio, music, etc. They do this for entertainment, but also, at times, to mask a feeling of being alone. The sound is a comfort and gives makes them feel as if they were not alone; it temporarily fills a space in them.

As Christians we realize that we are never alone. Jesus promised to always be with us and He is. Many people do not develop the ability to recognize the presence of God, because they do not try to listen in silence.

Solitude is the confident awareness that we are never alone; it is the spiritual understanding of God's presence in our lived experience, and that we never need to feel lonely.

## How does God communicate?

**The Pope, Bishops, Priests, and Religious** – The Church, especially through the Pope, continues to guide God's people on earth. When the Pope speaks about our faith and morality, it is Jesus speaking through him. Jesus promised this to Peter, our first Pope, when he said "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Luke 10:16). God also guides us in our local diocese under the guidance of the bishop and in our parish communities, looked after by our parish priests and religious sisters and brothers, and lay ministers. They use these to teach us and give us advice on how to grow in our relationship with Jesus.



**The Sacraments** – The sacraments are visible signs that God is present among us. They give us the graces we need to live our discipleship. They change us in visible and invisible ways. One example of a radical change brought about through the sacraments is the life of Charles de Foucauld, who was from a rich family and had a wild life. He fell into serious sin and did not go to church for ten years. One day he went up to a priest who was in the confessional and said, "Come out, I want to talk to you about a problem." The priest responded "No, come in; I want to talk to you about your sins." Charles went to Confession and immediately after his confession he was shocked to feel God in him in a powerful new way. He felt the joy of finding Christ, changed his life, gave away his wealth, became a priest and moved to Africa to teach the people in the desert about Jesus. In this example, we see clearly how honest and frequent reception of the Sacraments deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ.



**The Bible** – "When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers." (1 Thes 2:13). The words of the Bible were inspired by God and given to us through its authors. Since the words come from God, no matter how many years pass, they will continue to speak to all people and give them inspiration, guidance and consolation. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are especially important, because they will help you learn more about Jesus and what He taught so that you can grow even closer to Him.



**People in our lives** – God places people in our lives to help us. Our parents, teachers, priests, friends and neighbors can inspire us to live better lives, and if they have a good relationship with God, they can help us become closer to Him. Often trustworthy family members and friends have the ability to see God working in ways that you may not have noticed before. It helps to speak to them about how God might be calling you.



The Old Testament tells us that when the prophet Samuel was a young man, he heard a voice call his name while he was asleep, but he did not know who it was. Samuel ran to Eli the priest, who was in the next room, and said, "Here I am." Eli said, "I did not call you, go back to sleep." Three times this happened. Finally, Eli said, "Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" (1 Sam 3:10). When Samuel did this, he discovered that it was God calling out to him with a special message.

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Teachers note: In the "How does God communicate?" section, the categories that are listed are not necessarily in order of importance. The point of this section is that all of them are ways that God communicates with us and it is God in the person of the Holy Spirit that communicates through any of these means.

Students might come up with other ways that God communicates with us such as nature, the study of science, music, art, stories, a movie.

After "The Sacraments" section, ask: Have you ever had an experience of God that came out of receiving the sacraments? Has anyone you know ever had such an experience?

After "The Bible" section say:

Reading the Bible is something you can do on your own. You may have a bible at home that you can read. There are also many Bible web sites that you can look up.

For a list of online Bible resources, see Optional Activities section on page \_\_\_\_.

After "People in our Lives" section ask:

**Q:** How did Eli help Samuel to find out that God was calling him?

**A:** Eli helped Samuel by helping him to recognize it was God speaking to him.

**Q:** Have you ever helped someone to understand that God is communicating with them? How can we help others listen to God?

**A:** We can help others by encouraging them to spend time in prayer.

After "Helping Others" section say:

People who help others very often feel joy and peace in their hearts when serving of others. Joy and peace often are God's way of communicating that He is with us.

Teachers' note on "Joy and Suffering" section: Students should understand that God does not want us to suffer; He always loves us and can help us in difficult times if we remain open to his voice in our lives.

The story of Saint Ignatius on page 11 is a helpful example of how God sometimes communicates with us in time of suffering.

## Supplemental Material: Ways that God communicates with us

God is interested in every aspect of our lives so it should come as no surprise that he communicates with us through all created things. For example, a beautiful song like Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" may so inspire us that we have a glimpse of the heavenly beauty behind it. A painting can stir emotions that all the reading in the world can't match. Sitting on a mountainside and quietly watching nature may tell us more about God and what he wants from us than some of the best teachers. Even science has led many to wonder about the Hand who has created such a complex world. Wherever beauty and truth can be found, there is God. If you are open to it, He will speak to you in the most unexpected ways and you will find the road upon which you are to travel. "We must learn to see the Creator by contemplating the beauty of His creation." (Pope John Paul II, Go In Peace).

**Helping others** – When we help others, we share in the love that God has for all people. This is also a very powerful way that God speaks to us. Someone who helps the sick may discover that God is asking them to be a doctor or nurse, and someone who teaches others about Jesus may discover that they can serve God as a missionary. If you are joy helping in the parish, maybe God is calling you to work in parish ministry. Serving others out of love for God prevents us from becoming selfish and opens our hearts to God's plan for our lives.



**Joy and Suffering** – God is always with us, even in the most ordinary days of the week. When something great happens, we are more likely to remember that God has given us a gift, and we thank him. However, God also works in us during times of difficulty and suffering, to help us grow and become better. The times when we are hurt or ill, when we are disappointed, or even when we lose someone we love can be opportunities to grow closer to God and to open our hearts to His will. There are many things that are out of our control, and only by trusting in God can we survive the most difficult times.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. What are some moments or places that we can pray?  
How does prayer help us to hear God speak to us?
2. Who are some people we can talk to about our vocations?  
When can we speak to them?
3. Are there things that have happened to you that have helped you to see how God is working in your life?



**St. Ignatius of Loyola** was once a young soldier, who was full of pride and had no time for God. During a battle, a cannon ball shattered his leg and he had to spend a long time in bed recovering. To pass the time, he read the only books that were available: *The Life of Christ* and *The Lives of the Saints*. In his suffering, Ignatius became less concerned with the things of the world that had previously filled his mind. He became more open to God, and heard the voice of the Lord calling him in a way he had not recognized before. With the courageous examples of the saints to inspire him, Ignatius turned his life over to God, became a priest, and founded a group of religious priests and brothers called the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits.

Unit One: Lesson Three

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## Summary:

A lived relationship with Jesus Christ includes praying every day. Our prayer should be a dialogue with God, speaking to Him and then listening to Him with our hearts. God communicates with us in many different ways: through the Church, the sacraments, the Bible, other people, and the events of daily life. God wants us to choose freely to draw close to Him in order to hear Him. This relationship brings us closer to Jesus, who helps us discover and find joy in our specific vocation in life. We should be aware that God speaks to us in many different ways.

### Let's Talk About It!

1. What are some moments or places that we can pray? How does prayer help us to hear God speak to us?

A: Answers will vary. Some examples are: in the morning, after school, or at night, in our room, in Church, whenever we are by ourselves in silence.

Prayer helps us to hear God speak to us because it engages us in dialogue with Him.

Teachers note: Prayer requires that we leave behind the noise and distractions of the outside world (video games, TV) because we are making an effort to hear God's voice. When we pray it is like we are pointing our spiritual satellite dish at God, to get a clearer signal.

2. Who are some people we can talk to about our vocations? When can we speak to them?

A: Priest or religious sister/brother, our parents, our teachers, our principal.

Ask them for a free moment when you could speak with them.

3. Are there things that have happened to you that have helped you to see how God is working in your life?

## Supplementary Material on St. Ignatius of Loyola:

**Teacher's Note:** Ignatius is pronounced ig-NAY-shus. Read the passage about St. Ignatius aloud, then ask:

**Q:** While Ignatius was recovering, he was able to spend plenty of time alone with his thoughts, and without the distractions of the world. How do you think that this affected his ability to speak with God in prayer?

**A:** The time Ignatius spent recovering helped him to deepen his relationship with God in prayer and listen to what God was calling him to.

**Q:** Which of the means listed above did God use to communicate with Ignatius? How did Ignatius hear God calling him?

**A:** In his suffering, Ignatius began to turn away from the distractions of the world and listen to God. Through his suffering, Ignatius found strength in God and began trust in Him. Through the example of the saints he learned how to be heroic in his Christian faith.

A: Answers will vary. Some examples are: a time of sadness, a time of joy, a time when you see God acting in your life, awe-filled moments, nature.

### Write about it!

#### Optional activity:

The students' vocation prayers from Journal option number two can be collected and made into a book. Copies of the class' *Vocation Prayer Book* can then be given to the students to keep.

As a further (extracurricular) activity, the students can pray their vocation prayers for the other grades over the school PA in the morning, or during a school mass or prayer service.

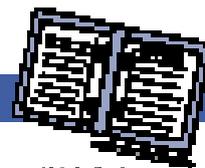
### Prayer for Guidance

At the end of class, the teacher can invite the students to recite together the Prayer for Guidance. Some of the language may prove a bit advanced and, depending on the group of students, may require some further explanation.

### Bible Quote on Finding God

Have a student read the passage at the bottom of page 12. You may want to discuss with the class what this means, and how it could impact their lives. You may also use this as the basis for a spontaneous class prayer, recognizing that God wants us to find Him, voicing the desire to be honest and open in seeking Him, and telling Him that we will never hide from Him.

### Write about it!



#### Journal options:

- When do you pray? How do you pray? How much time do you think that you should take, and how much time should you talk so that your prayer is a dialogue with God? Write 3-5 things that you can do to pray better and hear God better.
- Write your own personal vocation prayer (3-5 lines) asking God to help you discover your vocation.



### Prayer for Guidance

by St. Teresa of Avila

Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by you, always follow your plans, and perfectly accomplish your holy will.

Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of my life, I may do whatever you require of me.

Help me respond to the slightest prompting of your grace so that I may be your trustworthy instrument for your honor.

May your will be done in me and in meekness by me, in me and through me.

Amen.

The Bible says, "The Lord searches all hearts and understands all the mind's thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let Himself be found by you" (1 Chr 28:9). God wants you to find Him. Be honest with Him. Have patience. If you look for Him with trust and sincerity you will find Him.

### St. Teresa of Avila

Saint Teresa of Avila was born in 1515 in Avila, Spain. Although she suffered from many illnesses over the years, and almost died when she was twenty four, Teresa was a strong, hardworking and spiritually minded woman. She entered the Carmelite order when she was twenty-two and dedicated her life to prayer. She said that it took her twenty years as a nun before she actually felt like she knew how to pray, which is an inspiration for all of us beginners to keep at it. She began a reform movement to return the Carmelite order to its original purpose, which was dedicated to prayer and study, with a focus on contemplation. This reform movement caused many to think of her as a trouble maker, but the reform caught on and she personally founded many new monasteries for women (and a few for men). She had many mystical experiences where she felt united to God and wrote several books on prayer. She was named a saint in 1622 and in 1970 she was declared a Doctor of the Church, which means her writings are very important for the people of God. She is considered the Doctor of Prayer.

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## NOTE: Different types of Prayer

What is prayer? "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (St. John Damascene, CCC 2559). According to the Catechism, there are several forms of prayer: Blessing and Adoration where we acknowledge God as our creator; Prayer of Petition where we ask God for forgiveness, mercy and for our needs; Prayer of Intercession where we pray for others; Prayer of Thanksgiving where we thank God for all things; and Prayer of Praise for God "from whom all things come and for whom we live" (1 Cor 8:6).

## Supplementary material on prayer

There are different expressions of prayer. The most common is vocal prayer where our "prayer takes flesh" (CCC 2700). Examples of vocal prayers, said out loud or within our hearts, are the Our Father, taught to us by Jesus, the Hail Mary, the Psalms and any prayer of our own composition. Another expression of prayer is meditation. For example, we may meditate with our imagination and emotions on a mystery of the Rosary or a passage from the Bible with the goal of developing a deeper relationship with Jesus. The final expression of prayer is contemplation, is basking in the Lord's presence. It is a silent contemplation of God, like friends quietly sitting with one another. A good example of this is someone who spends a holy hour with Jesus in the quiet of a church.

## Catechism and Bible Passages

"It is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain" (CCC 2562).

"Pray constantly" (Thes 5:17). Prayer and Christian life are inseparable (CCC 2757). It is possible to offer a fervent prayer even while walking in public or strolling alone, or seated in your shop, ... while buying or selling, ... or even while cooking" St. John Chrysostom (CCC 2745).

## Online Bible Resources

Below are two good web sites where you can find the bible online:

<http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/>

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_INDEX.HTM)

Here are some good vocation stories the students can look up.

The call of Jonah: Jonah 1-4

The call of Moses: Exodus 3:1-22; 4:1-17

The call of St. Paul: Acts 9:1-22

The call of Samuel: 1 Samuel 3:1-21

## Role Playing: Vocation Stories in the Bible

Read the full story of Samuel in the Bible- Have the students act it out as a role playing activity. You may want to prepare props to help with this activity. Other biblical vocation stories that can be used are: Mary and the Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38), Elizabeth and Zachariah (Lk 1:5-26, 57-64), Jacob's dreams (Genesis 28:10-22), Moses, Abraham and Sarah Genesis (12:1-3)

## Prayer Activities

- Prayer partner: assign each student a prayer partner for the week that they promise to pray for each day.
- Write down several intentions on slips of paper and put them into a box. The intentions can then be distributed to the students, who promise to pray for that intention.
- Take a moment after saying the Vocation prayer to allow the students to speak to God and listen to Him in silence.

For "The Pope, Bishops, Priests, and Religious" section (page 10): This is an excellent opportunity to introduce these figures to the students. You can begin by asking the students: 1) who the current pope is, 2) the name of the local bishop, 3) the name of the pastor of the parish, and 4) the names of any other priests and religious working in the parish. This can then be supplemented with pictures of any or all of these people, so that the students will be able to recognize them if they see them.

For "The Sacraments" section (page 10): Scrapbook of Sacraments, Faith History. The reception of sacraments are traditionally well-documented events in the life of a Catholic. With the help of their parents, students can create a scrapbook commemorating their baptism and first communion, which may include pictures. They can also, if they choose, include material from their parents' or grandparents' baptisms, first communions, or weddings. Ask the students to write how God was communicating with them in each occasion depicted in their scrapbook. Ask the students to write in their scrapbook how each sacrament is a step on the path God is inviting them to follow and to talk about where they think it might lead in the future.

# Lesson Planner

## Unit One : Lesson Four

### Overview:

This lesson introduces the four main vocations: marriage, single life, priesthood, and religious life. The focus of this lesson is the vocation of the single life and it describes how this vocation should be lived as a disciple of Christ: unselfishly, chastely, and following the example of Christ, who was single.

Single people have a special role in the Church, and they are uniquely able to serve others.

As part of the discussion of the vocation of the single life, chastity and modesty are examined within the context of Christian life. While these may prove to be topics of great interest and debate for students, the discussion should remain focused on the vocation of the single life.

### Objectives:

- To define the vocation to the single life and understand that it is the only vocation that every person is called to live for at least some part of their lives.
- To learn that single men and woman are called to be unselfish in loving and serving God and other people
- To discuss some of the ways that single people can contribute to the Church.
- To learn that an important part of living as a single man or woman is to live the virtues of chastity and modesty.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	2
• Section 1: Called To Do Great Things	2
• Section 2: The Single Vocation: Prepared For God's Call	5
• Section 3: Selfish Vs. Unselfish	4
• Section 4: A Special Mission In The Church	5
• Section 5: The Virtue Of Chastity	10
• Section 6: Jesus Is Our Example	1
• Discussion: Let's Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Special Preparation /

### Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Vocation Journals
- Bible (optional)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

See page \_\_

- Chastity: Temptation vs. Sin
- On Homosexual Attraction

### Supplemental Material:

See page \_\_

- Meditation by Pope John Paul II
- CCC citations on Chastity, Modesty
- Relevant passage from Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*.

### Optional activities:

See page \_\_

- Becoming a Good Spouse
- Additional Discussion Material
- Interview a single person working in the Church
- Optional Activity: Lay Organizations
- People who work in the parish

### Vocabulary:

Single life  
Lay people  
Chastity  
Modesty

# Unit One: Lesson Four

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

## Introduction: (2 minutes)

Call the students attention to the graphic in the lower left corner of page 13 and say:

Every person has a different story, because God is a creative writer who likes to make different plots and adventures for each vocation he creates. He does, however, follow certain patterns, and we can group the many specific vocations together in four major categories. Today we are going to talk about one of those categories that we are all called to live at some point in our lives.

## Lesson Development

### Section One: Called to do Great Things (2 minutes)

Begin reading the section aloud.

Teachers' note: This lesson focuses on the single life, if students have questions about other vocations, you may say that they will be covered later in the curriculum, and for the moment, they can find more information in the glossary

At the end of the section say:  
The period of your life when you are single is an important time to form yourself as a Christian Disciple.

### Section Two: The Single Vocation: Prepared for God's Call (5 minutes)

Begin reading the section aloud. After the second paragraph say:  
For those who are called by God to remain single, this is the path God has invited them to follow and they find joy in living this vocation. Some people remain single in order

## The Vocation to Single Life



### CALLED TO DO GREAT THINGS

Now that you know what a vocation is, as well as what you can do to discover yours, we can begin to discuss the different kinds of vocations. Every person has a unique path; however, we can group vocations into four major categories: single life, married life, priestly life, and religious life.

There is one vocation that we all live at some point in our lives, even if it is only for a short time while we prepare for another vocation. This is the single life. This way of life, whether temporary or lasting one's whole life, is much more than just waiting for something to happen. Single people are called by God to do great things and to become saints.

### THE SINGLE VOCATION: PREPARED FOR GOD'S CALL

A vocation is something that you choose because you have found your greatest joy living in that certain way. In marriage, the priesthood, or the religious life, a person perceives before God to live a certain way for the rest of their lives.

Single life is different because it can be either a stage of life that a person will live until God calls them to another vocation, or a permanent vocation for those who will remain single their whole lives. Some people choose to remain single because of the desire to serve others in the world.

Since everyone is single for at least some part of their lives, our time as a single person should be spent preparing ourselves for what God might ask of us in the future.

Men and women who are called to be married should focus their single lives on forming themselves to become a good spouse for someone. Those who are called to the priesthood or the religious life can prepare themselves by shaping their lifestyle to prepare themselves for their vocation.

Those people who are called to be single for their entire lives must also be prepared to do God's will. Single people have a special freedom to serve God and others while they are single. Other vocations do not have the same special freedom. Married people are committed to taking care of a family, priests are responsible for serving the Church, and religious brothers and sisters have obligations to their communities. Single men and women live out their vocations in the world and have a unique opportunity to serve the Lord anytime, anywhere and with their whole hearts. They are like a special task force that can be sent wherever God needs them.



You too  
can be  
a saint!



Teachers note on single parents (this can be shared aloud with the class):

All parents, whether they are married or single, are committed to caring for their children. Single people who are raising children are called to live out their vocation to the single life in a special way. As Christian Disciples, they are called to grow in their relationship with Jesus. Like any other single person, they remain open to God's will for their lives and serve others and the Church according to their abilities.

God is a creative writer who writes a unique vocation story for each one of us. St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:3-4, "You show that you are a letter from Christ ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God.

After the third paragraph, you can turn to the grey box on the page 17, entitled Becoming a Good Spouse. Read it and discuss what it means. or, if it is more convenient, you can come back to it later.

to take care of sick or elderly family members. Others devote their lives to serving the church as consecrated lay people.

### Section 3: Selfish vs. Unselfish (4 minutes)

Begin by asking:

**Q:** What does it mean to be selfish?

**A:** To think only of yourself and not care about anyone else.

**Q:** What does it mean to be unselfish?

**A:** To think of others, share with others, help others.

**Q:** What are some examples of being selfish or unselfish?

**A:** Answers will vary.

Begin reading the section aloud. After the first paragraph, say:

All Christian disciples are called to serve others and to be unselfish, not just those who are single.

**Q:** What are some things that you can do that are unselfish?

**A:** Answers will vary. Possible answers are: helping others, volunteering, donating items./ money, not being greedy

After reading the second paragraph you can provide some popular examples of selfish/unselfish people. Selfish: Grinch, Scrooge, the selfish giant. Unselfish: firemen, social workers, nurses.

Then say:

How does being unselfish increase your ability to love? It teaches us to put others' needs before our own, and teaches others to do the same.

All Christian disciples are called to serve others, the following is a list of ways that people can serve God in different areas of their lives.

### Section 4: A Special Mission in the Church (5 minutes)

Begin reading the section aloud. After reading the list of ways to help in the parish, ask:

**Q:** Do you know any of the people who

**Question:**  
How did Jesus show his unselfish love?

**Answer:**  
Jesus showed unselfishness by giving everything He had to other people; He gave time when He listened and talked with people, He gave cures to sick people, He gave teachings to people who did not know about God, and even when He was tired Jesus did not stop serving others.

#### SELFISH VS. UNSELFISH

While a person remains single, they have the opportunity to offer more of their talents and time in generous service to others just like Jesus did. If a single person does not make the effort to serve others, they can be tempted to serve only themselves and use their talents selfishly.

By being unselfish we grow in our ability to love and be loved. Being selfish, on the other hand, limits our ability to love and our ability to be loved. Selfishness makes us shallow of heart, and can make us feel isolated. Single people should find ways that they can serve others so they do not become selfish. Some of the ways a person's talents and time may be shared are:

**Professionally** in the workplace or at school, by acting honestly, fairly, and generously

**Personally** by offering sincere friendship to others or being a good role model for nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters

**Spiritually** by going to Church every Sunday and praying daily for others

**Apocryphally** by giving time working for the Church as the Apostles did, visiting the sick and teaching about the Faith

**Militarily** by helping the poor and needy and not becoming too concerned about material things

#### A SPECIAL MISSION IN THE CHURCH

Being part of a family teaches us how to love others. A single person may appear to be alone, "but no one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family to everyone." In the Church, a person can find many ways to serve this community. Priests, religious, married people, and single people can all help in the parish, in various professional and voluntary positions including:

- Religious Education Teachers who teach children about the Catholic faith
- Pastoral Associates who help organize the liturgy, church music, caring for the sick, supporting the poor, instructing new adult Catholics (RCIA), etc.
- Catholic School Teachers who teach faith and knowledge to the next generation of young Catholics
- Volunteers who work in soup kitchens, homeless shelters, young adult groups, choirs, and evangelization missions



help around the parish in any of the ways described above? (Answers will vary.)

Then say:

Remember that you all are single too. This means that you are also called to serve others and serve the Church. Ask yourselves what are you doing now in school to serve others? How are you participating in the special mission of the Church? Do you do anything in the parish, such as altar serving, collecting and distributing food to the needy, participating in parish activities, or helping at a soup kitchen?

Then say:

Many high school and college students go on mission trips to help people in economically challenged areas, or in areas of natural disaster.

Continue reading the lesson aloud.

*Then I heard  
the voice of the  
Lord saying,  
"Whom shall I  
send? Who will  
go for us?" Here  
I am," I said,  
"Send me!"*

Isaiah 6:8

These activities and many others offer a single person the opportunity to serve God and others as a part of their vocation.

In recent years, many new groups and movements have sprung up to help lay people, both married and single, to live their discipleship more intensely through prayer, service, and spiritual growth. There are also various volunteer organizations that offer exciting opportunities for people to give one or two years in full-time service to the Church. Many young people choose to volunteer after graduating from high school or college.

Some religious communities (also called congregations) have branches specifically for lay people who wish to live like members of the community. For example, secular Franciscans follow the example of St. Francis in his detachment from material things. Third Order Carmelites seek to live their vocation by praying and listening to the word of God. There are many other religious communities that have ways for lay people to be involved and grow within their vocation to marriage or the single life.

A single person has many opportunities to live the call to serve others; the only thing they need is a generous heart and openness to the Lord's call. God gives each person the opportunity to live his or her unique vocation in a holy way.

*Free to Love*

### THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY

Chastity is a very important part of every vocation because it prepares a person for whatever God might be calling them to in the future. Chastity also helps single people to live their single vocation to the fullest extent. Chastity is the virtue that guides the way we express love with our bodies. Our bodies are a gift from God, so we must learn to use them appropriately and not to disrespect our own bodies or other people's.

**Chastity** is the virtue which controls our sexual desires, according to one's particular vocation.

An important part of chastity is that all sexual relations are meant to be between a man and a woman who are married. Our faith teaches us that sexual acts outside of marriage are immoral and sinful. In the Bible, St. Paul says, "Shun immorality... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?" (1 Cor 6:18-19).

Chastity treasures one's heart in a special way: increasing our love for God and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Everyone is called to live the virtue of chastity, even married people by their faithfulness to their spouse. "People should cultivate chastity in the way that is suited to their state in life - which enables them to give themselves to God along with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner."<sup>1</sup>

Chastity also requires us to live the virtue of **modesty**. Modesty means respecting your own body by not exposing it inappropriately and not using it to cause others to fall into temptation. It also means respecting others by avoiding the temptation to look at or create their bodies disrespectfully. The Church teaches us that "modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing."<sup>2</sup> Modesty also helps us avoid unhealthy curiosity.

**Modesty** protects our most intimate selves. This means being decent and appropriate in dress, words, and behavior.

*A lay person is someone who is not a deacon, priest, or bishop.*

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Before the paragraph that begins, "In recent years," you may want to explain what the term "lay person" means by reading the blue box on page 15. Then say:

A lay person is a single or married person who is a member of the Church. Most people in the Catholic Church are lay people.

## Section 5: The Virtue of Chastity (10 minutes)

**Teacher's Note:** in discussing chastity it is important to remember that the point of this section is to give a simple, objective statement of the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is not meant to be judgemental of individuals. Special care should be taken to maintain a tone of charity and due delicacy during this discussion.

Begin reading the section aloud. After second paragraph say:

For a single person, chastity means not having sexual relations before marriage - plain and simple.

But chastity is more than just not doing something; chastity is loving other people with a love that is pure, instead of using others to satisfy our desires.

After the third paragraph, say:

Chastity is the school of love. It teaches us what true love is. It teaches us to love as God loves and it helps us to love God and others more deeply with a love that is pure, the only love that is true.

After the fourth paragraph, say:

Not exposing your body inappropriately means not dressing sleazy and not using your body to get attention.

Not looking at people disrespectfully means not lusting after people, not making inappropriate comments about other people's bodies, and not looking at pornography.

At the end of this section, let students know that if they have any questions about chastity or modesty, that are private, they should feel free to ask the teacher later or they can ask anonymously by using the question box.

## Supplemental Material on Lay Celibacy

There are three forms of celibacy living in the Church: celibacy of the laity, the consecrated celibacy of the religious, and celibacy proper to Holy Orders (the ministerial priesthood). The reason for each form of celibacy is love of God and generous dedication to one's personal apostolic and specific evangelizing mission.

Perhaps celibacy of the laity can be best understood by looking to the first Christians. Tradition points to some men and women who renounced marriage to imitate Christ's way of life and to build up the Kingdom of God (Mt 19:12) Examples are St. John the Baptist, St. John the Apostle, St. Paul, and probably St. Mary Magdalene. During the Church's first two centuries the early virgins and martyrs were often lay people living celibacy. In their case, "virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is an unfolding of baptismal grace." (CCC 1619). Today there are many lay people who live apostolic celibacy, in various groups within the Church.

Later in the second century, the "order of virgins" makes a formal appearance in the Church, and unlike the lay virgins, it consisted of men and women who made a public profession of virginity for the Kingdom of Heaven. They were consecrated by means of a liturgical ceremony in which they received a distinctive sign. In our day, there are consecrated virgins belonging to various groups in the Church. Both consecrated virgins and lay people living celibacy help build up the Church in modern times.

## Section 5: Jesus is our Example (1 minute)

Begin the section by saying:

One thing to remember in discussing the single vocation is that Jesus was single. Jesus was a kid, a teenager, and a young adult before He began His ministry. How do you think he would have behaved?

Continue reading the rest of the section aloud.

## Saints Who Were Single

Begin this section by saying:

Now we are going to talk about some saintly young men and women who were single. Even though they were young, some very close to your age, they acted courageously in standing up for their faith.

After reading this section aloud, ask: Has your faith ever been challenged? Have you ever been made fun of or made to feel uncomfortable for living your faith? Did you realize that often times these are moments when you can stand up for your faith?

**Q:** What can you do to stand up for what you believe the way that these young men and women did? (Answers will vary.)

There are times in our everyday lives when we must stand up and defend our purity. Whenever impure conversations or topics come up, do you change the subject, walk away, remain silent, or join in? Whenever you see something in a movie or on television is that is offensive, do you have the courage to walk out or change the channel? When people say inappropriate things in front of you or about you do you stand up for yourself?

Teacher's note: In discussing the subject of defending purity (particularly with reference to the example of St. Maria Goretti) you should be sensitive to students who may have been subject to situations beyond their control, such as abuse at home or by an adult, or even rape. The story of Maria Goretti is meant to be a positive example and should not give rise to inappropriate feelings of guilt.

Why should we practice modesty? We should do so because "modesty protects the intimate center of a person." Your "intimate center" is your whole self, what you think and feel; it is your personality, and what makes you who you are. When you expose your body by dressing or acting inappropriately, it causes people to disrespect who you really are. People no longer look at you as a person; they look at you as an object, a thing. This can affect the way people hear you, and the respect they have for you. By dressing and acting modestly, you express that you are a unique, intelligent person who is beautiful on the inside, as well as on the outside, and that you must be respected for who you are.



### JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus is the prime example of a single person living in the world. Jesus combined an active ministry with private prayer showing us that we too can do our jobs, go to school, have friends and yet still lead a holy life if we turn to God regularly for our guidance and direction. He showed us that this is the best way to find fulfillment on earth and in Heaven.

*Long live Christ the King!*

### SAINTS WHO WERE SINGLE



**St. Maria Goretti** (b.1890) was born in Italy and was murdered by a young man in 1902 when she bravely resisted his forced sexual advances. On her deathbed, she forgave him. Her murderer experienced a conversion because of her example, and when he was released from prison, he testified on her behalf at her beatification. Maria was declared a saint in 1950, and is the Patron Saint of Teenagers.



**St. Kateri Tekakwitha** (b.1656) was born to a Christian mother in the Mohawk tribe. Kateri was orphaned at age four and raised by her uncle who did not like Christianity. Her family tried to force her to marry but she felt called to remain single in service to God. At age 17, she asked a priest to baptize her and escaped to Canada where she dedicated the rest of her life to God.



**Jose Luis Sanchez del Rio** (b. 1915) lived in Mexico at a time when the government was persecuting Catholics. He joined the *Cristeros*, a group of Mexican Catholics who fought against the religious persecution. At the age of 14, he was captured by the federal army and put in prison. The soldiers told Jose Luis that if he did not give up his faith in Christ they would execute him, but he was not afraid and he kept his faith in Jesus Christ. The soldiers cut the skin from his feet and forced him to walk through the town. They would stop along the way and tell him that if he would cry out "Death to Christ the King" they would spare his life. Every time he answered, "Long live Christ the King!" Finally, they arrived at the cemetery and they asked him one last time to deny his faith. He refused and cried out "Long live Christ the King!" He was then shot and killed for bearing witness to his faith in Jesus Christ. Jose Luis has been declared a martyr and was beatified in November 2005 on the feast of Christ the King.

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Unit One: Lesson Four

If in the course of the discussion, a student indicates in any way that they may have been abused, speak to the student in private, and if abuse has occurred, notify the proper authorities.

Teacher's note on exemplary saints sections:

Throughout the curriculum, the lives of saintly people are included to help illustrate the different vocations (married life, single life, priesthood, religious life) as paths to holiness.

In the Roman Catholic Church, there are different stages before a person is declared a saint. The stages are as follows:

1) Servant of God 2) Venerable 3) Blessed 4) Saint

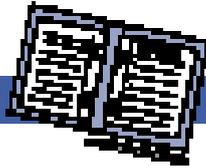
You will notice that some of the people who are mentioned in these sections carry one of these titles, according to the stage the process for their canonization (being named a saint) has reached.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. What are some ways that you, as a single person, can avoid selfishness? Based on your talents and the needs of your community, how could you be the most helpful? What are the benefits of being unselfish?
2. What are some ways that single people live the virtue of chastity? How can you be modest in the way you dress and act?
3. It is natural to be attracted to other people. What is the respectful way to think about and treat someone who we are attracted to? How does the way that we look at other people affect our ability to live modestly?

### VOCABULARY

Single life  
Lay people  
Chastity  
Modesty



## Write about it!

### Journal options:

- Chastity is a great Christian teaching that the world does not always understand. Do you ever see movies, television shows, or magazines that show lifestyles that are not chaste or modest? How does this affect the way people look at and think about other people? What would the world be like if nobody respected each other or if everyone treated each other as objects instead of human persons?
- Many young single people volunteer for a year in various church-related organizations around the world. Would you ever consider spending a year or two doing volunteer service? Describe what type of service you would be interested in doing.



### Becoming a Good Spouse

If you plan on being married in the future, what qualities would you look for in a husband or wife? Honesty? Kindness? Treatworthyness? If you want these things in a spouse then they will probably want them from you. So if you plan on being married in the future, start becoming a good spouse now.

Unit One: Lesson Four

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## Summary:

Living a single life is a vocation from God. It is a way to pursue God by growing in holiness, and to find fulfillment in this life and in the next. Single people are called by God to be saints by unselfishly serving God and others, and to better the world in whatever place God calls them to be.

## Let's Talk About It!

1. What are some ways that you, as a single person, can avoid selfishness? Based on your talents and the needs of your community, how could you be the most helpful? What are the benefits of being unselfish?

**A:** By serving others. Answers will vary according to people's talents. The benefits of being unselfish are a greater ability to love and be loved, and an opportunity to become a better person.

2. What are some ways that single people live the virtue of chastity? How can you be modest in the way you dress and act?

**A:** By respecting our bodies and the bodies of others; by dressing appropriately, yet stylishly; by not giving into inappropriate curiosities; by not looking or thinking of others in inappropriate and demeaning ways; by defending the dignity of others.

3. It is natural to be attracted to other people. What is the respectful way to think about and treat someone who we are attracted to? How does the way that we look at other people affect our ability to live modestly?

**A:** Think of others as being created by God, and as your possible spouse (someday). Respect them as God's creation and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Respect their human dignity and who they are by getting to know them as a person. The way we look at others can either help us to respect them or cause us to objectify them.

## Homosexual Attraction

It is possible that in discussing question number 3 the subject of homosexual attraction may arise. Teachers should be sensitive but clear on the subject.

Like all single people, a person with same-sex attraction is called to holiness and chastity. They are not to be treated unjustly, but on the contrary they should be treated with charity because they are created and loved by God.

Homosexual attraction is distinct from homosexual acts. The Catholic Church has always taught that homosexual acts are contrary to the natural law and God's plan for creation, and are sinful. God called men and women to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). "A man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body" (Gen 2:24). The bible speaks very clearly on this subject (See Gen 19:1-19, Rom 1:24-27, 1 Cor 6:10, 1 Tim 1:10). For more information on this subject see CCC 2357-2359.

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## NOTES

### Chastity: Temptation vs. Sin

It is important that students know the difference between a temptation, and a sin in order to avoid inappropriate feelings of guilt. Temptation in itself is not a sin. For example a fleeting impure thought is not a sin, while dwelling on it is.

When the text says, "Modesty means... respecting others by avoiding the temptation to look at or desire their bodies disrespectfully," it should be understood that it is normal to have temptations, but that the important thing is not to encourage or act on these temptations in sinful ways.

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

### Meditation by Pope John Paul II

When you help your neighbor, you proclaim the Good News of Christ, which makes universal brotherhood possible.

When you visit a sick person, you are a sign of Christ's mercy toward those who suffer.

When you forgive, even your worst enemy, you are a sign of the forgiveness of Christ, who never nourished hatred in his heart.

When, as a young man or woman, you save yourself for the one who will be your spouse, you are testimony of the unique value that love can bring.

When as Christian spouses, you remain faithful in marriage, you are an encouragement to all and a sign of the eternal love between God and man.

When you radiate Christ, you awaken a desire for total self-giving in his service and inspire new priestly and religious vocations.

May our Lord of Peace help you to be, for your brothers and sisters, men and women of light, authors of peace and reconciliation who can be builders of a more just and fraternal world. Amen.

### CCC citations on Chastity, Modesty

Chastity: CCC 2337-2356

Modesty: CCC 2530-2527

### Optional activity: Becoming a Good Spouse Box

After reading the gray box on page 17, students can individually or in groups create a list of characteristics they would look for in a spouse, and that they should, in turn, work on developing within themselves. This can be used as an appropriate segue to the next lesson on marriage.

### Additional discussion material:

1. Chastity is a great virtue and Christian teaching that society does not understand and criticizes. What does society say, through the media, movies, pressures, etc. about chastity in the life of a single person? Why does the Church continue to teach about the virtue even though it is counter-cultural?

2. Many young single people volunteer for a year in various church-related organizations. Would you ever consider spending a year in a volunteer community to serve people in need? Describe what type of service you would be interested in taking part in.

### Optional Activity: Interview a Single Person

Interview a single person who is active in your parish, or another Catholic church. Describe what activities in the parish they are currently involved in. Ask them if being single gives them more time for these activities.

### Optional Activity: Lay Organizations

Introduce and discuss lay organizations that are viable in your parish such as St. Vincent De Paul Ministry to the home bound and Minister of Care. Use this opportunity to connect the lesson with the real life of the parish.

### Optional Activity: People Who Work in the Parish

Students can make thank you cards in appreciation for some of the people who help around the parish, thanking them for their being active in the mission of the Church.

# Lesson Planner

## Unit One : Lesson Five

### Overview:

This Lesson discusses the vocation of marriage within the context of the Church's teaching: as a call from God, as a symbol of Jesus' love for the Church, as a sacrament and a sacred bond, ordered toward raising children in the faith. Teacher should be prepared for a variety of questions on the subject given students' varying family situations and the debate on traditional marriage.

### Objectives:

- To know that marriage is a God-given vocation with a mission and specific way of life
- To see that marriage is a visible sign of God's love
- To know that marriage is a sacrament and a sacred bond
- To know that married people are called to raise their children to know and love God.
- To Define what a Deacon is.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Section 1 : God Has a Plan for Married People	2
• Section 2 : What is So Special About Christian Marriage?	5
• Section 3 : The Special Mission	5
• Section 4 : How Do I Know Whom to Marry?	2
• Section 5 : What is a Deacon?	5
• Discussion: Let's Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Vocabulary:

Marriage  
Vow  
Sacred bond  
Domestic church  
Deacon  
Holy Orders

### Special Preparation/ Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Vocation Journals
- Bible (optional)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)

### Extra Material for Teachers

Below is a bullet-point summary of the material at the end of the lesson

### Notes:

- See page \_\_
- Teacher note: Preparation for marriage
  - Teacher note: On Choosing a Spouse
  - Students from various family situations
  - On Traditional Marriage

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- On True Happiness
  - 4 passages from the CCC on Marriage, the Domestic Church
  - 2 Bible passages
  - Pius XI, Encyclical on Christian Marriage

### Optional activities:

- See page \_\_
- Bulletin Board Ideas
  - Additional discussion material: Marriage Vows
  - Additional journal options
  - Interview a Deacon

# Unit One: Lesson Five

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

## Introduction: (2 minutes)

### Section 1: God Has a Plan for Married People

Teacher's note: Be cautious in using language that assumes that marriage is the default vocation like "when you grow up and get married." Take into account that some students may have a vocation to the priestly religious, or single life.

The Martins' story may serve as an appropriate introduction. The teacher or a student may read the story aloud.

The main idea here is that marriage is a vocation and must be discovered like any other vocation, therefore you should pray about it and prepare for it.

At the end of the section ask:

**Q:** How were Louis and Zolie faithful to their vocation?

**A:** By discovering God's will for them and being married, by raising their children to love God.

**Q:** How did their experiences before they were married prepare them to be good spouses and good parents?

**A:** They learned to love God, to honestly seek their vocation and generously follow it. They taught this to their daughters.

Teachers Note: the picture faintly visible in the background of page 18 is St. Therese of Lisieux. The same picture appears on page 38

## Unit One: Lesson Five

# The Vocation of Marriage



## GOD HAS A PLAN FOR MARRIED PEOPLE

Louis Martin and Zolie Guerin were both good Catholics. They loved God so much that they wanted to dedicate their whole lives to serving God. Louis wanted to be a monk, and Zolie wanted to be a nun. However, both discovered that God had different plans for them. God was calling them to the vocation of marriage. They eventually met each other, fell in love, married, and raised five children.

All five daughters became nuns, the most famous being St. Therese of the Child Jesus, who is called the Little Flower. The reason we have this famous saint today is because her parents realized that the most important thing in life was to follow their vocation to marriage.

Married people are called by God to become saints, help their spouses to become holy, teach their children to love God, and be witnesses of their Christian faith in the world.

## WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

The vocation of marriage is a special gift that God chooses to give many people. In marriage, a man and a woman promise before God to love and honor each other for the rest of their lives.

In the Gospel, Jesus compares His love for the Church to the love of a groom for His bride. This is why a good Christian marriage reminds us of the true love that Christ has for the Church and helps us to understand it better. Christ gave up everything, leaving his home and his mother and eventually giving up his whole life for us, the Church. In the same way, the Bible tells us that "a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This holds true for both husbands and wives. Just as Christ gave himself completely for his Church, a man and a woman give themselves to each other. This gift of self is pure, sincere, beautiful, and complete for as long as they live.

Marriage is more than just a promise of love. In the Catholic Church, marriage is a sacrament. It is a sacred bond of love and responsibility between a man, a woman, and God. It is the sacrament of matrimony, the man and woman make special promises to God called vows to live faithfully as husband and wife for the rest of their lives. God unites them in a sacred bond and fills their souls with the grace they need to love each other and form a family. When a man and a woman are married in the sacrament of matrimony, they invite God to be the center of their family and they offer their love for each other as a gift to Him.



## Lesson Development

### Section 2: What is So Special About Christian Marriage? (5 minutes)

Begin reading the section aloud. After the second paragraph say: We can see that God created this as a vocation for men and women to love and honor each other. Now we are going to read about the role that the Church plays in this vocation.

After last paragraph, ask:

**Q:** What connects God, a husband and a wife in the sacrament of marriage?

**A:** A sacred bond.

**Q:** Can anyone tell me what a vow is?

**A:** It is a special promise made to God.



### THE SPECIAL MISSION

Married people are called to help each other to get to Heaven. God created Eve as a "helper" for Adam because He knew that two people who were united in love could help each other to get to Heaven (Gen 2: 18-25). A husband and wife are also called to teach others to love God, especially their children and the people around them. A married couple is like a team that together bears witness to God's love in the world by the way they live out their faith at home, at work, and in the Church. Like single people, married couples can also serve God in church-related careers or as volunteer workers.

The vocation to marriage also includes the children that may be raised by a married couple.

One of the greatest miracles is the ability to bring children into the world and to cooperate with God in forming them as Christian disciples. If the man and woman truly love each other, their love will extend to any children that God sends them, and their hearts will be open to the gift of every new life. Louis and Zelle Martin did not know that their youngest child would be a great saint. They simply welcomed the new baby that God gave them and taught him to love God.

Parents see, by word and example, the first ones to teach their children about God. The Church teaches that the family is like a small household church, which is called the "domestic church." Each family is a domestic church where its members learn how to be good Christians: to love, to forgive, and to help others. God entrusts little children to married couples so that they will love them and teach them the Christian Faith. Parents provide for the material and emotional needs of each child. Most importantly they should care for the eternal life of each soul by helping them fulfill the vocation that they are called to, especially nourishing any religious vocations their children might have.

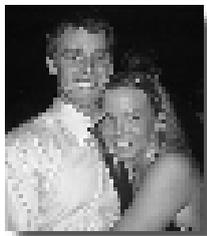
It is the task of each family to form Christian disciples and it is the task of every Christian disciple to build a better world. Therefore, if every Christian family lived as God intended, the world would be a much better place.

The Lord  
God said  
"It is not  
good for the  
man to be  
alone."

Genesis 2:24



### HOW DO I KNOW WHOM TO MARRY?



Marriage is not only a matter of marrying someone who is attractive and fun, but finding someone who will truly help you to love God. If a couple agrees to be disciples of Jesus Christ, it will help them to stay together for the rest of their lives. So it is very important to find the right person to marry, who shares the same Christian faith that you do.

Those who know that they are called to marriage may ask themselves, "How do I know who is the right spouse for me?" If marriage is a God-given vocation, God will be the guide to help us.

Unit One: Lesson Five

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## Section 3: The Special Mission (5 minutes)

Begin the section by saying:

In addition to faithfully living their vows, married people have special responsibilities that are part of their vocation. The next section discusses what these are.

After the first paragraph ask:

Q: What obligation do married people have towards one another?

A: They have to help each other get to Heaven.

After the second paragraph ask:

Q: What is their obligation to their children?

A: They have to welcome them with joy into the world and love them.

After the third paragraph ask:

Q: What is the domestic church? As sons and daughters, what can we do to help make our homes "domestic churches"?

A: The domestic church is the home where the family learns to be good Christians. We can help make our homes domestic churches by helping our parents and siblings to be good Christians and by being a good example to our brothers and sisters

## Section 4: How Do I Know Whom to Marry? (2 minutes)

Read the section aloud

Teacher's note: the passage in the Student Edition that reads: "it is very important to find the right person to marry, who shares the same Christian faith that you do" is not meant to alienate students who have parents who are non-Christians (Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc). The point of this section is that faith is an important part of marriage. It is not meant to be a condemnation of a mixed Christian/non-Christian marriages. Many marriages between people of different faiths are very loving and supporting of one another's pursuit of God. Yet being able to share your faith is always an important part of any marriage and should be taken into account when choosing a spouse.

### Teacher note: Preparation for marriage

Many young people dream of their wedding day. Rightfully so, as it can be a very grace-filled, blessed day and a good start to married life. Yet it is only one day, while marriage is for a lifetime. Young people should be encouraged to consider the time of engagement not as a waiting period or time to prepare for the wedding day, but a time to develop skills such as communication, humility, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, flexibility, trust that help make a good marriage. This is the time during which they can deepen their faith and learn how to support and encourage each other's relationship with Jesus.

### Teacher note: On Choosing a Spouse

One tip on choosing a spouse is to observe how a person treats other people. Often when people are on a date, they are on their best behavior, but this is not always an indication of their true self. For example, how does this person treat the cashier at a store, or the busboy or waitress at a restaurant? This reveals something about their character and most likely, that is how they will eventually treat you, if you were to marry after the honeymoon is over.

## Section 5: What is a Deacon? (5 minutes)

Begin the section by asking:

Does anybody know what a deacon is? How many of you have ever seen a deacon? Are there deacons in our parish? What are their names?

After reading section :

Who can tell me what holy orders is?

### Examples of Married Saints

Begin by saying:

Did you know that there are many married saints.? The vocation of marriage is an important way to serve God and a path to holiness.

Teacher's note: St. Gianna Molla is a much honored figure in the Catholic pro-life movement and a shining example of an unconditional respect for life and unshakable trust in God's will. One of her famous quotes reads, "If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child – I insist on it. Save the baby."

### Summary:

Marriage is a vocation for spouses to live true love for each other and for their family, giving an example to the world of what the love of God is like. It is also a way to serve God, living the Faith and passing on the Faith together. Married people are called to the same holiness and happiness that God has planned for all people, in the fulfillment of their vocation according to his plan.

### Let's Talk About It!

1. How can a married person help their spouse to go to Heaven? How can they help their children become holy?

**A:** Answers will vary. Possible answers: a married person can help their spouse by praying with them and for them, by helping them to be good spouses and parents, by helping them to grow in their love for God, by helping them to learn more about the faith. They can help

Psalm 118: "You must ask Him for help in choosing a spouse. Christ tells us, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7). Jesus assures us that if we trust in Him, He will help guide us in finding a good person to marry.

**Vow:**  
a special  
promise made  
to God

### WHAT IS A DEACON?

Being a **deacon** is a special vocation that is open to both married and single men. Deacons serve the church by assisting the bishop and priests. Deacons may read the Gospel and preach during the Mass. They may also perform baptisms, witness marriages and lead wake and funeral services. They cannot celebrate the Mass, hear confessions, or anoint the sick.

Like any vocation, a man must determine whether God is calling him to be a deacon. Before a man can become a deacon there is a preparation period in which they learn about the faith and about service in the Church. A man is ordained a deacon through the sacrament of **Holy Orders**. This is the same sacrament that priests and bishops receive but is a different degree. A deacon is ordained for life, but only to the ministry of the diaconate, which is different from the priesthood.



### EXAMPLES OF MARRIED SAINTS



**Venerable Pierre Toussaint** (d. 1850) was a black slave who moved to New York with his Catholic slave owners, the Berards. When the Berards became poor, Pierre supported them through his income as a hairdresser. Granted his freedom, he married and became well-known for his charitable acts. He is buried with honor in New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral.

**St. Thomas More** (d. 1535) was married with four children when he was Lord Chancellor of England under King Henry VIII. The King refused to recognize the Pope as head of the Church and wanted to create his own church by declaring himself the head of the Church of England. Thomas wanted to remain faithful to the Catholic Church, so he resigned his position in the government. King Henry viewed this as an act of treason and had Thomas arrested, put in prison, and finally sentenced him to death. Before he was beheaded, Thomas More declared that he was "the King's good servant but God's first."



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Unit 04: Lesson Five

## On True Happiness

We all desire happiness in this life. In seeking it, we often look the wrong way. St. Augustine said, "I seek a happy life, let me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from you" (CCC 1718). Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). This is a fundamental truth: "True happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement, however beneficial it may be, such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love" (CCC 1723). True happiness lies in following the vocation that God is calling us to.



**St. Gianna Molla** (d. 1922) was a married doctor, born in Italy, who gave special attention to mothers, their babies, the poor, and the elderly. When pregnant with her fourth child, she was advised to abort the baby to save her own life. She refused to kill her baby even though she knew it would mean giving up her own life. She died seven days after giving birth to a healthy baby girl. Her daughter read this prayer at her beatification: "Thank you mother, for having given me life two times: in conception and when you permitted me to be born, deciding for my life. Intercede and help always all mothers and all families that come to you with confidence."<sup>22</sup>

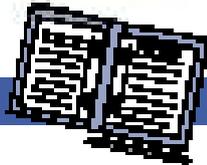
### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. How can a married person help their spouse to go to Heaven? How can they help their children become holy?
2. What are some ways we can help our parents be good mothers and fathers? How can we help them be good husbands and wives?
3. What are some characteristics that would make someone a good spouse? What are some things married people can do to build a strong family?

#### VOCABULARY

Marriage  
Vow  
Sacred bond  
Domestic church  
Deacon  
Holy Orders

### Write about it!



#### Journal options:

- If God called you to marriage, describe what your ideal family would be like. What are some challenges involved in raising a Christian family? How can these challenges be overcome?
- In the Bible, St. Paul writes: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her" (Eph 5:25-26). What does this tell us about the love of Christ for the Church? What does it tell us about the love between a husband and wife?

Unit One: Lesson Five

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their children by teaching them the faith, by teaching them to pray, to love God, and to respond to their vocation.

2. What are some ways we can help our parents be good mothers and fathers? How can we help them be good husbands and wives?

**A:** by praying for them, by obeying them, by being responsible, by treating our siblings with charity, by praying with them. We can help them be good husbands and wives by not making them angry, by thanking them for their sacrifices and love for each other.

3. What are some characteristics that would make someone a good spouse? What are some things married people can do to build a strong family?

**You can add:** if you were married, how would you want your spouse to treat you?

**A:** Someone who treats people with respect and who has a good relationship with Jesus Christ would make a good spouse. Married people can build a strong family by being patient and loving parents, by growing in their love for their spouse, and by living as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

### Additional Discussion material: Marriage Vows

Below are the two versions of marriage vows approved for use in the United States. These can be read aloud in class and examined in light of the lesson material.

**1. GROOM:** I, (name), take you, (name of bride) to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

**BRIDE:** I, (name), take you, (name of groom) to be my husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

**2. GROOM:** I, (name), take you, (name of bride) for my lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

**BRIDE:** I, (name), take you, (name of groom) for my lawful husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

These can be read aloud in class and examined in light of the lesson material. See discussion questions below.

**Q:** Name the different promises made in these marriage vows.

**Q:** How can someone prepare themselves to live these vows faithfully?

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## NOTES

### Students from various family situations.

Many children come from homes with single or divorced parents or are being raised by other family members or organizations. While it is important to be sensitive to the students' family situation, it is equally important that they receive clear, solid instruction on the beauty and fruitfulness of God's plan for men and women in marriage.

### On Traditional Marriage

With regard to marriage, CCC 1601 says "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring". By the grace of the sacrament, the spouses "help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children" (CCC 1641).

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

### Catechism/Bible passages:

On Marriage - CCC 1601-1666

On the Domestic Church - CCC 1655-1658

A husband and wife do more than sign a piece of paper, they "form with each other an intimate communion of life and love" (CCC 1660). "The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church" (CCC 1661). Since God is forever faithful to His Church, men and women pledge in marriage to be faithful to one another in the same way. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church" (Eph 5:25).

Jesus chose to be born and grow up in a family (CCC 1655). His first public miracle occurred during the wedding feast of Cana (Jn 2:1-11), a "confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence" (CCC 1613).

### Pius XI, Encyclical on Christian Marriage

"This outward expression of love must have as its primary purpose that man and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life, so that through their partnership in life, they may advance ever more and more in virtue, and above all that they may grow in true love toward God and neighbor." (Pius XI, Encyclical on Christian Marriage).

### Bulletin Board Ideas:

As a visual aid you can use a "merging" road sign with two paths merging to signify two people whose paths come together to lead them to the same destination. They help each other get to Heaven.

### Additional Journal options:

1. If God called you to marriage, describe what your ideal would be. Describe your ideal for your family as well.
2. What are some ways that Christ shows us in the Gospel what real love is? Write several sentences that begin with "Love is..." according to his example and teaching. Use a Bible if you need to look up some quotes.
3. Interview a married couple (it could be your parents). Ask them how they knew that God meant them for each other.

### Optional Activity: Interview a Deacon

Interview a deacon from your parish. Prepare beforehand a list of questions you can ask him. Make sure to ask how he discovered that God was calling him to be a deacon, how he experiences joy in living this calling, and how it helps them grow closer to God



# Unit Two Planner

Lesson	Title	Special Preparations Materials	Major Concepts	Teaching Steps	Extra Resources, Activities
1	Priesthood: What is a priest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Bible (optional)</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a priest?</li> <li>• Ways a priest serves the Church</li> <li>• Diocesan and religious priests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map of the Diocese</li> <li>• Make a Chart: Diocesan or Religious</li> <li>• Priest wanted</li> <li>• Ordination Photos</li> </ul>
2	The Spirituality of Diocesan Priesthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Bible (optional)</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A priest's spirituality</li> <li>• Prayer and service</li> <li>• Ways a priest prays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you solve this?</li> <li>• MVP - Most Valuable Priest</li> <li>• Rosary</li> <li>• Prayer or service?</li> </ul>
3	Witness of a Priest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule speaker</li> <li>• Make a copy of Speaker Suggestions and FAQ's for the speaker</li> <li>• If you cannot get a speaker, see Optional Activities at end of chapter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How God calls someone to the priesthood</li> <li>• What it is like to be a priest</li> <li>• The joy of being a priest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Witness of a Priest.</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Witness of a priest online</li> <li>• Priests in the Parish</li> <li>• Frequently Asked Questions for priests</li> </ul>
4	How Does a Man Become a Priest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Bible (optional)</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steps to follow a vocation</li> <li>• What is a seminary?</li> <li>• Actively seeking our vocation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of major seminaries in the United States.</li> </ul>
5	Witness of a Seminarian / Adopt a Seminarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule speaker</li> <li>• Make a copy of Speaker Suggestions and FAQ's for the speaker</li> <li>• If you cannot get a speaker, see Optional Activities at end of chapter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discerning a call to the priesthood</li> <li>• What the seminary is like</li> <li>• Responding to God's call</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Witness of a Seminarian</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt-a-Seminarian/Sister</li> <li>• Fishers of Men DVD</li> <li>• A day in the life of a seminarian.</li> <li>• Witness of a seminarian online</li> <li>• Thank you letter to seminarian</li> </ul>

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Two : Lesson One

### Overview:

This lesson lays the foundation for Unit Two's week-long focus on the priesthood. By defining the vocation of the priesthood and its primary mission, it sets the framework for later lessons.

### Objectives:

- To review the fundamental principles of a vocation, in light of the specific call to the priesthood
- To see that the priesthood is a special call to follow Jesus' in a particular way, as a gift to the Church and the world
- To know some concrete ways a priest is called to serve the Church

### Timeline of Lesson:

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| • Vocation Prayer  | 1 minute   |
| • Introduction   | 2 minutes  |
| • Section 1: The Gift of the Priesthood                    | 2 minutes  |
| • Section 2: The Sacrament of Holy Orders                  | 1 minutes  |
| • Section 3: Priestly Promises                             | 10 minutes |
| • Section 4: The Priestly Mission                          | 5 minutes  |
| • Section 5: Diocesan Priests In<br>Service to the Church  | 5 minutes  |
| • Section 6: Priesthood Within a<br>Religious Congregation | 5 minutes  |
| • Discussion: Let's Talk About It!                         | 10 minutes |
| • Journal: Write About It!                                 | Homework   |

### Vocabulary:

Ordination  
Obedience  
Celibacy  
Vows  
In persona Christi  
Religious community  
Religious superior

### Special Preparation /

### Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Vocation Journals
- Bible (optional)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

- See page \_\_
- On married priests
  - On priestly celibacy

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- On the nature of the priesthood
  - Celibacy

### Optional activities:

- Map of the Diocese
- MAKE A CHART: Diocesan or Religious
- Priest wanted
- Ordination Photos

# Unit Two: Lesson One

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

## Introduction: (2 minutes)

In the last Unit, we learned about a special plan that God invites us to live called a vocation. We also learned that there are four main vocations, and spoke about two of them: the single vocation and the married vocation. In Unit Two, we are going to talk about the priestly vocation.

## Lesson Development

### Section 1: The Gift of the Priesthood (2 minutes)

Begin reading the section aloud. At the end of the section, ask:

**Q:** Who called the first men to be priests? Where did these men come from?

**A:** Jesus chose them from among his disciples

**Q:** Who is it that calls men to be priests today? Where do these men come from?

**A:** Jesus is still the one who calls men to be priests, and He calls them from among his disciples.

*Then say:*

Jesus promised that He would be with us until the end of time. He remains with us in the Church, in the sacraments, and in the Gospel. Jesus calls priests to help Him do this in a special way by guiding the Church, celebrating the sacraments, and preaching the Gospel.

### Section 2: The Sacrament of Holy Orders (1 minute)

Read the section aloud. At the end of the section ask:

**Q:** Where have we heard the phrase "holy orders" before?

**A:** Deacons receive Holy Orders.

## Unit Two: Lesson One

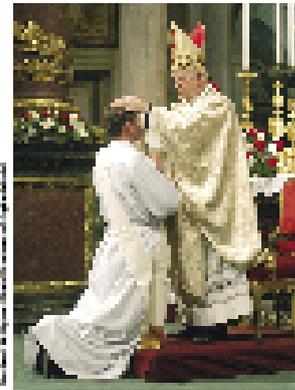
# Priesthood: What is a Priest?

## THE GIFT OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Jesus Christ knew that it would be difficult to live the Christian life here on earth, so He gave us the Church and the sacraments to help us along the way. He also chose a special group of men from among his disciples to guide the Church and celebrate the sacraments. These men were the first priests. Today, he continues to call certain men to the priesthood so that they can fulfill these special duties. All people are called to be disciples of Christ, but those who God chooses for the priesthood imitate him in a particular way. They live like Jesus did here on earth by completely dedicating themselves to serving the Church.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit.

Joh 15:16



## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

The priesthood is so important to the life of the Church that becoming a priest is one of the seven sacraments. This sacrament is known as Holy Orders. When a man receives this sacrament, we say he is ordained, and the ceremony is known as an ordination. In the sacrament of Holy Orders, a priest is ordained by a bishop to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ in a special way. "A priest is a man chosen and called by Christ from among God's faithful people to serve them in the person of Christ, the head of the Church, by forming, leading, teaching and sanctifying them as a community."<sup>1</sup>

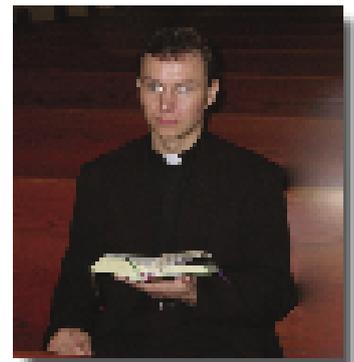
## PRIESTLY PROMISES

In order to fully dedicate himself to his mission, a priest promises to live in a way that will help him be more Christ-like.

Before he is ordained a priest, a man makes three special promises: he promises to pray certain priestly prayers everyday, he promises obedience to his bishop, and he promises to remain celibate his whole life.

The promise of daily prayer is an important part of a priest's life. Prayer helps a priest to remain close to God and connected in prayer to the people he serves. Every single day priests say a special set of prayers called the Liturgy of the Hours. We will learn more about this in the next lesson.

Another priestly promise is obedience to the bishop. Just as a priest guides the people he serves, he looks to his bishop and the pope for guidance because God has called them to lead the Church. A priest promises to remain loyal to his bishop and to follow the teachings of the Church. Obedience does not mean blindly following orders; it means paying



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Unit Two: Lesson One

*Then say:*

Has anyone ever seen a priestly ordination? The picture on the left side of page 22 is of a man being ordained a priest. In the sacrament of Holy Orders, the bishop lays his hands on him and prays over him.

### Section 3: Priestly Promises (5 minutes)

Begin the section by saying: At their ordination a priest makes three special promises. Now we are going to read about what those three promises are.

*After the second paragraph say:* Look at the picture at the bottom of page 22. This priest is praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Have you ever seen a priest praying like this? He is fulfilling his priestly promise of prayer.

*After the third paragraph say:* Obedience to the bishop is important because the priests in a diocese have to work together as a team, and the bishop is like the coach of the team. Priests promise obedience not only to the bishop but to future bishops that will come after him.



attention to God's will and for a priest, part of doing God's will is obeying his bishop.

Priests promise to live a celibate lifestyle as part of their commitment to God. Celibacy means not being married. Just as married people promise to give their whole self, body and soul, to their spouses, celibate priests promise to give themselves completely to God.

God gives priests special help to live this calling, despite any limitations or shortcomings they might have. God knows that they are not perfect. God calls whomever He wants, and promises to help them live their promises no matter what their strengths or weaknesses. A priest is only able to live his priestly promises with Jesus' help. Even if a priest had lots of personality, intelligence, and skill, without Jesus' help, he would be unable to fulfill his mission as a priest.

### THE PRIESTLY MISSION

By definition, the priest is called to be, like Jesus, a priest, prophet and king: a priest to offer the sacrifice of the Mass, a prophet to preach the faith, and a king to lead his people to Heaven like a shepherd guides his flock. Jesus Christ is the one acting in and through the priest when he celebrates the Mass or any of the sacraments. Whenever a priest administers the sacraments, he acts in persona Christi, which is a Latin phrase meaning "in the person of Christ." The main responsibility of a priest is to allow the Lord's presence and grace to work through him for the salvation of all people and for God's glory.

A priest brings Christ to us when he:

- Celebrates the Mass, transforming the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.
- Preaches and teaches about Jesus
- Anoints the sick and the dying
- Forgives sins through the sacrament of Reconciliation
- Baptizes new Christians
- Celebrates marriages
- Consoles the grieving, sad and depressed
- Performs wake and funeral services
- Receives new Catholics into the Church
- Prays with and for his parish
- Cares for the poor and homebound



The "arch" before the words diocese or bishop denote the importance and large number of people in a diocese, governed by the bishop.

### DIOCESAN PRIESTS IN SERVICE TO THE CHURCH

There are two basic types of priests: diocesan priests and religious priests. A diocesan priest serves within a geographical area called a diocese (or arch diocese) usually as a pastor or an associate-pastor of a parish.

Diocesan priests live their vocation focused on the needs of the people in their parish and diocese. A diocesan priest promises obedience to the bishop of the diocese. Most diocesan priests live and minister in parishes, although some serve in hospitals or universities, some teach in schools, some work in the diocese's offices, and some serve in other special assignments such as chaplains for police or fire departments.

*After the fourth paragraph say:*

When we learned about marriage, we read that Jesus compares His love for the Church with the love of a husband for his bride. A priest imitates Jesus' love for the Church by promising never to get married and by committing their whole self - body and soul - to loving and serving the Church.

Spiritually, the priest takes the Church as his bride and he becomes the spiritual father of the Church community. He cares for the Church the way a father cares for his family. This is why we call priests "father."

*At the end of the section ask:*

**Q:** Who can name the three promises that a priest makes at his ordination? Who can explain what they mean?

### Section 4: The Priestly Mission (5 minutes)

*Begin reading the paragraph aloud.*

*If students are not familiar with the phrase 'sacrifice of the mass' explain that it refers to the sacrament of the Eucharist, and it is another way of saying 'celebrating mass.'"*

*After the first paragraph ask:*

**Q:** In whose place does the priest act when he celebrates the sacraments?

**A:** He acts in the person of Jesus Christ.

*Optional: As you read the list of the ways a priest brings Christ to us, have the students make a show of hands if they have seen a priest do any of these things.*

**Q:** What do you think it would be like to do these things? (answers will vary)

### Section 5: Diocesan Priests in Service to the Church

*(You may want to look at the Optional Activity on Diocese on page \_\_\_)*

*Begin the section by asking:*

**Q:** Does anyone know what a diocese is?

**A:** A diocese is a geographical area; within this area the Church is assigned to a bishop.

*Then say:* The Church is made up of dioceses, dioceses are made up of parishes, and parishes are made of parishoners, like you and me. Did you know that our diocese has its very own group of priests to serve our parishes?

**Q:** Now that you know what a diocese is, what do you think a diocesan priest is?

**A:** He is a priest who works in the diocese in obedience to the bishop.

*Read the Chapter aloud. At the end of the second paragraph say:*

The diocese is broken up into parishes. Just as the bishop is the head of the diocese, so the pastor is the head of the parish. Does anyone know what the name of our pastor is? Does anyone know what the name of our bishop is? So, if our pastor is a diocesan priest, our pastor, Father (name) promises obedience to our bishop, Bishop (name).

At the end of the section, ask:

**Q:** Now that we've read about it, in your own words, what is a diocesan priest and what makes him diocesan?

**A:** Answers will vary but should include: 1) they work in a parish, 2) they work within the boundaries of the diocese 3) they obey the bishop of the diocese (and his successors) 4) they serve the people of the parish.

## Section 6: Priesthood Within a Religious Congregation (2 minutes)

Begin the section by saying:

Now we are going to talk about the second type of priest, a religious priest.

After the first paragraph ask:

**Q:** Does anyone remember what the word vow is?

**A:** It is a special promise made to God to live in a particular way.

*Teachers' note: the term "religious community" is introduced here, a term that will be explained fully in the next section. If a question arises, refer to the glossary for a full definition.*

### Teacher note: Vows vs. promises

*For the purposes of this curriculum, it is only necessary to know that diocesan priests make promises and religious men and women take vows. Although there are technical differences between the promises and vows, the two terms are very similar and are often used interchangeably: both signify a serious, lifelong commitment made to God.*

At the end of the section say:

A religious priest's community is a very important part of his life. They are like brothers in the same family. They support each other, work together, pray together, and have fun together. Community life is a special part of this vocation.

*Teachers note: the gray box on page 24 reads: "Priestly vows: Prayer Celibacy Obedience." It should read "Priestly Promises." Hopefully this will not be a cause of confusion.*

As a pastor, a diocesan priest is called to be a shepherd for God's people. A pastor plays an important part in the lives of the people in his parish. He shares in their times of joy, such as baptisms and weddings, as well as in difficult times, during sickness and death. The pastor helps to run the parish and its programs. The diocesan priest is called to live in and among God's people everyday as their shepherd.

### PRIESTHOOD WITHIN A RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION

A religious priest is a priest that belongs to a religious community. A religious community (also called a religious order or congregation) is a group of individuals who make vows to live their Christian faith together in a particular way. They focus their service to the Church by fulfilling a specific mission.

A religious priest is ordained as part of a religious community and makes special promises called vows that are different than a diocesan priest's promises. Religious priests take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The vow of poverty means that they do not own material possessions for themselves. Instead they share things in common with their community such as houses or cars. They also use some basic things, such as clothes, shoes, or watches that will help them in their service to the Church. The vow of obedience that a religious priest makes is to follow the lead of the religious community, known as the religious superior. The vow of chastity is similar to the promise that diocesan priests make to remain celibate, meaning he does not get married.

Rather than serve a specific diocese, religious priests work with their religious community in their common mission spread over a wide area, perhaps even worldwide. A religious priest administers the sacraments. He works with other priests and religious brothers in a variety of ministries. Their work may include parish ministry, missionary work, work with the poor, counseling, vocational guidance, teaching, or hospital chaplaincy. Religious priests and communities are the focus of the next unit.



Priestly vows:  
Prayer  
Celibacy  
Obedience



Remember that you are chosen from among God's people and appointed to act for them in relation to God. Do your part in the work of Christ: the Priest with genuine joy and love, and attend to the concerns of Christ before your own.

— Rite of Ordination —

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Unit Two: Laylife One

### Optional Material: Rite of Ordination

Have a student read aloud the quotation at the bottom of the page, then say:

These are some of the words that are actually said at ordination as part of the sacrament of Holy Orders.

**Q:** What does this tell us about the priestly life?

**A:** Answers will vary but can include: being chosen by God, acting for God's people in relation to God, doing the work of the priesthood with joy and love, putting Christ's concerns before your own.

## Saintly Priests

Read the Saintly Priest section aloud then say:

Both these men were normal guys, just like the guys here in the classroom, and as disciples of Jesus they chose to stay open to what God wanted and followed their vocation.

We do not receive our vocations for ourselves, but for the sake of others. Priests see a need in the community and respond to it.

### Let's Talk About It!

1. How did these priests mentioned above contribute to the Church? How were their lives important?

**A:** Answers will vary but can include serving God's people, bringing others to Jesus, setting a Christian example.

*You may wish to add:*

Have you ever felt God working through you to help other people? Why do you think God worked through you, instead of just doing it Himself?

2. In what way has your parish priest, or any priest, affected your life?

**A:** Answers will vary but can include items from the list on page 23.

*Teacher's note: This question aims at how a priest affects our lives positively (negative examples, if they should arise, should not be dwelled upon).*

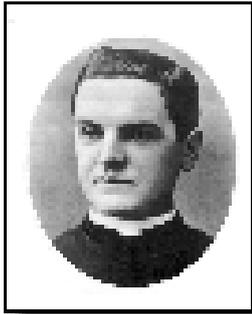
3. What would happen to the Church, the People of God, if there were no priests?

**A:** Answers will vary, but could include, there would be no sacraments, less activity at the parish.

*Teacher's note: there are many places in the world there are not enough priests, such as China, and even parts of the United States.*

4. What are some ways that priests follow the example of Jesus Christ?

**A:** Answers will vary but should include preaching, teaching, celibacy, praying, celebrating the sacraments, serving others.



### SAINTLY PRIESTS

**Fr. Michael McGivney (d. 1880)** saw the need for a worldwide organization of men who could help the Church support widows, orphans and other needy individuals. To accomplish this work, he founded the Knights of Columbus, the largest organization of its kind in the world with over 12,000 members. Fr. McGivney was born and raised in Connecticut and he played an important role in the history of American Catholics. The process for declaring his sainthood has begun.



**Fr. Nelson Baker (d. 1926)** lived in an era when many families were too poor to care for all of their children and were sometimes forced to abandon them. To provide these children with a loving home, Fr. Baker established an orphanage. His orphanage became so well known that children sometimes arrived by train with a note pinned to their coat which read, "Fr. Baker's, La Gravena" (New York). During the Great Depression he served over a million free meals a year to those suffering from hunger. He has been declared a Servant of God, the first step on the road to being declared a saint.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. How did the priests mentioned above contribute to the Church? How were their lives important?
2. In what way has your parish priest, or any priest, affected your life?
3. What would happen to the Church, the People of God, if there were no priests?
4. What are some ways that priests follow the example of Christ?

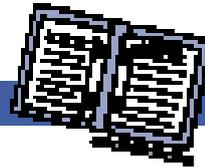
### VOCBULARY

Ordination  
Obedience  
Celibacy  
Vows  
In persona Christi  
Religious community  
Religious superior

### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- What are some reasons to be thankful to God for the priesthood?
- Write a "Thank You" letter to God, or directly to your favorite priest for all the things that the priestly vocation does for us.



## SUMMARY

Priests are ordained by the bishop for the service of God and for his people the Church. Priests share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ and stand *in persona Christi* (Latin for "in the person of Christ") to offer the sacrifice of the Mass, to celebrate the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which is the center of the priesthood. Diocesan priests remain within the geographical area of their dioceses, most often within a parish, where they serve the spiritual needs of the people in their parish community. Religious priests take vows, live in a religious community, and follow their religious superior.

## HOMEWORK

- What are some reasons to be thankful to God for the priesthood?
- Write a "Thank You" letter to God, or directly to your favorite priest for the many things that the priestly vocation does for us.

# EXTRA MATERIAL

## FOR TEACHERS

### NOTES

#### On married priests

The Catholic Church is made up of several different "rites." The Roman Rite makes up over 90% of all Catholics, hence we are often called the Roman Catholic Church.

Within the Roman rite of the Catholic Church the discipline of celibacy for priests has been in effect for many centuries. However, this is not the case for several of the smaller rites within the Catholic Church, who are in full communion, acknowledging the Pope as the head of the Catholic Church. For example, the Ukrainian rite of the Catholic Church does not have the discipline of celibacy for priestly ordination and have married priests.

The Roman Catholic Church will ordain men to the priesthood who are married, if they are converts from another Christian denomination and had been validly recognized as ministers (or priests) in their denomination. Since they were not part of the Roman Catholic Church before their conversion they would not have had the opportunity to enter the discipline of celibacy while pursuing the call they felt by God to be a minister. Once converted to Catholicism, often these men recognize their call is to priesthood, yet they are married. The Church thus allows them to pursue the priesthood without the discipline of celibacy in order that they are able to fulfill their vocation without detriment to their marriage or family.

The Church also welcomes widowers or men who have had a marriage annulled to pursue the priesthood. Often these men have children and grandchildren. The Church asks the duties of a Christian parent be responsibly fulfilled before a man with children can be ordained a priest.

#### On Priestly Celibacy

Celibacy was not mandatory in the early Church but by the fourth century it was "strengthened, spread and confirmed." Even in the Eastern Orthodox Churches, only celibate priests may become bishops and priests themselves cannot marry after ordination. "The unmarried man is busy with the Lord's affairs, concerned with pleasing the Lord; but the married man is busy with the world's demands and occupied with pleasing his wife. This means he is divided" (1 Cor 7:32, 33). Celibacy "is a precious gift given by God to his Church and as a sign of the kingdom which is not of this world and of the individual love of the priest for God and for God's people" (Pastores Dabo Vobis). (See also Mt 19:10)

### SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

#### On the Nature of the Priesthood

"I will appoint over you shepherds after my own heart, who will shepherd you wisely and prudently" (Jer 3:15). The mission of a priest cannot be separated from the mission of Christ, they are the same. Jesus invested in the Apostles the authority to act in His name and through His priests "it continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time" (CCC 1536). "He who hears you, hears me" (Luke 10:16). "Through the ordained ministry... the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers." The priest is truly the image of our high Priest, Jesus Christ.

#### Celibacy

There are those in our society that try to denigrate celibacy and virginity. In fact, virginity is "a powerful sign of the supremacy of the bond with Christ (CCC 1619). "From the very beginning, there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to be intent on the things of the Lord, to seek to please him, and to go out to meet the Bridegroom who is coming" (CCC 1618). The Church teaches that both marriage and virginity come from the Lord and when one is denigrated, the other suffers. "Esteem of virginity for the sake of the kingdom and the Christian understanding of marriage are inseparable, they reinforce each other" (CCC 1620).

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

#### Map of the Diocese

Find and post a picture of your diocese. Locate your school and parish. Another option is to find any map of your area and outline the borders of your diocese, indicating the location of parish churches using colored pins.

You can also draw a quick diagram using concentric circles to depict the parish, diocese, country, and universal Church. This can help explain distinction between religious and diocesan. Religious priests work throughout the biggest circle (the Church), while diocesan priest work in the smaller circle of the diocese.

#### Make A Chart: Diocesan or Religious

Make a chart with two columns one labeled Diocesan, one Religious. Then you can list which characteristics belong to which one, for example obedience bishop/superior, takes vows/promises, community vs. parish, vow of poverty vs. no vow of poverty, works in diocese/works anywhere in the world.

This can be done on the board and made into a quiz game for the students to write items under the correct column

#### Priest wanted

Make a 'want ad' for a parish priest. What would you be looking for? What would it require? It is a want ad, so keep it short and clear.

#### Ordination Photos

Most priests have pictures of their ordination. See if you can obtain a copy of the ordination pictures of some of the priests in the parish. This is especially intriguing if he was ordained a long time ago, so students can see what he looked like as a young priest. This also helps generate interest and questions for the priests visit later in the week.

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Two : Lesson Two

### Overview:

This lesson continues on the topic of the priesthood and discusses the spirituality, or inner life, of a priest with a focus on prayer and service. It is a relatively short lesson, so you may have some extra time for other activities or to prepare questions for the priest's visit.

### Objectives:

- To know the two parts of a priest's spirituality: prayer and service, and how they are related.
- To understand the vital importance of the spiritual life of the diocesan priest.
- To know some of the ways a priest practices his life of prayer.

### Timeline of Lesson:

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| • Vocation Prayer                               | 1 minute   |
| • Introduction                                  | 2 minutes  |
| • Section 1: Priesthood:<br>A Challenge of Love | 2 minutes  |
| • Section 2: A Life of Prayer<br>and Service    | 10 minutes |
| • Section 3: Relationship with God              | 5 minutes  |
| • Section 4: At the Service of Others           | 4 minutes  |
| • Discussion: Let's Talk About It!              | 10 minutes |
| • Journal: Write About It!                      | Homework   |

### Vocabulary:

Spirituality  
Sanctification  
Consecration  
Liturgy of the Hours  
Meditation

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Vocation Journals
- Bible (optional)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

- See page \_\_
- What is spirituality?

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- Fulton Sheen
  - Spirituality of the priesthood

### Optional activities:

- See page \_\_
- Can you solve this?
  - MVP - Most Valuable Priest
  - Rosary
  - Prayer or service?
  - Pray the Liturgy of the Hours

# Unit Two: Lesson Two

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

## Introduction (2 minutes)

### Section 1: Priesthood: A Challenge of Love

Begin reading the section aloud. At the end of the section say:

*Teacher's Note: This quote was taken from the words of Archbishop Ternyac in a congress on the clergy (October 19, 2004)*

The quote we just read describes the challenge that priests have in living out the mission to which God has called them. It is a challenging mission, but it is also joyful when a priest is strengthened in his spiritual life by his relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is a positive challenge to face the world. In order to face the challenges of the world a priest has to remain healthy in their relationship with Jesus.

## Lesson Development

### Section 2: A Life of Prayer and Service (2 minutes)

Begin reading the section aloud at the end of the section, there are two terms that need to be defined. Say:

Spirituality is a particular way of living your faith in God.

(See teacher note on spirituality on page \_\_\_)

Sanctification means becoming holy. A priest works to become holy and to help others to become holy.

Then ask:

**Q:** What are the two main characteristics of a priest's spirituality:

**A:** 1. being centered on his relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer  
2. serving others by bringing Jesus Christ to them

Then say:

These two things go together. Prayer gives the priest the strength to serve others. Service inspires the priest's prayer.

## The Spirituality of Diocesan Priesthood

### PRIESTHOOD: A CHALLENGE OF LOVE

"To sail when the wind is favorable is no great thing, but when the wind is unfavorable, it becomes a real challenge. In a society that prizes success, a career, [excessive pleasure], financial success, the young man who responds to the priestly call tries to orient his life another way, seeking not what is [passing] but enduring values. And this is the challenge that young men love: to go against the current." Priests face many joys and challenges in living out their vocation to bring Christ to the world. A priest receives his strength from his spiritual life and his relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Do not be afraid."

### A LIFE OF PRAYER AND SERVICE

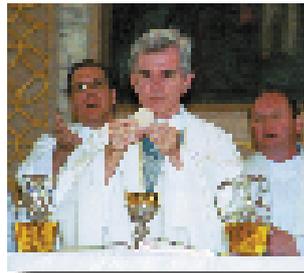
A priest's life is essentially one of prayer and service. These two parts make up a priest's spirituality. He prays so that he can serve with the strength and inspiration he needs. He serves so that God may work through him to assist His people. The spirituality of a diocesan priest is centered on his personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the call to bring Him to the members of the local faith community: his parish. The diocesan priest is called to be in and among the people of his parish, for his own fulfillment and the benefit and sanctification of his parishioners. His life is marked by the characteristics of love, generosity and self-sacrifice.

### RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A priest must be a spiritual man, whose trust and hope are solely in the Lord. They give a witness of how we should trust in God above all things. A priest must be a man whose faith rests firmly in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His joy in the risen Lord comes from his experience of Jesus working in his own life. This allows him to stand firm and strong as he leads the Christians under his care.

A priest receives great joy from serving others, but he must remember that at the root of his vocation is his relationship with God. To nourish it and keep it strong he has to pray every day. Here are some of the many ways a priest prays each day:

Features of a priest's life:  
Love  
Generosity  
Self-sacrifice



**Celebrating the Eucharist.** During the Mass, a priest offers up his prayers and our own prayers to God through His Son Jesus in the celebration of the Eucharist.

**Praying the Liturgy of the Hours.** Priests pray the Liturgy of the Hours. This is a series of prayers made up of psalms, scripture passages, and intercessions that help a priest to lift his eyes toward God at certain times throughout the day.

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.** Adoration is a way to spend time with Jesus, who is present in the Eucharist, listening and praying without the distractions of everyday life. Every day of the sixty years of his priesthood, Archbishop Fulton Sheen prayed for one hour in front of a tabernacle.

All Christian disciples are called to be holy through prayer and service, but as a priest, your doing this serves as an example to others.

Now we are going to talk about the first of these two parts: their relationship with God in prayer.

### Section 3: Relationship with God

Begin this section by saying:

If you like sports, but you do not feed and nourish my body, you will not be able to play. A car needs gas to run; if it does not have gas, it will go nowhere. In the same way, a priest needs to constantly feed his relationship with Jesus through prayer.

After "Celebrating the Eucharist" say:

Have you ever seen a priest praying? Have you ever been to mass? The priest is praying in mass. Who is he praying for? He is praying for you, the parish community, the Church, and the whole world. He is praying for all of us.

**Praying the Rosary.** The rosary is a meditation on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The rosary is also a way to ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for our needs and for the Church.

In addition to daily prayer, a priest reads religious or spiritual books. He goes on an annual spiritual retreat to renew himself and his ministry. A priest should also have a spiritual director with whom he can talk about his faith and about spiritual matters. Priests also go to confession on a regular basis.

### AT THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

A diocesan priest must be a man at the service of others, "For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). As Jesus taught us, the greatest gift we can give is to lay down our life for a friend. Priests lay down their lives for the people every day. In little ways, they give their time, energy, and lives to those who need help, thus being like Christ here on earth.

Diocesan priests live their unique spirituality in and among the people they serve. All people are called to a relationship with Jesus Christ, to a life of prayer and service, and so the priest is an example and a guide for others to follow. A priest is with his parishioners in all the moments of joy and sadness that come throughout their lives. He is there, in the role of a shepherd, like Jesus, to lead and accompany God's people on their journey of faith. The priest strives to increase the holiness of the people of God so they may in turn sanctify the world. In growing in his own spiritual life, he becomes more like Christ, and is a visible sign to other people of happiness in this life and of our final goal: eternal life.

*Meditation: A way of prayer in which we focus our minds on a religious image, idea or scripture passage.*

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Why is it important for every Christian disciple to pray daily? Why is it especially important for a priest to pray daily?
2. What benefits does the priest get out of prayer? What would happen if a priest stopped praying?
3. How does a priest's prayer life affect his ability to serve? What are some ways that your parish priest serves your community?

### VOCABULARY

Spirituality  
Sanctification  
Consecration  
Liturgy of the Hours  
Meditation

Unit Two: Lesson Two

27

*After "Liturgy of the hours" say:*

Have you ever seen a priest reading a prayer book like on page 22? He is praying the Liturgy of the Hours. He is praying for the people in his parish and for the whole Church. Have you ever thanked your pastor for praying for those of us in his parish?

*After Adoration section, ask:*

Have any of you ever been to adoration? (Answers will vary.)

*After Rosary section, ask:*

Do you know what a meditation is? Look at the grey box on page 27.

*Have a student read this aloud, then ask:*

How many of you own a rosary? How many of you know how to pray it?

*At the end of the section ask:*

Did you know that priests went to confession? Who do you think they go to confession with? They go with another priest, just like you and I. Even the pope goes to confession.

## Section 4: At the service of others

*Begin the section by saying:*

Why does a priest serve others? He serves others out of love, in response to Jesus Christ's command to love God and love thy neighbor. It is an act of love which is an expression of God's love working through him. They are urged on by God's love. Look at the grey box on page 26.

*Have a student read this aloud. Then begin reading the section aloud.*

*After the first paragraph say:*

A priest must also try to increase in holiness by serving others. By growing in holiness, he can serve the people even better.

### Let's Talk About It!

1. Why is it important for every Christian disciple to pray daily? Why is it especially important for a priest to pray daily?

A: Answers will vary. Every Christian disciple should pray in order to grow in their relationship with Jesus and to be open to God's guidance. Prayer opens our heart, mind, and soul to God's presence. It is especially important for a priest to pray daily because it nourishes his spiritual life, and because he is an example to others.

2. What benefits does the priest get out of prayer? What would happen if a priest stopped praying?

A: Answers will vary. In prayer, A priest receives the strength and grace he needs to serve others. If a priest stopped praying, he would be unable to fulfill his mission as a priest.

3. How does a priest's prayer life affect his ability to serve? What are some ways that your parish priest serves your community?

A: Answers will vary. The Holy Spirit is the life of the Church. In prayer, a priest opens himself to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit including strength, wisdom, and guidance to continue serving and leading his parish community.

## SUMMARY

A priest is a unique disciple of Jesus Christ in that he is called to be a vehicle of God's love and grace to the people of his local Church, his diocese and parish. This is an important part of his spirituality as he prays with and for his people, in his private prayers and in the public celebration of the Eucharist. He needs to have a solid foundation of prayer and should use the sacrament of Reconciliation so that he will be able to give Jesus to others. His role is both sanctifying for his people and himself if he lives a life of service and prayer.

## HOMEWORK

Have students prepare 1-3 questions for the priest that will be visiting tomorrow.

## Answers for "Can you Solve This?"

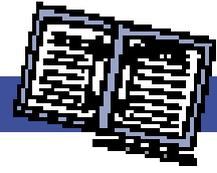
1 hour/day x 365 days/year x 60 year = 21,900 hours (not including leap years)

Extra credit: Figure out how many days that was.

21,900 hours / 24 hours/day = 912.5 days

Figure out how many years that was.

912.5 days / 365 days/year = 2.5 years



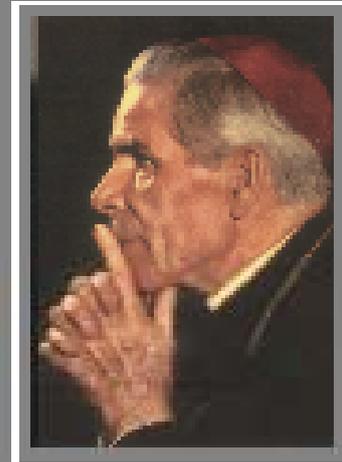
### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- Write this bible passage in your journal and memorize it: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (Jn 15:13). What are some small ways that you can give your life to serve others everyday?
- Write how this bible passage applies to the priesthood. How does it apply to the vocation of marriage? What about the single life?

## Can You Solve This?

If Archbishop Fulton Sheen prayed in front of a tabernacle for one hour every day of his priesthood, and his priesthood was 60 years, how many hours did he spend adoring Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? (Hint: there are 365 days in every year. Also, there is no need to calculate for leap years unless you want to.)



## Archbishop Fulton Sheen

Archbishop Fulton Sheen was born in El Paso, Illinois in 1895. Inspired by the priests who visited his home, his experiences as an altar boy and his family's daily recitation of the rosary, he felt called from an young age to be a priest. Fulton became an eloquent, funny and charismatic teacher of the faith who received an Emmy Award for his television show, "Life is Worth Living," in 1952. His love for the Church and desire to share his faith with others led many people to convert to Catholicism. Even when bedridden with illness, he offered his sufferings for the conversion of others. He credited his success to the Holy Hour he spent, every day of his priesthood, in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Shortly before his death in 1979, Pope John Paul II embraced him saying that he had written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus. The boy who prayed that he would be worthy of the priesthood, is now on the road to sainthood.

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## NOTES

### What is Spirituality?

Catholic spirituality is defined as the way in which we live out our faith; it is our way of life as a Christian. True spirituality brings us closer to God, increasing our love for Him and helping us grow in holiness. But as each person is unique, each person lives out their faith differently. One of the great treasures of the Church that goes untapped by many Catholics are the rich diversity of spiritualities that have been handed down to us. Some may have a Marian spirituality, that is, a devotion to Mary, as a way to know Jesus better. Others may be Charismatic, with a special devotion to the Holy Spirit. Franciscan spirituality compels one to live simply, like St. Francis. Encourage your students to realize that our Church has many tremendous ways of prayer and a diversity of Christian spiritualities they can explore in their lives. Ultimately, our own personalities and experiences will move us down a particular spiritual path. What God asks of us is that we water the seeds that he has planted and help them grow.

It has been said the unreflected life is not worth living. In other words, if we go through life without some level of reflection, we are bound to miss much of what makes life joyful, rich, and meaningful. This is especially true for priests. Part of priestly spirituality is to regularly reflect on your life, God's presence in your life, and how God has been involved in your day to day ministry. When priests (and all Catholics) take time daily for this basic sort of reflection, it becomes readily apparent how active God really is in our lives, in his people and in the Church.,

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

### Spirituality of the Priesthood

Of special importance in priestly formation are "continuing spiritual, doctrinal and pastoral formation; about living a life in accordance with the Gospel without any thought of personal or family advantage; about fostering a deep appreciation of the mystery of the Church" (Ad Gentes Divinitus). Above all, a priest must develop a deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. From this relationship flows his ability to accomplish his mission in life, a relationship which he also strives to encourage among God's people.

The beauty of the spirituality of the priesthood is that priests have the beauty of knowing that although separated by distance, there are tens of thousands of other priests around the world all praying the Liturgy of the Hours in concert. Additionally, priests on a local level often pray with parish groups throughout the week, thus priests are spiritually connected locally and globally.

**Most Valuable Priest:** As a possible homework assignment, have the students write a nomination for their MVP - Most Valuable Priest. It should be written as if they were introducing their nominee at the MVP awards banquet.

### Rosary/Meditation activity

To illustrate some types of prayer that are mentioned in the lesson, you may choose to lead the class in the recitation of the rosary or in a guided meditation. There are many rosary resources available through the parish and online that can be used to teach children to say the rosary. While reciting the rosary, take time to explain and reflect upon the mysteries that you are praying, as a way of presenting the rosary as a meditative prayer.

For the meditation, it is recommended to use a passage from the Gospel, perhaps the reading for the following Sunday. Using the gospel passage as a starting point, lead the class in prayerfully reflecting upon various aspects of the passage while maintaining a dialogue with Jesus.

### Prayer or Service Game

Split class teacher can name different priestly functions, and the two groups classify them as prayer or service. Some fall under both. Refer to page 23 or provide a list - hand out slips of paper - have them stand on one side of the class or the other.

### Pray the Liturgy of the Hours as a class.

Priests, religious and many other Catholics pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily. There are some web sites where teachers can download samples of these prayers that can be introduced and prayed as a class (such as [www.liturgyhours.org](http://www.liturgyhours.org)).

The Liturgy of the Hours is, in part, centered on the recitation of the psalms. The 150 psalms in the Bible capture a wide range of human experience and a yearning for God. This is why, when praying, some of the psalms may speak to our own present experience more than others, while some psalms may be more applicable to other people or other times in our lives.

Have the class use Bibles to skim through the psalms and locate one that seems to capture their lives at the present moment, a prayer that fits them. Then have them choose another psalm of a different tone and describe how this psalm may fit a different person. This could be done as a class discussion or a journal assignment.

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Two : Lesson Three

### Overview:

In this lesson, a priest visits the classroom to speak about the vocation of the priesthood as well as his own experience in hearing his call and following it. Any questions that the class has on the subject of the priesthood can be discussed during this lesson.

### Objectives:

- To host a diocesan priest to present an example of the priesthood, his life as a priest and his own vocation story
- To learn that priests are ordinary people who are called to an extraordinary vocation
- To value the vocation of the priest and the service that he does for the Church

### Timeline of Lesson:

• Vocation Prayer	Minutes	1
• Introduction		2
• Section 1: Witness of a Priest		15
• Section 2: Questions and Answers		15
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework	

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Schedule a Priest to speak to the class
- (optional) Make a copy of the Speaker Suggestions and Frequently Asked Questions for speaker to help them prepare
- If you are unable to get a speaker, see the Optional Activities section at the end of the chapter.

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

- See page \_\_\_
- If you cannot schedule a speaker
- Screening Questions
- Note on Discretion

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_\_
- On Speaker Aids
- Speaker Suggestions for Priests
- Frequently Asked Questions for priests.

### Optional activities:

(To be done if a priest is not available to speak to the class)

- Witness of a priest online
- Priests in the Parish
- Frequently Asked Questions for priests

## Suggestions For Priest Speaker

Priests are asked to cover the following points in their classroom talk. These points can also be used as an outline for the speaker to follow during the talk.

- (1) Share some of the details of your upbringing that will help students relate to you: where you grew up, what schools you attended, your work experience and hobbies, what activities you were involved in as a youth.
- (2) Share your vocation story: when did you first think about the priesthood? When did you begin to respond to the call to priesthood? How did you go about discerning and following your call to the priesthood?
- (3) Describe your experience of priesthood. Speak about living in your parish community. Describe the ministries you have been involved in since joining priesthood with emphasis on the spiritual aspects of the work (try to speak more about your ministry and less about meetings/administrative duties).
- (4) Speak about your current assignment. What is a "typical" day like? Speak about what you enjoy about your ministry and parish.
- (5) Speak about your own pursuit of God, including your prayer life, use of spiritual direction, retreats, and other practices that strengthen you in living your vocation. Speak about how you continue to discover God in your own life and in the people you minister to.
- (7) Speak about what you like to do in your free time, hobbies, favorite activities, or other things that will help the kids to view priests as real people that they could be like one day.

Ask the teacher what the approximate length of your talk should be. Teachers are asked to have each student prepare one question in advance. This age group is usually very interested in asking questions.

*Note to Priests:* Be joyful. Be positive. Students will remember how you spoke about the priesthood more than the details of your talk. Every vocation has challenges, but also joys. We ask you not to ignore the challenges in your talk, but to focus on the joys.

## Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Priesthood

- (1) Do priests have fun? What do you do for fun?
- (2) Are priests allowed to go on vacation?
- (3) Why can't priests get married? Why did you not want to get married?
- (4) Do you miss not having kids (a family)?
- (5) How much money do you make? (Do priests make money?)
- (6) Can you be married and work for the Church?
- (7) Why can't women be priests?  
[Note: Women's ordination is a significant question. It is up to the presenter to decide how to answer this question. While not avoiding the significance of this question, we suggest the speaker to accentuate the tremendous gifts that women currently contribute (and historically have contributed) to the People of God, the Church, as well as present opportunities young girls might aspire to in religious life.]
- (8) There are typical questions surrounding priestly collars and religious habits: why do some priests wear collars and others do not; can you ever wear blue jeans and "regular clothes"; what is the meaning of a priest collar.
- (9) Have you ever had a miracle happen in your life?
- (10) How do you know if God is calling you to be a priest?

*Note: In the course of the vocation curriculum, the teacher will have introduced the class to the subjects of celibacy, family, and priest receiving a salary.*

Some students ask about the recent priest sexual abuse scandals. It is best to tell them the truth that some priests have unfortunately been involved in some very wrong (evil) acts that have caused pain to members of the Church, and the Church as a whole. However, this behavior is not from the priesthood inherently. Unfortunately, these horrible crimes are also done by married men and single men. These horrible actions by priests are a cause for the Church to reinvigorate herself with good, spirit filled priests to help bring about healing to those harmed and begin a new chapter in the life of the Church.

## Witness of a Priest

### INTRODUCTION

We have learned a lot about the mission and spirituality of a priest. Today we welcome a diocesan priest who will tell us what it is like to live his vocation, and how he discovered what God wanted him to do in his life. At the end of the discussion, there will be an opportunity to ask Father any questions that you may have about the priesthood.



Unit Two: Lesson Three

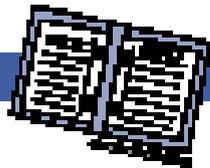
### SUMMARY

Priests are chosen by God to serve God's people in the Church. A priest is like every other disciple trying to follow the Lord as best he can by living the command to love God and love his neighbor as himself. Ultimately, a priest is trying like everyone else to be holy and become a saint. The importance of prayer and regular reception of the sacraments are as important for a priest as they are for all disciples who desire to grow closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- What did you learn about priests today?
- How did the talk help you understand the life of a priest?
- What was one thing that you could relate to in what he said?



Unit Two: Lesson Three



## Unit Two: Lesson Three

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

### Introduction: (2 minutes)

Introduce the speaker by saying:

When you want to learn about something you go to an expert. You wouldn't ask a basketball player about softball.

That's why we have invited a priest to visit the class today. We have been learning a lot about the priesthood, the mission and spirituality of the priest. Today we welcome a priest who will tell us what it is like to live his vocation, and how he discovered what God wanted him to do. You may think of a question to ask Father at the end.

### Section 1: Witness of a Priest (15 minutes)

### Section 2: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (15 minutes)

The question and answer period can be open or structured. Use an open forum if your class will benefit from the discussion. If you have any concerns, discuss ahead of time the type of questions that would be suitable for the students to ask.

### SUMMARY

Priests are called to serve God in the service of God's people, the Church. A priest, like every other Christian disciple, tries to follow Jesus by responding to His commandment to love God and love neighbor. Ultimately, a priest is trying like everyone else to be holy and be a saint. The importance of prayer and regular reception of the sacraments are as important for a priest as they are for all disciples who desire to grow closer to the Lord Jesus.

## Speaker Aids

Some priests and religious sisters may be reluctant to speak to a junior high class, especially if they feel that they will not know what to say. In order to assist them, suggested outlines for each speaker presentation are provided, which the speaker can be given in advance. In addition to the suggested outline, there is a list of "Frequently Asked Questions" that will also help the speakers prepare. Teachers may add their own class' interests or questions to this list as well. Teachers should encourage reluctant speakers, and not leave the room while the speakers are presenting. Teachers can help reluctant speakers by informing them that no speaker is to be placed in a supervisory role and that the teacher will not leave the classroom while they are presenting.

The *Speaker Suggestions* and *Frequently Asked Questions* segments are also available online at [www.WhatIsMyVocation.com](http://www.WhatIsMyVocation.com), in case you want to e-mail it to your speakers.

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

## UNIT II LESSON 3

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

### NOTES

If it is not possible for a priest to give a presentation, one of the optional activities listed on this page may be used. These activities cannot replicate the personal witness of a priest, which is a very valuable way of introducing this vocation to the students, but they may help the students to develop a better understanding of the priesthood.

### Screening Questions

You know your class best. If you think it necessary you can screen the class' questions prior to the priest's visit by having the students submit the questions in writing, or by having the students post their questions on the bulletin board.

### Note on Discretion

It is a good idea to explain to the students that the visit of the priest is a special situation in which they will be allowed to ask the priest questions about his life and his background. This is a special privilege that does not necessarily extend beyond the class. Students should be respectful in their questions and conversation..

Explain that the priest who will be visiting will answer any question the students ask as long as the question is respectful, but that there are certain things that are private to us that might not be appropriate to ask asked in a public setting. Teachers should not allow questions that they themselves would not be comfortable answering.

Students should also know that if there are any questions that they would like to ask the priest in private, they can approach him later at an appropriate time.

### ACTIVITY 1: Witness of a priest online

On the vocation web page of the Archdiocese of Chicago, [www.chicagopriest.org](http://www.chicagopriest.org), (also see: [www.vocations.org](http://www.vocations.org), [www.vocation.com](http://www.vocation.com)) there are several priests' stories which can be printed out and read by the students (or read online). Divide the class into small groups and assign one priest story to each group.

Have the students read the story together then, as a group, answer the following questions and report their findings to the entire class. Choose one person to write down notes, and another to be the spokesperson. After the students have had adequate time to prepare their reports, each spokesperson presents the findings to the class.

1. What is the name of the priest that you were assigned?
2. How long has he been a priest?
3. When did he discover his calling to be a priest?
4. Did he work before preparing to be a priest? If so, where?
5. Why is he happy being a priest?
6. What was one new thing that the class can learn from the story?
7. What was one thing that the class might find interesting from the story?

### ACTIVITY 2: Priests in the Parish

Have the students write on a sheet or paper what is the most important thing about the priesthood for the life of the parish and the faith of the people. They can decide based on the list of general responsibilities given in lesson 1: celebrate mass, visit the sick, keep the parish running (administrative work), teach in many different ways (including RCIA, schools, Religious Education, Bible Studies etc...), help people in times of crisis, help build the community of faithful, etc. The teacher or students may think of other items to add to the list

In groups of three, students must discuss their ideas and decide which of the responsibilities is the most important for the parish community and why. Pick one person in the group to present the group's decision to the rest of the class.

As each small groups presents their idea to the class, about what is the most important thing about the priesthood, and why. The teacher or a student can write them on the board.

Hold a class "election" to vote on which aspect of the priesthood they think is the most important.

With the time remaining, allow students to share a moment in their lives when a priest played a part. (Usually this is the reception of a sacrament: first communion, reconciliation or anointing of the sick). Their answer also depends on the specific ways the student and their family take part in the parish: scouting, volunteering, sports, clubs liturgical ministers, etc.

### ACTIVITY 3: Frequently Asked Questions for priests

Discuss the "Frequently Asked Questions" prepared for priests in the speaker suggestions. If there are questions that are unanswered, write a letter from the class to a local priest to ask these questions. You can also discuss the other material from Lessons 1 and 2 which were not covered earlier.

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Two : Lesson Four

### Overview:

This lesson discusses the process by which a man discovers a call to the priesthood (discernment and how he prepares to become a priest in the seminary. The material in this lesson should help prepare the students for the visit of a seminarian in Lesson 5.

### Objectives:

- To emphasize the importance of taking action to pursue one's vocation.
- To know several practical means to discern a religious vocation or pursue a call to the priesthood.
- To describe some aspects of seminary life, and how a man is trained to prepare for ordination to the priesthood.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	
• Section 1: Come and See	2
• Section 2 : How can I follow Jesus Christ?	5
• Section 3 : Go and Change the World	5
• Discussion: Let's Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Vocabulary:

Vocation Director  
Discern  
Seminary  
Seminarians

### Special Preparation /

### Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Vocation Journals
- Bible (optional)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional)

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

(None in this lesson)

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- Fun Facts about Seminaries
  - Supplemental Material on Activities A and B
  - Pope Benedict XVI
  - On Human, Christian, and Priestly Formation

### Optional activities:

- List of major seminaries in the United States.

## Unit Two: Lesson Four

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

### Introduction: (2 minutes)

The story of John and Andrew at the beginning of the lesson serves as an appropriate introduction. The teacher or a student may read the story aloud.

### Section 1: Come and See (2 minutes)

After reading the section aloud ask:

Q: Who were John and Andrew?

A: They were two of the twelve apostles, and they were among the first that Jesus called.

## Lesson Development

### Section 2: STEPS TO BECOME A PRIEST, SISTER, OR BROTHER (2 minutes)

Begin the section by saying:

What if you heard Jesus calling you to be a sister, brother or priest? We are going to talk about the steps a person takes to become a priest, brother, or sister.

*Teachers Notes: There are many things that students can do now to begin to discover their vocation. Activity A on page 32 lists some ways of finding information about different kinds of priests, sisters, and brothers. Activity B lists some activities that students can look into if they are interested in learning more about a particular vocation. There are also many more resources that will be explored in Unit III. More information is available at [www.whatismyvocation.com](http://www.whatismyvocation.com).*

Begin reading the section aloud. At the end of the section ask:

Q: Does anybody know what a vocation director is?

Ask them to look it up in the glossary in the back of their books, then say:

There is someone whose job it is to be available to help you to discover your vocation.

### Section 3 The Seminary

(10 minutes)

Begin the section by asking:

Where does a man go if he wants to be a priest? How does a man become a priest? Next we are going to talk about the preparation a man goes through to become a priest.

### Unit Two: Lesson Four

## How Does a Man Become a Priest?

### COME AND SEE

John and Andrew were two friends from a small town.

One day, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, they were standing near the road when Jesus walked past them. Something about Him caught their attention, though they did not quite know what it was, so they began to follow Him. As they began to follow Him, Jesus turned and asked them, "What do you seek?" They wanted to find out who He was and where He came from; they wanted to learn all about Him, so they responded "Rabbi, where are you staying?" Jesus wanted them to experience being Christian disciples for themselves so He invited them to follow Him saying, "Come and see!" From that day forward they became disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus makes the same invitation to any young man who is interested in following Jesus more closely in the priesthood, or even just learning more about it. Jesus invites them to come and see what it is like, try it out, and discover if it is their vocation.



Come  
and See!

Read John 1:35-39

### STEPS TO BECOME A PRIEST, SISTER, OR BROTHER

**Step 1:** Find out Learn about the different kinds of priests, sisters, and brothers to see if you might be interested in a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

**Step 2:** Act! Contact a Vocation Director and take part in vocation activities in order to learn more about the diocese' priesthood or religious communities.

**Step 3:** Join! Join your diocese or a religious order to begin training to be a priest, sister, or brother. During this time of preparation you can discover whether or not it is your vocation. This is a rewarding experience, even if you discover that it is not your vocation.



### THE SEMINARY

Men who are preparing to be ordained as priests attend a special school called a seminary. These men are called seminarians. Historically, there have been three types of seminaries. The first kind is a high school seminary for boys considering the priesthood. The second is called a minor seminary or college seminary and it is for college-age men who are interested in the priesthood. The high school and college seminaries are not required but highly recommended for boys and young men interested in being priests. This early preparation is a way for them to explore their vocation with other people who are also discerning the priesthood.

The third is a major seminary for seminarians who have

*Then say:* Preparing for the priesthood is preparing for a lifestyle more than a career, but there is some degree of training involved for doing the work that a priest will do. Just as we would not let an untrained surgeon operate on us, we want a priest to have the preparation, not just technically, but also spiritually, to be able to act as priest.

*Begin reading the section aloud. After reading the first paragraph, ask:* Does anybody know what the word "discern" means?

*Ask the students to look at the grey box on page 31 and ask someone to read the definition aloud.*

We ask God to help us to discern our vocations. Discernment also means hearing what God wants us to do with our lives and acting on it. So when you discern, you ask God to show you what He would like you to do. To discern our vocation is to try to determine what God's plan is for us.



finished college. A major seminary is the final preparation for seminarians before becoming priests. These seminarians take classes to learn about our Catholic faith, as well as classes to practice celebrating mass and hearing confessions.

Many dioceses do not have their own seminaries, so they send their seminarians to minor or major seminaries located elsewhere.

In addition to classes, seminarians learn how to pray and are trained in spiritual practices. They begin serving at parishes or as chaplains in various places including hospitals, jails, nursing homes, and juvenile detention centers. They also enjoy sports and other school activities just like everyone else.

Being a seminarian does not automatically make someone a priest. Studying at a seminary simply means

that a man is open to being called to the priesthood and wants to try it out to see if it fits. By attending a seminary a man opens his heart to accept a possible vocation and gives to God a greater opportunity to call him. Seminaries are environments in which men can openly consider and discern a possible calling to the priesthood while receiving the support they need to do it.

During this time, some seminarians may determine that God is not calling them to be priests. They are free to go and find whatever vocation God wants for them. These men are usually glad that they were in the seminary because it allowed them to deepen their faith, receive a good education and develop life-long friendships. They know that they have been open and generous with God and they are confident that He will continue to guide them.

A seminarian who does seek the diocesan priesthood is ordained by a bishop after he completes his training at the major seminary. His ordination to the priesthood includes the promise of a life-long commitment to serve the people of God as a priest of Jesus Christ in the local diocese. At his ordination, he joyfully reaches the goal of his preparation, but his adventure is just beginning!

To discern means to try to discover with God's help something that takes time to arrive or understand. **Discernment** is the process of discerning your vocation.



### The Seminaries of the Archdiocese of Chicago:

Mundelein Seminary  
www.usml.edu

St. Joseph College Seminary  
www.stjoseph.luc.edu  
Archbishop Guilley Preparatory  
Seminary High School  
www.guilley.org

Archdiocese of Chicago  
vocation website:  
www.chicagopriest.org



Unit Two: Lesson Four

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## Fun Facts about Seminarians

Although seminaries are serious schools to prepare men to be ordained priests. Like other people seminarians play many sports including: basketball, volleyball, baseball, soccer, flag football, swimming, golf, racquetball and even skateboarding. Some seminarians have basketball and baseball teams and host tournaments. Seminarians have rec (recreational) rooms with ping-pong, pool, foosball, board games, and televisions to watch movies, news, and sports. Seminarians use the internet in healthy ways to e-mail friends and family, to research class projects and visit fun sites of interest. Seminarians enjoy music. Some play instruments and form bands and groups to entertain at seminary gatherings or at local parishes. A few have made CDs of their original music in various styles from rock, jazz, to religious. Seminarians are allowed to leave the seminary grounds and often do so to shop at stores, have dinner at a favorite restaurant, go see a movie, or visit family and friends.

Seminarians also get breaks from school and many seminarians travel to visit other countries or to do fun things like: hiking, boating, surfing, skiing and white water rafting.

Seminarians also go to sporting events, concerts, museums, summer festivals, and other cultural events.

Humor is a big part of seminary life. Laughter is a common daily way of life for seminarians. Even safe (respectful) practical jokes are not uncommon. Ultimately, God is not boring and did not create us to be boring. The life of a seminarian, although serious, is fun and joy-filled.

After fourth paragraph ask:

**Q:** How is a seminary like any other school?

*(Answers will vary. Some ways are: going to classes, taking tests, writing papers, studying, etc.)*

**Q:** How is it not like any other school?

*(Answers will vary. Some ways are: daily mass, intensive prayer time, learning about the priesthood, etc.)*

Then after the sixth paragraph, ask:

**Q:** If a man joins a seminary does he have to be 100 percent sure that he is going to be a priest?

**A:** No, it only means that he is strongly considering it and trying to discern whether God is calling him to be a priest.

*Teacher's note: there are three levels of priestly formation: human, Christian, priestly. Each one builds on the last. You have to be a good man before you are a good Christian, and a good Christian before you can be a good priest (see note on page 61).*

At the end of the section ask:

**Q:** When you join does that mean that you automatically become a priest?

**A:** No, it takes several years of preparation before a man is ordained a priest. During this time he might discern that it is not his vocation.

**Q:** Why do you think a man would join the seminary if he is not absolutely sure about becoming a priest?

**A:** He might join the seminary because he is open to whatever God is asking of Him and wants to give God the first chance at calling him to be a priest.

Then ask:

**Q:** Does anyone remember what are the three steps to become a priest, sister, or brother (see page 30)

Then say:

The first step is finding information. This is something you can start doing now. You have to do step one before you can do steps two or three.

We are going to do an activity that will help us to learn how to find information about vocations.

## Vocation Activities (15 minutes)

Activity A focuses on showing who you would speak to. Activity B focuses on what you can do to experience what different vocations would be like.

Students should read through both activities and choose three items from each list that they would be most interested in doing. Students can use their journals to record their choices.

### ACTIVITY A: Supplementary Material

Ask my Religious Ed teacher: Any Catholic who has accurate information about vocations may also be a good place to start to learn more about the priesthood or religious life. These people would include one's: Religious Ed teacher, DRE, school principal, parent, friend, or neighbor. Don't be afraid to start up a conversation about the vocation, to talk about it. Can you think of any things you can say to start the conversation?

Vocation Directors: have concrete information about how a person can become a priest, religious sister or brother in their local diocese or religious community. Vocation Directors help guide interested persons in the processes of discernment and recruitment. Vocation Directors commonly offer opportunities such as discernment retreats, days of reflection, and visits to the seminary or to convents. They may point you towards discernment groups to help women and men in their decision-making process and pursuit of becoming a priest or religious sister or brother. It is their job as Vocation Directors to help people who feel called to (or are interested in) the priesthood or religious life. Ultimately, any seriously interested person will need to speak with a Vocation Director. Initial contact is usually made with Vocation Directors via e-mail from an Internet web site or a phone call.

[Note: Every diocese has their own vocation director who "recruits" men for priesthood for that particular diocese. Correspondingly, every religious order has their own vocation director who "recruits" women and men for their religious communities.]

Search the Internet: This has become a

## Giving God the first chance.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

#### Activity A: Find out!

Imagine yourself in the future, beginning to think that God is calling you to a religious vocation. Even if you never thought about it before, it is possible that it could happen! Listed below are some ways to find out more information about what a vocation really means and how to pursue it.

**Instructions:** Choose three options that you would pursue in order to find out more information about a religious vocation.

- Ask my Religious Education teacher
- Ask my school principal
- Call a Vocation Director
- Search the Internet for vocation websites
- Write a letter to a Vocation Director
- Check ads in Catholic magazines or newspapers
- Ask my parish priest
- Ask a religious sister
- Email a Vocation Director
- Read a book or magazine about vocations
- Ask my Mom or Dad
- Ask my friends or classmates

#### Activity B: Just do it!

If you think you may have a religious vocation, even if it is just a feeling or a hunch, it is important that you do something about it and take steps to pursue it. Below are some ways that will help you learn more about the lives of priests, sisters, and brothers.

**Instructions:** Which of these would you find interesting to do right now or in the future?

- Volunteer alongside sisters, brothers, or priests at your parish or elsewhere to learn more about what they do.
- Have a conversation with a religious sister, brother or priest. Find out what they do and how they live.
- Go on a retreat: seek out for people who want to learn more about being sisters, brothers or priests.
- Join a service program and work alongside sisters, brothers and priests as a full-time volunteer for a year.
- Visit a seminary or convent where people prepare for the priesthood or religious life. Take a tour and see what it is like to live there.
- Find out about the prayer life of priests, sisters and brothers. Pray with them or get a copy of their prayers and pray them to see if their spiritual way of life fits you.
- Read about the lives of sisters, brothers and priests in books, magazines, or on the internet to learn about how they lived.

VOCABULARY  
Vocation Director  
Discern  
Seminary  
Seminarians



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Unit Two: Lesson Four

popular vehicle for people to learn more about priesthood and religious life. It is anonymous and readily available. There are numerous web sites available to learn more about vocations.

[www.chicagopriest.org](http://www.chicagopriest.org) priest web site for the Archdiocese of Chicago  
[www.usml.edu](http://www.usml.edu) web site for Mundelein Seminary  
[www.quigley.org](http://www.quigley.org) web site for Archbishop Quigley High School Seminary  
[www.stjoseph.luc.edu](http://www.stjoseph.luc.edu) web site for St. Joseph College Seminary

Ask my parish priest: Direct information about life as a priest can be found by going to the source. Ask your local parish priest, religious sisters or brothers about their lives. These individuals can share their joy and lived experience in these blessed vocations.

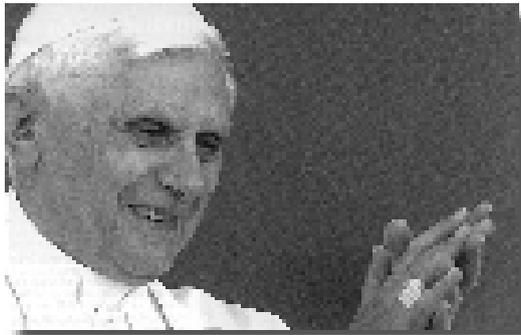
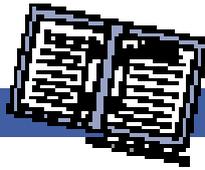
[Note: Not all parish priests or religious sisters and brothers have additional information about how to pursue a vocation or what steps to follow to become a priest, sister or brother. You may get from them the name and contact information of the person who can help, the Vocation Director.]

Check advertisements in Catholic Magazines or Newspapers: by religious orders and dioceses often give some basic information about an upcoming Vocation Event to be held that interested women and men may attend to learn more about vocations. These ads also contain

## Write about it!

### Journal options:

- In preparation to meet the seminarian who will speak tomorrow, each student should prepare at least one question to ask the seminarian.



*If we let Christ into our lives,  
we lose nothing, nothing,  
absolutely nothing of what  
makes life free, beautiful  
and great. No! Only in this*

*friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship  
is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in  
this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so,  
today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of  
long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people:  
Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives  
you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a  
hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ  
— and you will find true life.*

—Pope Benedict XVI\*

Unit Two: Lesson Four



the Vocation Director's contact information (e-mail and phone number). Read a book or magazine about Vocations: There are several books and magazines published about vocations to the priesthood and religious life that can be very helpful for people who wish to learn more about these vocations. Some frequently used, free vocational publications are: A Guide to Religious Ministries For Catholic Men and Women, Vision Magazine, OYE! Magazine. These are produced every year and contain helpful articles about discernment, basic explanations of vows and religious life as well as full-page ads for many religious communities. Each of these publications also has a corresponding web site. Information to order these free publications is outlined in Unit III, Lesson 3.

## SUMMARY

The Church gives us many ways to find out more about our vocation, especially for those who are interested in the priesthood. Contacting (calling or e-mailing) a Vocation Director is helpful if you would like to ask questions, receive guidance and learn more about vocations. The important thing is to know how to find out more information, and then to make the decision to do it. Those who decide to enter the seminary have a period of preparation in order to know what the priesthood is, and to train to be priests.

## Write about it!

1. Journal option: In preparation to meet the seminarian who will speak tomorrow, each student should prepare at least one question to ask the seminarian.

*(The seminarian will give a short presentation on his vocation story, life in the seminary and then give time for questions from the class.)*

## Quote from Pope Benedict XVI

*Begin by asking the students:*

**Q:** Does anyone know whose picture is on page 33?

**A:** Pope Benedict XVI

*Have a student read aloud the quote from Pope Benedict. Then ask the students to reflect on this quote and record their thoughts in their journals.*

## Biography of Pope Benedict XVI

Joseph Ratzinger was born in Marktl, Germany in 1927. His studies for the priesthood were interrupted by World War II but he was ordained, along with his brother Georg, in 1951. He became a well-respected teacher and was an advisor to a Cardinal during the Second Vatican Council. He is the author of numerous theological books and articles. In 1981, Pope John Paul II appointed him Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a responsibility held by him until the Holy Father's death. In this role, he was responsible for protecting the teachings entrusted to the Church by Jesus Christ. Joseph was the main celebrant at the funeral Mass for Pope John Paul II and was elected Pope by his peers on April 19, 2005, taking the name, Pope Benedict XVI, in honor of St. Benedict. His first papal letter (encyclical) was released in 2006 entitled "God is Love."

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

### On Human, Christian, and Priestly Formation

Seminaries design formation programs to form men into priests. These programs are based on the belief that men must be good human beings, then good Christian disciples before they can be good priests.

The simple premise would also apply to lay men and women. The process of “human formation” helps men be better human beings. This involves developing self-knowledge of one’s human person and then humbly, with the help of seminary faculty, addresses areas of one’s life that need improvement. Issues as simple as better language skills or as difficult as past family dysfunction are worked on.

Christian formation means learning more and more about our Christian faith and continually be challenged to be shaped by the teachings of Jesus Christ. From developing greater virtue to deepening one’s prayer life, Christian formation helps seminarians become holier men.

Priestly formation then builds on the above human and Christian formation process. This involves helping a seminarian to develop a priestly identity with a heart of compassion, a desire to serve, zeal for preaching the gospel, a deep love for Jesus in the Eucharist and devotion to the other sacraments.

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Optional Activity

- Have the students look up the web site for one of the seminaries listed here and write a short paragraph about what they saw, what they liked, and why.

#### Major Seminaries in the United States:

St. Vincent Seminary  
300 Fraser Purchase Road  
Latrobe, PA 15660  
www.stvincent.edu  
724-532-5052

Sacred Heart Major Seminary  
2701 W. Chicago Boulevard  
Detroit, MI 48206-1799  
www.vocationsdetroit.org  
313-868-6440

St. Patrick Seminary  
320 Middlefield Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94015  
www.stpatricksseminary.org  
650-322-0997

St. Mary’s Seminary  
9845 Memorial Drive  
Houston, TX 77024-3498  
www.stthom.edu  
713-681-7550

Sacred Heart School of Theology  
7335 S. Highway 100  
P.O. Box 429  
Hales Corner, WI 53130-0429  
www.shst.edu  
414-529-6999

St. Joseph’s Seminary/Dunwoody  
201 Seminary Avenue  
Yonkers, NY 10704  
www.ny-archdiocese.org  
914-376-2019

St. John’s Seminary  
5012 E. Seminary Road  
Camarillo, CA 93012-2598  
www.stjohnsem.edu  
805-484-4074

Theological College  
Washington D.C. 20064-0001  
www.theologicalcollege.org  
202-726-1716

SS. Cyril & Methodius Seminary  
3535 Indian Trail  
Orchard Lake, MI 48324-1623  
www.sscms.edu  
248-738-6735

Pontifical College Josephinum  
7625 N. High Street  
Columbus, OH 43235-1498  
www.pcj.edu  
614-885-2307

St. Mary’s Seminary  
5400 Roland Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21210  
www.stmarys.edu  
410-864-4278

Holy Apostles College  
33 Prospect Hill Road  
Cromwell, CT 06416  
www.holyapostles.edu  
860-632-3030

Moreau Seminary  
P.O. Box 668  
Notre Dame, IN 46556  
www.holycrossassociates.nd.edu  
574-631-0111

Saint Meinrad School of Theology  
200 Hill Drive  
St. Meinrad, IN 47577-1301  
www.stmeinrad.edu  
812-357-6964

Mount Angel Seminary  
St. Benedict, OR 97373  
www.mtangel.edu  
503-845-3126

St. Charles Borromeo  
100 E. Wynnewood Road  
Wynnewood, PA 19096  
www.scs.edu  
610-667-7635

Mount St. Mary’s Seminary  
Emittsburg, MD 21727-7797  
www.msmary.edu  
410-864-4278

Oblate School of Theology  
285 Oblate Drive  
San Antonio, TX 78216-6693  
www.ost.edu  
210-341-4519

Seminary of the  
Immaculate Conception  
444 W. Neck Road  
Huntington, NY 11743  
631-423-2346

Christ the King Seminary  
711 Knox Road  
P.O. Box 160  
East Aurora, NY 14052  
www.cks.edu  
716-652-8903

Mount St. Mary’s Seminary  
6616 Beechmont Avenue  
Cincinnati, OH 45230-2091  
www.mtsm.org  
513-231-3254

Blessed John XXIII National  
Seminary  
558 South Avenue  
Weston, MA 02493  
www.blessedjohnxxiii.edu  
781-899-9057

Notre Dame Seminary  
2901 S. Carrollton Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70118-4391  
www.nds.edu  
225-336-8789

St. Francis Seminary  
3257 S. Lake Drive  
St. Francis, WI 53235  
www.sfs.edu  
414-747-6442

Kenrick-Glennon Seminary  
5200 Glennon Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63119-4399  
www.kenrick.edu  
314-792-6500

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Two : Lesson Five

### Overview:

In this lesson, a seminarian visits the classroom to speak about his experience in the seminary as well as his own path of discernment. Any questions that the class has about the seminary can be discussed during this lesson.

### Objectives:

- To host a seminarian who will present an example of a vocation story, and bear witness to his faith in Jesus Christ
- To encounter the seminarian on a personal level and relate to him and his experience of discernment.
- Optional: Adopt the seminarian by committing as a class to pray for him.

### Timeline of Lesson:

• Vocation Prayer	Minutes	1
• Introduction		2
• Section 1: Witness of a Seminarian		15
• Section 2: Questions and Answers		15
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework	

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Schedule a Seminarian to speak to the class
- (optional) Make a copy of the Speaker Suggestions and Frequently Asked Questions for speaker to help them prepare
- If you are unable to get a speaker, see the Optional Activities section at the end of the chapter.

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

- See page \_\_
- Final note on hosting a seminarian speaker:
- If you are unable to find a seminarian speaker

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- Speaker Suggestions for Seminarian
- Frequently Asked Questions for Seminarians
- Online Resources

### Optional activities:

- Adopt-a-Seminarian/Sister
- Fishers of Men DVD
- A day in the life of a seminarian.
- Witness of a seminarian online
- Thank you letter to seminarian

## Speaker Suggestions For Seminararian

Seminararians are asked to cover the following points in their talk to the students. The following also constitutes an outline that can be followed for a talk as well.

- (1) Share some of the details of your upbringing that will help students relate to you: where you grew up, what schools you attended, your work experience and hobbies, what activities you were involved in as a youth.
- (2) Share personal story of your vocational call: when you first thought about priesthood, when you began to respond to the call to priesthood, how you went about discerning your call to the priesthood, and what motivated you to follow that call.
- (3) Speak about your transition into the seminary, the choices that you made and the joys and difficulties of pursuing your call to be a priest.
- (4) Describe your experience of the seminary. Describe the three prong approach to preparation as a priest: academics, pastoral ministry experience, and spiritual formation. Spiritual formation might be described as learning how to pray more deeply, recognize God working in our lives and then trying to cooperate with God.
- (5) Speak about living in the community, going to classes, praying together, having mass together, life with your brother seminararians. Tell them what a typical day looks like.

Note: the students will not understand seminary terminology. You might use the expression "dorm" or "hallway" instead of the word "cam". The word "formation" will mean nothing to them without some brief explanation. Describe it as spiritual preparation.

- (5) Describe the ministries you have been involved in since joining the seminary.
- (7) Share about your own pursuit of God including your prayer life, use of spiritual direction, retreats and other support for your vocation etc... Speak about how you continue to discover God in your own life and in the people you now minister to.
- (8) Talk about what you like to do in your free time, hobbies, favorite activities, things that will help the students to view seminararians as real people that the students could be like one day.

The talk should be about 15 minutes. The teachers are being asked to have their students prepare one question each in advance. This age group usually is very interested in asking questions.

## Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Seminararians

(Note: In the vocation curriculum, the class would have been introduced to the subjects of celibacy, family and priest receiving a salary.

1) Do seminararians and priests have fun? What do you do for fun?

Yes. Seminararians and priests have a lot of fun. God is not boring. People may be boring or "bore" each about God, but God is certainly never boring. Seminararians and priests go to baseball games, movies, shopping at the mall like everyone else. We hang out with our friends and spend fun time with our families. We laugh and have fun very much like regular people.

(2) Are you allowed to leave the seminary? Can you go on vacation?

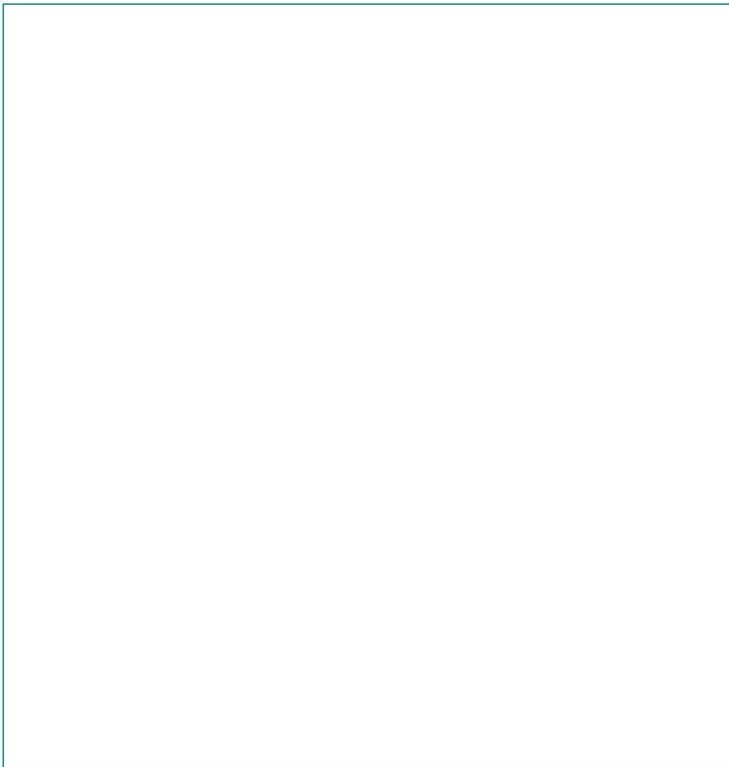
Many years ago, the seminary was a closed campus and seminararians were not allowed to leave except for one or two days at Christmas and Easter. Now it is quite different. We are encouraged to leave on weekends, to get involved with parishes and see and learn about the larger Church in our diocese. We also have a break at Christmas and again in Spring. Seminararians and priests go on vacation to balance out the time spent in study, work, and ministry.

(3) Why can't priests get married? Why do you not want to get married?

Priests take a vow not to be married in order that they may be completely available for the service of God in His Church. Jesus taught that some men would not be married "for the sake of the Kingdom". Priests have many very meaningful relationships with people, but not an exclusive one with a wife. The Lord Jesus has called them to this way of life for their own personal holiness, being able to give themselves totally to God, in order to work in the special ministry of priesthood. Practically priests are often most busy when men and women would spend time together – with a family, in the evenings and on weekends.

(4) Don't you want kids, a family?

Priests often say that not having their own family was hard until they were ordained and discovered that they had "many families". Parish priests truly become a part of many parish families who welcome them unconditionally into their homes and hearts. These families give a lot of life, love and enjoyment to priests in their daily lives. Men do not enter the priesthood because they are trying to



escape family life. They appreciate it, but because of their vocation they give it up for direct service to God.

(5) Can seminarians make money / work? What do you do for money? How much money will you make as a priest?

The seminary pays for our room and food. We get some money from groups like the Serra Club, the Knights of Columbus, and other Catholic groups to help pay for auto and health insurance, books and social expenses. While priests do receive a salary, we are definitely not in this for making money. Priests receive a small salary from the Church to help them with their living expenses. Their parishes house them and feed them and parishioners are often very generous in helping priests as well.

(6) Can a person be married and work for the Church?

Yes. Deacons are married men who are ordained to do certain ministries such as baptisms, witness weddings, preach, etc. There are also married men and women who work full time in the Church as religious education directors, catholic school principals, parish staff members. Many married women and men also work extensively in the Church as volunteers for various ministries in parishes and in diocesan wide groups.

(7) Why can't women be priests?

Seminarians, while not avoiding the significance of this

question, should try to accentuate the tremendous gifts that women currently contribute, and have historically contributed to the People of God, the Church, as well as current opportunities that many young girls aspire to in religious life.

(8) There are typically questions surrounding priestly collars and religious habits: why do some priest wear collars and others do not; can you ever wear blue jeans and regular clothes; what is the meaning of a priest collar?

Some religious communities require that their members always wear special clothes (clerical black shirts or religious habits). Diocesan priests can and do wear the clerical black collar as well as non-clerical, normal clothes. Priests can wear the clothes they feel are the most appropriate for the occasion. For example, Basketball games usually call for shorts and a T-shirt, whereas a wedding calls for formal clerical attire.

(9) Have you ever had a miracle happen in your life?

Miracles are supernatural events. Miracles happen everyday in the sense that God is at work in our lives and in our world everyday. Bigger, more dramatic miracles, such as healing a dying person, have been documented, but more frequently the miracle of hope when someone is at a breaking point or guidance to make a positive life changing decision.

(10) How do you know if God is calling you to be a priest?

Your lessons have discussed some of the ways that God calls us. The clearest way is to sense with your mind, heart, and soul what your vocation is. You know because it brings about a sense of joy and peace. The Lord puts a yearning in our heart for the vocation we are called to pursue. That yearning will bring you deep peace and joy within you when you answer it.

Note: Some students may ask also about the recent priest sexual abuse scandals. Be truthful that some priests have unfortunately been involved in some very wrong (evil) acts that have caused pain to the Church. This is not from the priesthood inherently. Unfortunately these horrible crimes are also committed by married men and single men as well. These horrible actions by a few priests are a cause for the Church to reinvigorate herself with good, spirit filled priests to help bring about healing to victims and begin a new chapter in the life of the Church.

## Unit Two: Lesson Five

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

### Introduction: (2 minutes)

*Introduce the speaker by saying:*

In the last lesson, we learned about seminarians, and a little about their lives. Today we welcome a young man who is in the seminary, who will tell us a little bit about how he got there, and what his life is like. You should have already prepared questions to ask him, but if you think of others you may ask them too.

### Section 1: Witness of a Seminarian (15 minutes)

### Section 2: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (15 minutes)

*Seminarians are told in advance to expect questions from the students. Students should have prepared at least one good question to ask.*

### SUMMARY

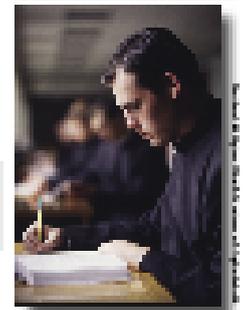
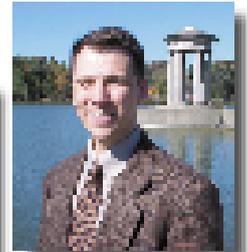
Seminarians normal men, whom God has called to actively consider the priesthood. Some of them are 100% sure that this is the vocation God has blessed them with, while other seminarians are still trying to listen to the voice of the Lord and to discern (figure out) what God is calling them to do. Major seminarians are in the last stage of preparation and seriously pursuing the call the Lord has given them. They need our prayers and support as much as we also need theirs.

*To end the class, pray with the seminarian one Our Father and one Hail Mary for the vocation of the seminarian as well as the vocations of the students in the class.*

## Witness of a Seminarian Adopt a Seminarian

### INTRODUCTION

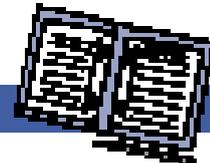
We have learned about seminarians, and how they prepare to be priests. Today we welcome a seminarian, who will tell us what led him to the seminary and what his life is like. If you have already prepared questions for the seminarian, then you may ask them at the conclusion of his presentation.



LET'S PRAY ABOUT IT!  
Adopt a Seminarian Prayer

### SUMMARY

Seminarians are men whom God has called to actively prepare for the priesthood. Some of them are 100% sure that this is the vocation God has blessed them with, while other seminarians are still trying to listen to the voice of the Lord and to determine what God is calling them to do. Seminarians need our prayers and support as much as we need theirs.



### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- What is one thing you found interesting about the speaker's presentation and why?
- What was one thing that you could relate to in what he said?
- What do you most admire about the seminarian?
- Why is it important to pray for him?

### Optional Activity: Adopt-a-Seminarian / Sister

A great way for the class to continue to support the seminarian speaker is the Adopt-a-Seminarian Activity. This activity appears on page 66. The Adopt a Seminarian / Sister activity is intended to remind students of what they have learned from the speakers.

Inform the class that you will be adopting the speaker. Post their pictures and biography in a prominent place and explain that the class will be adopting them by praying for them regularly, as a class and individually. As a class, you may use the Adopt-a-Seminarian/Sister prayer service. It is recommended to pick a regular time each week (or month) to pray the short prayer service. Individually, students can be encouraged to pray for the adopted seminarian and sister using their own words, followed by a formal prayer such as the Our Father and Hail Mary. The speaker, in turn, promises to pray for the entire class and the teacher. The pictures of the seminarian and sister can remain posted for the rest of the school year to remind the students who they have adopted.

Also, on page \_\_ you will find ideas for a bulletin board based on the witness of the seminarian and religious sister, and a list of Fun Facts to ask the speakers when they visit.

# Adopt-a-Seminarian / Sister: Class Prayer Service

## OBJECTIVES

- Pray on a regular basis (weekly or monthly) for the seminarian and sister who spoke to the class
- Pray for religious women and men, and priests, and for future vocations to religious life and priesthood.
- Pray for the students and teachers to joyfully discover their own specific vocation and to have the strong faith to pursue their vocation.
- Teachers know how best to implement this prayer service. A teacher may lead the entire prayer, or various parts may be delegated to students. During the year, new students may be chosen to be prayer leaders until every student has the opportunity to participate.

## PRAYER SERVICE

Begin with the sign of the cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

VOCATION PRAYER - The class prays together:

Lord Jesus,  
Make me your disciple.  
With your joy fill me,  
By your love form me,  
In your hope lead me,  
Show me the vocation that you desire for me,  
The path to love and follow you. Amen.

## OPENING PRAYER

Prayer leader:

Lord God,  
Inspire us today with your Holy Spirit to be your disciples. Help us to love you and others.  
Hear our prayers that we pray this day.  
We ask our prayers through Jesus Christ.  
Amen

## INTERCESSIONS

Led by prayer leader or distributed among individual students.  
The response after each prayer intention is "Lord, Hear Our Prayer:"

Lord,  
Bless (name of seminarian / sister) and all seminarians, religious sisters and brothers, and priests. Fill their hearts with love, peace and joy. Give them strength and deep faith.  
We pray to the Lord. (Response: Lord, hear our prayer.)

Lord,  
Bless religious and volunteer missionaries around the world who preach and teach about you. Help them by giving them courage and joy in their missions.  
We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)

Lord,  
Bless all people preparing to become religious sisters, brothers and priests. Inspire them through your Holy Spirit with a deep love and a joyful commitment to serve you and your people.  
We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)

Lord,  
Bless all seminarians preparing to be ordained priests. Help seminarians to pray, to learn, and to grow in love for you. Strengthen their desire to serve the Church as faithful and holy priests.  
We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)

Lord,  
Bless us today. Help us to be your disciples in how we live each day. Help us with what you know we need most. Open our hearts and send your Holy Spirit to help us to discover our vocations. Help us to follow you in our vocation.  
We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)

Lord,  
Bless our families with a deep faith in you. Help especially those in most need. Guide them by your Holy Spirit and give them your joy in their hearts.  
We pray to the Lord. (Lord, hear our prayer.)

*Note: Teacher may wish to add intentions specific to the local community, parish, school or class or offer an opportunity for the students to offer their own intentions.*

## OUR FATHER AND HAIL MARY

Prayer leader: We join these prayers and all of the prayers within our hearts as we pray together the Lords Prayer:

All: "Our Father, who art in heaven . . ."

Prayer leader: Let us ask our Blessed Mother to now intercede for (Sister name), (Seminarian Name) and all of us as we pray together:

All: "Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you . . ."

## CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer leader: Lord, We thank you and we praise you for the many great gifts you have given us through religious men and women and priests. Call more men and women to joyful service in your Church. We ask this prayer through your son Jesus, the high priest, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Leader ends with the sign of the cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Biography of Seminarian/Sister (for Adopt-a-Seminarian/Sister or Vocation Bulletin Board)

Ask the seminarian/sister (or vocation director) to write a brief biography using the following bullet points. Teachers may edit, add to, or shorten the list of questions. The responses can then be posted on the bulletin board, possibly with a picture of the speaker.

- Where did you grow up?
- Where did you attend school?
- What did you like to do when you were in junior high (for example, sports, music, clubs, hobbies, other activities)?
- Describe your family (number of siblings, brothers/sisters, cultural heritage).
- When did you first begin thinking about being a priest or sister?
- What did you do to begin answering your call from God?
- Did you work prior to entering the seminary/religious life? What kind of work did you do?
- Where do you live? Where is your seminary/convent?
- What is a "normal" day like?
- What do you like about the priesthood or religious life?
- Why do you want to be a priest/religious sister?

## Fun Facts about Seminarian/Sister

(Teachers may choose to edit, delete, or add to this example below.)

- What is your shoe size?
- What is your favorite color?
- What is your favorite food? Dessert?
- Where is the most beautiful place you have visited?
- What is your favorite movie?
- If you could meet one person (besides Jesus and Mary) who would it be? Why?
- What is your favorite movie?
- What state is your favorite? Why?
- What was your best subject in school? Least favorite?
- Have you owned (or do you own) any pets? What kind? Names?
- Do you have a hobby, or play a sport? Describe.
- What is your favorite song? Radio station?
- What is your favorite planet (besides Earth)?
- Do you ever day dream?
- Which grade in school was your favorite?
- Do you dance? Sing? Play an instrument?

Choose between the following:

Ice cream or cake?

Coke or Pepsi?

Motorcycle or convertible car?

Roller skates or skateboard?

Sky diving or mountain climbing?

Gardening/farming or fishing?

Sandals or gym shoes?

*Teacher note: The biographies and fun facts may be filled out in advance by the seminarian or sister. It may be used as a way to create dialogue between the students and speaker with the students writing down their responses. Or it may be completed as a further way of communicating with the seminarian/sister.*

## Final note on hosting a seminarian speaker:

In order to safeguard both the students and the seminarian/sister, NO contact information should be exchanged between the speakers and the students. All contact with the seminarian/sister/priest is to occur through the teacher and school officials only. No e-mails, cards, or letters should be sent from individual students directly to the seminarian, sister, or priest. Their private e-mails should never be given out. Any e-mails should be mailed from a teacher or secured school account to seminarians, sisters, or priests. Likewise, any mailed cards, letters should be reviewed by teacher to insure they do not contain individual student contact information (students should sign cards with first names only). And teachers should mail the cards themselves. Additionally, students should not call or seek to contact the seminarian, sister, or priest individually. Interested students should have teachers, or parents contact them on their behalf.

These precautions and others that teachers and schools deem necessary should be followed for the mutual protection and benefit of everyone: seminarians, sisters, priests and students.

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

## UNIT II LESSON 5

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## NOTES

### If you are unable to find a seminarian speaker

The personal testimony of a seminarian can leave a profound impression on the students in discerning their own vocation. It not only illustrates what the students have been learning in class, but also presents the seminary as a real possibility for their lives. For this reason, teachers are encouraged to make every effort to obtain a speaker: talk to the parish priest or the principle, contact the local vocation director, contact the nearest seminary.

If it is not possible to arrange for a seminarian to visit the class, one of the optional activities listed on this page may be used. Although it may not achieve the same impact as a seminarian speaker, they may help the students to develop a better understanding of the seminary life.

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

### Online Seminarian Resources

There are many very valuable resources available online and elsewhere that can be of great use in teaching about the life of a seminarian. Below is a list of a some very helpful ones. These and many more resources are available on our web site [www.WhatIsMyVocation.com](http://www.WhatIsMyVocation.com), including seminarian interviews, audio files of radio shows featuring seminarians, and links to various resources online.

[www.WhatIsMyVocation.com](http://www.WhatIsMyVocation.com)

*A day in the life of a seminarian.*  
<http://www.chicagopriest.org/education/story.html>

Meet our Seminarians (Diocese of Toledo)  
<http://www.toledovocations.com/meet.html#>

Diocese of Toledo Vocations Videos  
<http://www.toledovocations.com/media.html#>  
(See *From Doctor to Seminarian*, and *Final Year of Formation*)

Vocation.com Seminarian Testimonies  
<http://www.vocation.com/content-nti.htm>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
<http://www.usccb.org/vocations/>

### Activity 1: Fishers of Men DVD

Fishers of Men is a full-length DVD (approximately 18 minutes long) that was produced by Secretariat for Vocations & Priestly Formation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. It includes various testimonies from priests and seminarians and serves as an excellent resource in the event that a seminarian speaker is not available

The cost of the DVD is \$3.30 (plus \$5.50 shipping and handling) and can be ordered using the information at the beginning of this book.

### Activity 2: A day in the life of a seminarian.

Have the students read the article entitled *A day in the life of a seminarian* (<http://www.chicagopriest.org/education/story.html>). You can print this out or have the students read it online. Then, ask the students to write about what in the seminary article was similar to their own school and their daily life, and what was different. Ask them what they found surprising and what they learned from reading the article.

### Activity 3: Witness of a seminarian online

On the vocation web sites listed on this page, there are several seminarians' stories which can be printed out and read by the students (or read online). Divide the class into small groups and assign one seminarian story to each group.

Have the students read the story together then, as a group, answer the following questions and report their findings to the entire class. Choose one person to write down notes, and another to be the spokesperson. After the students have had adequate time to prepare their reports, each spokesperson presents the findings to the class.

1. What is the name of the seminarian that you were assigned?
2. Where is he from? What diocese or religious order is he studying with?
3. When did he discover his calling to be a priest?
4. When and why did he decide to enter the seminary?
4. What did he do before joining the seminary?
5. How does he like being in the seminary?
6. What was one new thing that the class can learn from the story?
7. What was one thing that the class might find interesting from the story?

### Thank You Notes

Have the students write a thank you letter to the seminarian encouraging him in discovering his vocation.

# Unit Three Overview

Unit III focuses on the vocation to the religious life as a sister, brother, or priest.

- Lesson One provides a basic understanding of the religious vocation.
- Lesson Two describes the role of religious communities in the Church and some aspects of their daily life.
- Lesson Three covers the process by which a man or woman becomes a religious.
- Lesson Four features a religious sister speaking to the class.
- Lesson Five is a summary of the curriculum and a final call to action.

Lesson One is a longer-than-average lesson and contains a great deal of material. Lessons Two and Three are much shorter. Consequently, you may want to plan on spending some extra time on Lesson One, or alternately, plan on organizing activities for Lessons Two and Three.

## PREPARATION

1. It is recommended to schedule your speaker well ahead of time, for the mutual convenience of speakers and teachers. For scheduling purposes, keep in mind that the religious sister's presentation corresponds with Lesson Four.
2. Find out what religious brothers, sisters, and priests work in the school or the parish. If there are none working in the school, contact the diocesan vocation director or a nearby convent to see if a speaker can be arranged.
3. If you are unable to find a speaker, resources are available in the Lesson and at [www.whatismyvocation.com](http://www.whatismyvocation.com).
4. Free vocation publications are another valuable resource, one that will be used throughout Unit III for various activities. These take approximately two weeks to arrive, so it is recommended to order them in anticipation of this Unit. Ordering information can be found at the end of lesson Three. If your parish has a vocation committee, they may be very useful in helping to gather vocations material you can use in class.

## Unit Three

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**The Vocation to the Religious Life**  
WHAT IS A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY?

Religious sisters, brothers, and priests are individuals who have taken vows and joined a religious community. They live together in a common life, sharing their faith and their love for God. They are dedicated to the service of God and the service of others.

**RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE CHURCH**

During the centuries of the Church, there have been many different religious communities. Some are contemplative, some are active, and some are both. They have played a vital role in the history of the Church and the world.

**PRAYER AND ACTION**

Religious communities are called to live a life of prayer and action. They are to be a sign and instrument of unity with the whole Church, and to be a witness to the world.



**A Charism for Every Need of the Church**

There are thousands of people who dedicate their lives to God through the religious life. They appear in many forms, shapes, and settings. There are many different religious orders. Each one has a unique charism, or gift, which is a special grace given to the religious life to carry out its mission in the world.

**WHAT IS A CHARISM?**

A charism is a special gift or grace given to a person or a community. It is a supernatural power that enables them to carry out their mission in the world. Charisms are given to the Church to help it grow and to serve the needs of the world.

**WORK AND APOSTOLATE**

Religious communities are called to live a life of work and apostolate. They are to be a sign and instrument of unity with the whole Church, and to be a witness to the world.

**LIVING IN COMMUNITY**

Religious communities are called to live in community. They are to be a sign and instrument of unity with the whole Church, and to be a witness to the world.



**Becoming a Religious Sister, Brother, or Priest**

**WHAT IS IT?**

It is a way of life in which a person dedicates themselves to God and the service of others. It is a life of prayer, work, and community. It is a life of love and sacrifice.

**FINDING THE CROSS THAT FITS YOU**

There are many different religious communities. Each one has a unique charism, or gift, which is a special grace given to the religious life to carry out its mission in the world. You should choose a community that fits your own gifts and needs.

**TRY IT OUT!**

When you call a person to a religious vocation, you are calling them to a life of prayer, work, and community. You are calling them to a life of love and sacrifice. You are calling them to a life of service to God and the service of others.



**Witness of a Religious Sister/Adopt a Sister**

**INTRODUCTION**

This lesson is designed to help you understand the religious life and the role of religious communities in the Church. It is a life of prayer, work, and community. It is a life of love and sacrifice.

**LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!**

Adopt a Sister Prayer

**SUMMARY**

Witnessing the story of the religious life is a way of life in which a person dedicates themselves to God and the service of others. It is a life of prayer, work, and community. It is a life of love and sacrifice.

**Write about it!**

Journal reflection: What is the most important thing you learned about the religious life? How do you think you can witness to the religious life in your own life?



**Conclusion: Jesus Christ is Calling You**

**LISTEN**

Jesus Christ is calling you. He is calling you to a life of prayer, work, and community. He is calling you to a life of love and sacrifice. He is calling you to a life of service to God and the service of others.

**VOCATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE!**

Religious communities are called to live a life of prayer, work, and community. They are to be a sign and instrument of unity with the whole Church, and to be a witness to the world.

**CONCLUSION**

Jesus Christ is calling you. He is calling you to a life of prayer, work, and community. He is calling you to a life of love and sacrifice. He is calling you to a life of service to God and the service of others.



# Unit Three Planner

Lesson	Title	Special Preparations Materials	Major Concepts	Teaching Steps	Extra Resources Activities
1	The Vocation to the Religious Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Journals</li> <li>• <i>Vision</i> Magazines (optional activity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a religious community?</li> <li>• Two kinds: contemplative and active</li> <li>• Religious Vows: Poverty, Chastity, Obedience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find a Community</li> <li>• Vocabulary Review</li> <li>• Matthew 19:21</li> </ul>
2	A Charism for Every Need of the Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Journals</li> <li>• Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional activity)</li> <li>• <i>Vision</i> Magazines (optional activity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a Charism?</li> <li>• Many different kinds of religious orders</li> <li>• Religious are an example of faith and charity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a brochure for a religious community</li> <li>• Religious Medal as a visible sign of commitment</li> <li>• If the Habit Fits...</li> </ul>
3	Becoming a Religious Sister, Brother, or Priest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Journals</li> <li>• <i>Vision</i> Magazines (optional activity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you choose a religious order?</li> <li>• Formation: the process of becoming a religious.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Lesson Material</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulletin Board Idea: Formation Process</li> <li>• Religious Communities Show and Tell</li> <li>• Web sites for Religious Communities</li> <li>• Organize a Vocations Fair</li> </ul>
4	Witness of a Religious Sister / Adopt a Sister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Journals</li> <li>• List of the Class' Questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does God call people to the religious life?</li> <li>• Answering the call.</li> <li>• What is it like to be in a religious congregation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Witness of a Religious Sister</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious Sister Video</li> <li>• Religious Sister Vocation Story</li> <li>• Habit or Plain Clothes?</li> </ul>
5	Conclusion: Jesus Christ is Calling You	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Edition Textbooks</li> <li>• Student Journals</li> <li>• Vocation Survey</li> <li>• Xeroxed copies of Unit III Lesson 5 for students to keep.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus Christ is calling you right now</li> <li>• Review of the curriculum</li> <li>• Discovering your vocation. You must act!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation Prayer</li> <li>• Witness of a religious sister</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Summary</li> <li>• Homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand out Copies of Final Lesson</li> <li>• Complete Vocation Survey</li> <li>• Finish Student Vocation Journals</li> <li>• Final Prayer Service</li> </ul>

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Three : Lesson One

### Overview:

This lesson covers the basic facts of the vocation to the religious life. It covers the definition and history of the religious vocation, the two major types of communities, consecration, vows, religious priests, and community houses.

There is a great deal of material in this lesson so you should keep a steady pace in presenting the lesson, and, if necessary, spend extra time on it.

### Objectives:

- To know what a religious community/order/ congregation is.
- To recognize the two main types of religious communities: contemplative and active, and what each does.
- To know the essence of the consecrated life: the dedication of one's life to God.
- To identify the vows that religious men and women make: poverty, chastity, and obedience; and what each means.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	2
• Section 1: What Is a Religious Community?	2
• Section 2 :Religious Communities in the Church	5
• Section 3 : Prayer and Action	10
• Section 4 : Consecrated to God	10
• Section 5 : Religious Priests	5
• Section 6 : Where Do Religious Communities Live?	1
• Discussion: Let's Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Journals
- *Vision* Magazines (optional activity)

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- Sister or Nun?
  - St. Anthony and the origin of religious life in the Church.
  - Additional information on the vows of a religious.

### Optional activities:

- See page \_\_
- Find a community
  - Vocabulary Review
  - Matthew 19:21

### Vocabulary:

Religious community  
Religious order  
Religious congregation  
Monasteries  
Contemplative order  
Nun  
Monk  
Apostolic order  
Active order  
Sister  
Brother  
Consecrate

# The Vocation to the Religious Life

## WHAT IS A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY?

Religious sisters, brothers, and priests are individuals who live out their Christian faith as members of a larger group known as a **religious community** (also called a **religious order** or **religious congregation**). They make special promises to love and serve God for the rest of their lives, dedicated to a life of prayer and service.

There are many different kinds of religious communities in the Church. Each community lives according to a particular set of guidelines which inspires and identifies them and gives a focus to their prayer and work.

## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE CHURCH

During the early centuries of the Church, about 1,700 years ago, there were Christians who were inspired by the gospel to sell all that they had, leave their homes, and dedicate their lives completely to God in a special way. They left behind everything so that they could follow Jesus without distractions.

Eventually, as more people chose to live in this way, they began to form communities and live together in places called **monasteries**. As a community, they could help each other provide for their daily needs and work together to support the life of the whole community. Some religious communities were made up of all men, and others were formed by women. In each community, the members lived a life of prayer and pursued a spiritual union with God. Ever since that time, religious communities have been an important part of the Church and religious life continues to be a very attractive vocation for many people.

## PRAYER AND ACTION

Today, there are two main types of religious communities. Some religious communities serve God through meditation, prayer and solitude. These are known as **contemplative orders**. The men and women in these communities live in monasteries. Women's monasteries are also called convents. They live away from the distractions of the world so that they may devote their lives to praying for the needs of the Church. In contemplative communities of women, the members are known as **nuns**. In contemplative communities of men, the members are known as **monks**. The members of

the community also work to support their communities by farming or making and selling goods such as music cd's, communion hosts for mass, and works of art.



*The early martyrdom had ended. A new kind of martyrdom had begun. People give their lives for Christ every day.*

Read Matthew 19:16-21



Read Luke 8:1-3

## Unit Three Lesson One

*Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.*

### Introduction: (2 minutes)

*You may choose to introduce the lesson by asking the following questions:*

**Q:** What is a community?

**A:** A community is a group of people who share something in common.

**Q:** What are some examples of different communities?

**A:** Neighborhoods, families, parishes, clubs, etc.

**Q:** What are some advantages of being in a community?

**A:** Sharing things, helping each other, working together, etc.

*Then say:*

Today we are going to learn about a special kind of community called a religious community.

## Lesson Development

*Teacher or student may begin reading the lesson aloud.*

### Section One (2 minutes)

#### What is a religious community?

**Teachers' Note:** Make sure that students understand that in this context, religious community, religious order, and religious congregation mean the same thing.

### Section Two (5 minutes) Religious Communities in the Church

*You can introduce this section by saying:*

"Religious communities are not new in the Church; they have been around a long time."

### Section Three (10 minutes) Prayer and Action

*Begin by saying:* "Now we are going to talk about two different types of religious communities. Listen closely so you can tell the difference."

## Supplemental Material: Sister or Nun?

The distinction between "nun" and "sister" is a challenging one. It goes as follows: women in contemplative orders are nuns; women in apostolic orders are religious sisters. Both are addressed with the title "Sister (Name)" when saying their name. However, the word "nun" only properly refers to a contemplative nun, not a religious sister (of an apostolic order). The same distinction applies to monks and brothers.

As you can see, this can cause some confusion, so it may be best to let the students use the two terms interchangeably.

On the other hand, kids love knowing fun facts that not many people know. Try explaining it to them. Then they can show off what they know by asking people they know if they know the difference between a nun and a sister.

After reading the first paragraph you can ask:

**Q:** Who can explain what a contemplative order is?

*Then say:*

"Because they spend most of the time in a monastery, you have probably never seen a contemplative nun or monk. Now we are going to talk about the second kind of religious community, these are the sisters that you probably have seen."

After reading the second paragraph you may ask:

**Q:** Who can explain what an apostolic order is? What is the difference between an apostolic order and a contemplative order?

## Section Four (10 minutes) Consecrated to God

*Begin by saying:* Has anyone ever heard the word consecrated? If you look in the corner of page 36 you will see a definition.

*Have the students read the definition aloud then ask:*

**Q:** Can anyone tell me whose picture that is?

**A:** Pope Benedict XVI

After reading the first paragraph you may ask:

**Q:** Does anyone remember what the word "vow" means? You can look in your glossary (page 51) or turn to page 20 and look in the upper right corner of the page.

**A:** A vow is a special promise made to God to live in a particular way.

*Then say:*

In religious life, men and women take three special vows. Now we are going to read about what those three vows are.



### Contemplative – Prayer Apostolic – Active

The second type of religious community is active in the world, serving others in a variety of activities. These communities are known as active or apostolic orders. In these orders, women are called sisters, and men are usually called brothers unless they are ordained priests. These communities work both in the Church and in the world. They usually have a particular focus such as teaching in schools, caring for the sick, helping

the poor, doing missionary work in far off countries, or working in the media. These communities also spend time in prayer. Their community prayer and common mission unite them.

#### CONSECRATED TO GOD

The man and woman who join religious communities consecrate their lives to God as a way of seeking holiness. To consecrate something means to set it aside or devote it to a holy purpose. To consecrate one's life to Jesus Christ means to devote it entirely to Him.

When a man or woman decides to accept Christ's invitation to leave everything and follow Him in a more radical way, they make vows to live like Jesus in poverty, chastity, and obedience. They participate in a ceremony where they make this commitment, much like a married couple exchanges their vows on their wedding day. They promise Christ that they will live the rest of their lives dedicated exclusively to Him.

The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience help religious men or women to be free from earthly attachments and distractions. These vows help them to live simply, to be more open with God, and to depend more on Him.

**Poverty** as a vow does not mean being poor. It means sharing possessions in common with the community. Religious men and women who live this vow only have things that can help them in their mission.

**Obedience** is listening to and following God's will in one's life. This is done with the guidance of the religious superior. The vow of obedience also requires going wherever one is needed and giving oneself completely in service to God's people.

**Chastity** for a religious sister, brother, or priest means that they give their body and soul only to Jesus. They enter into a loving and

The priest, deacon, catechist and religious must...proclaim, be witnesses. But naturally, for this they must listen...on the one hand, with their soul open to Christ, interiorly listening to his Word so that it is... transformed and forms [their] being; and on the other, listening to today's humanity, our neighbours, those of [their] parish, those for whom [they] have been given a certain responsibility.

– Pope Benedict XVI<sup>15</sup>



**Consecrate:**  
to set aside,  
devote to a certain  
purpose, make  
sacred.

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Unit Three: Lesson One

After reading about the three vows, review the material by asking:

**Q:** Who can tell me what the three vows taken by a religious are?

**A:** The three vows are poverty, chastity, and obedience.

**Q:** Who can describe what these vows are in their own words?

**Q:** How does living these vows make you a consecrated person?

**A:** Living according to these vows sets you apart and devotes your life to the purpose of imitating Jesus Christ.



Jesus teaches that obedience is the key to a successful mission, even when obeying means accepting the cross.

*“The world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me.”*  
- John 14:31

exclusive relationship with Him. Jesus Christ, in turn, gives them special grace and the intense and intimate love of His own heart. Just as married people remain faithful to their spouses, religious men and women remain faithful to Jesus and do not marry or date other people. They avoid becoming intimately attached to people in a way that would distract them from their relationship with the Lord. By doing this, they remain free to love and serve God and neighbor with an undivided heart. Religious men and women may have family and friends with whom they spend time and form loving, friendly relationships.

### RELIGIOUS PRIESTS

A religious priest and a diocesan priest are different. A diocesan priest serves the people of a single diocese under the authority of his bishop. A priest in a religious order ministers to people according to the mission of his community. For example, if the religious order runs schools, then the priest might teach. If a religious priest is part of a missionary order, he might live in a foreign country. If he works in a monastery, he might do farm work in addition to his priestly duties. Like a diocesan priest, a religious priest celebrates the sacraments, and may work in a parish setting supported by his community of religious brothers and priests.

Religious brothers are not priests. They make vows and have responsibilities within their religious community but they are not ordained and do not celebrate the sacraments. A man may choose to be a brother rather than a priest because he wants to fully devote himself to contemplation or to a particular kind of work such as teaching. Their vocation and ministry is similar to that of religious sisters.



### WHERE DO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES LIVE?

Religious orders may live together in a community house. Each house may include a chapel, private rooms for sleeping, a kitchen, a dining room, and community rooms for socializing. Some houses have guest rooms for visitors.

A religious sister, brother or priest is not geographically bound by the parameters of the diocese. They live and work wherever the mission of the religious community and the needs of the world call them.

**Teachers' Note:** Generally, religious men and women never marry or have children. One exception is when a married man or woman's spouse dies; that man or woman may choose to join a religious community, even if they have children and grandchildren from their previous marriage.

### Section Five (5 minutes) Religious Priests

**Teachers Note:** Although this section is titled "Religious Priests" equal emphasis should be given to religious brothers and understanding this important vocation in the Church.

**Begin by asking:**

**Q** Remember when we talked about diocesan priests and religious priests? Do you remember what the difference is?

**A:** A diocesan priest serves the Church in one diocese under a bishop, a religious priest serves the mission of the community under obedience to his superior where his order needs him.

**At the end of the section say:**

Remember what we learned about consecrated life and vows? Religious priests and brothers take the same vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

### Section Six (1 minute) Where Do Religious Communities Live?

**Teachers Note:** religious men and religious women typically live in separate communities and in separate housing.

**At the end of the section ask:**

Do any of you know where religious communities live? Have any of you ever visited a religious house (convent/monastery)? Have you ever wondered what its like to live in a religious community? Maybe you can think of some questions about living in a community that you can ask the religious sister (or brother) when they visit.

## Summary:

The vocation to the consecrated life is a call to follow Jesus Christ more radically in poverty, chastity and obedience. These women and men feel God calling them to join together in a community of prayer, faith and service. There are many varieties of religious communities, but two main groupings: contemplative orders who remove themselves from the world for deeper prayer, and active orders who engage in the activities of the world and witness the gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed. Those who are called to this vocation have a specific calling to a certain community.

All religious men and women take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a way of consecrating themselves to following Jesus Christ.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Do you have religious sisters, brothers, or priests in your parish? Do you know other religious sisters, brothers, or priests?
2. What are some forms of service that religious communities do that you think would be fun or interesting to do? Why does the Church need some religious orders to be active in the world?
3. St. Therese of Lisieux was a religious nun in a contemplative order called the Carmelites. She prayed very much for the Church's missionaries. Though she never worked in a foreign mission during her lifetime, she played an important role in helping the Church's missions. Why were her prayers important? Why do we need contemplative religious communities that are dedicated to prayer?



### VOCABULARY

Religious community  
Religious order  
Religious congregation  
Monasteries  
Contemplative order  
Nun  
Monk  
Apostolic order  
Active order  
Sister  
Brother  
Consecrate

## Let's Talk About It!

*When discussing question 1 you can ask:*

If you know a religious brother/sister, what do you know about them? What community do they belong to?

*Then you can mention:*

Later this week, a religious sister will be visiting our class and she will be able to answer all of our questions about being part of a religious community.

*When discussing question 2, give some examples of what some religious communities do, for example:*

(work in hospitals, teach, serve the poor, work with pregnant women, etc.)

*Then you might ask:*

Why do we need so many different religious orders and communities?

*Between question 2 and 3 you can ask:*

We've talked about active orders and what they do – now we are going to talk about contemplative orders and why they are important.

## Homework:

Some examples of founders of a religious community that can be used for Journal question: Mother Teresa of Calcutta, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. John Bosco, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Clare of Assisi, Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice.

You can find information on founders of religious communities online (see [www.WhatIsMyVocation.com](http://www.WhatIsMyVocation.com)) or have students go to the school computer lab or library and research the subject.

## Write about it!



### Journal options:

• Read about the life of a founder of a religious community or a well-known religious elder, brother, or priest. Answer the following questions about them:

1. What do you admire about the religious elder, brother, or priest that you read about?
2. What about their lives inspires you?
3. What would our world be like with more people like them?

*If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to (the) poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*

(Mt 19:21)

## St. Anthony and the Origin of Religious Life in the Church

Anthony was a rich young man who lived in Egypt. When he was twenty, his parents died and left him a fortune. He was a Christian and tried to live a good life, but in his heart he felt that he was called to do more.

One day Anthony was in the church and he heard the Gospel that says, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all that you have" (Mt. 19:21). He felt like Jesus was saying those words directly to him. Anthony heard this invitation of Christ and had an inspiration. He went immediately and gave away all that he had. He moved out of the city, leaving everything that might distract him from God so that he could pray better, and spend his life getting to know God in a deeper way. Over time, Anthony moved further away from the city, until finally moving to the desert. There Anthony lived working and praying with only God to keep him company. Sometimes the devil would try to trick Anthony and even wrestled with him and beat him up on several occasions, but Anthony's faith would not be shaken.

People came from all over to learn from him and be healed by him. Eventually, people who wanted to imitate Anthony gathered around him to live in the desert and join Anthony in prayer. Each person lived separately, and the group gathered only to pray. This was how the first religious community started.

St. Anthony lived from 251 to 356 AD (yes, that is 105 years) and he is known as the father of Christian Monasticism.

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

## UNIT III LESSON 1

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

### SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

#### Additional Information on the Vows of a Religious Person.

The **vow of poverty** is a vow not to own material possessions. All goods and money are shared by the religious community. Necessary items such as cars are signed out by a sister or brother when needed. Likewise, community rooms offer TV, VCR and computers. The sisters, brothers and priests do not own them, but can use them as needed.

The **vow of chastity** is similar to the priestly promise of celibacy. Religious men and women give themselves to God in an exclusive bond of love. Because religious men and women are “married” to God, they do not marry or have exclusive relationships with other people. This vow includes abstaining from sexual relations and, as a result, not having children. Some people join a religious community after their spouse dies or if their marriage is annulled, as long as their existing children have reached the age of majority and are not financially or emotionally dependent of them. The person joining the community vows not to have any more children but they are able to stay in contact with their existing children as time permits. Even when this is the case, as religious men or women, they are committed and active in the life of the religious community.

The **vow of obedience** is a vow to obey God and do His will. In a religious community this is lived out by doing what the religious superior asks. Obedience to the superior is not blind obedience in the sense that any orders that would possibly bring about harm or evil must not be followed because God would not command us to commit evil, immoral, or unethical acts. Religious communities have general elections periodically for the governance of the community. Religious sisters or brothers also owe obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ as taught by the Church. As representatives of a religious community, they are a public witness to the faith of Jesus Christ that our Church has been entrusted to us by the Lord to preach, teach and pass on in truth to the next generation.

Some religious orders also take an additional vow of prayer or a vow of stability when they become part of the community and make their final vows.

The **vow of prayer** is a promise to pray daily certain prayers that are part of the spiritual life of the community. Often these prayers have set hours and are prayed as a community, gathered together in a community chapel or church.

The **vow of stability** is a vow to remain in one location. This does not mean that they cannot leave the community grounds for reasons such as traveling or visiting family; it means that the religious who takes this vow will make their permanent residence with the community in one location.

#### Find a Community

Using Vision magazine (a free publication which can be ordered using the information at the beginning of the book), have the students look through the magazine to find a religious community they think is interesting. Then have them write to the community and ask for more information.

#### Vocabulary Review

This lesson has several important vocabulary words. You may want to take a moment to review the vocabulary in class, possibly after the class discussion and before journal. Alternately, it may be assigned as homework to be written in the journal, asking the students to look up the vocabulary words in the glossary and write out the definitions.

#### Matthew 19:21

This can be done as part of the class discussion or as part of the journal. Have the students read the Gospel quotation at the bottom of page 38. How does this passage apply to life as a religious sister, brother, or priest? Why do you think these words of Jesus would inspire someone to leave everything and live as a religious person?

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Three : Lesson Two

### Overview:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “in the consecrated life, Christ’s faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come (CCC 916).” In the same line, Pope John Paul II asks all consecrated persons: “Live to the full your dedication to God, so that this world may never be without a ray of divine beauty to lighten the path of human existence (Vita Consecrata, 109).” The call to the consecrated vocation is not just for one’s own holiness, but to take on a special mission to be a light of God in the world. Thus God gives a person the vocation and the mission at the same time.

### Objectives:

- To know that within the vocation to the religious life there is a call to a specific order or community
- To explain what a charism is: the identity, mission, and particular gift of each religious community.
- To see that the consecrated vocation is a call from God, who helps religious men and women to live the demanding lifestyle and mission of the religious life
- To understand the common mission of religious men and women (and all Christians) to be a visible witness of charity in the world.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	5
• Section 1: What is a Charism?	5
• Section 2 : Work and Apostolate?	5
• Section 3 : Live in Perfect Charity	10
• Section 4: Examples of Saintly Sisters, Brothers, and Priests	5
• Discussion: Let’s Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Vocabulary:

Charism  
Habit  
Missionary

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Journals
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (optional activity)
- *Vision* Magazines (optional activity)

### Extra Material for Teachers

#### Notes:

- See page \_\_\_
- The importance of prayer.

#### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_\_
- Biography of Bl. Teresa of Calcutta
  - Consecrated Life
  - Biography of Pope John Paul II

#### Optional activities:

- See page \_\_\_
- Make a brochure for a religious community
  - Religious Medal as a visible sign of commitment
  - If the Habit Fits...

# A Charism for Every Need of the Church

## Unit Three Lesson Two

There are thousands of people who dedicate their lives to God through the vocation to the religious life. They appear in many forms, ways, and clothing. There are many different religious orders. Each one has a unique identity, mission, spirituality, and set of guidelines for living. Part of being open to a vocation to the religious life is considering which religious order God may be calling you to join.

### WHAT IS A CHARISM?

A charism is the identifying trait of a religious community. Charisms are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to an individual or group for the good of the whole Church. Every religious order has a special charism which forms their identity and mission. The charism is the motivating spirit that is the heart of a religious community.

Religious orders are known for the outward expression of their charism. For example, Dominicans are known for the charism of preaching, and Franciscans for simplicity of lifestyle and serving the poor. Paulists and the Daughters of St. Paul are known for using communication technology to spread the Gospel. The Blessed Sacrament Fathers have a great devotion to the Eucharist because their founder felt called to pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament serve the poor because their foundress, St. Katherine Drexel, used her vast fortune to minister to Native Americans and African Americans.



### WORK AND APOSTOLATE

Due to the variety of charisms, there is a variety of ways that religious people serve the Church. All religious orders work to fulfill their specific mission. Contemplative orders work within the confines of a monastery. This allows them to focus on their primary mission: to pray for the needs of the Church. Active or apostolic congregations work in the world. They preach the Gospel, teach in schools, operate hospitals, manage publishing companies, or run retreat centers. Some apostolic orders send members as missionaries throughout the world to preach the Gospel to people who do not know Jesus.

The needs of people in the world are many. Likewise, there are many different religious congregations to serve them. Religious men and women have a mission to serve God's people.

### LIVE IN PERFECT CHARITY

Even more important than their work, God calls religious men and women to truly live their consecration to God in charity and community with others. Pope John Paul II asked all consecrated persons: "Live to the full your dedication to God, so that this world may never be without a ray of divine beauty to lighten the path of human existence." The call to the religious vocation is not only to serve others or to pursue one's own holiness, but to be a light of God in the world.

In a world where many people do not know God, it is a great witness to see people living a religious vocation that demonstrates their belief in, and love for God. In a world where there is hatred and violence, it is inspiring to see communities of people of different cultures and classes coming together to live in joy and charity. They inspire us to live our own faith in the same way.

*"Live to the full your dedication to God, so that this world may never be without a ray of divine beauty to lighten the path of human existence."*

Pope John Paul II<sup>14</sup>

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

### Introduction: (2 minutes)

Begin reading the introductory paragraph of the lesson, then say: Today we are going to learn about the different kinds of religious communities and all the different things that they do.

## Development

### Section One: What is a Charism? (5 minutes)

*Teachers' Note: The word "Charism" (pronounced "care" + -ism) is a very important word for discussing religious communities. Teachers are encouraged to look in the glossary to learn the various meanings and uses of this word.*

You can begin the section by asking:

**Q:** What are some of the needs of the Church today?

**A:** Answers will vary but may include: spreading the faith, teaching the faithful, helping the poor, helping the homeless, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick.

*Then say:* Today we are going to learn about how the variety of different religious communities help to fill these needs.

*After reading the first paragraph say:*

There are many different religious communities and each has its own charism. Their charism is their gift, what identifies them and what gives them their mission.

*At the end of the section ask:*

**Q:** Do you know any other religious communities (from your school, family, personal experience, etc.) What do they do, What is their charism? (Answers will vary).

### Section Two: Work and Apostolate (5 minutes)

*Begin reading the lesson aloud. At the end of the section ask:*

**Q:** Can anyone remember what the difference between a contemplative and an active religious order are? Where does a contemplative order work? Where does an active order work?

**A:** Members of a contemplative order

serve God through prayer; they work in a monastery. Members of an active order serve God by working out in the world.

*Then ask:*

**Q:** Why are there so many different religious orders?

**A:** There are many religious orders because the needs of the Church and the world are many.

### Section Three: Live in Perfect Charity (10 minutes)

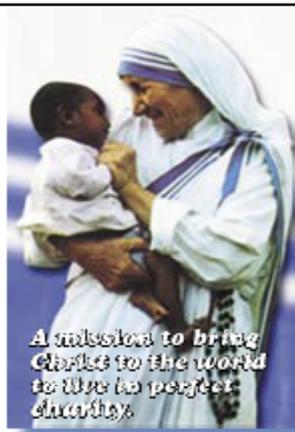
*You can begin the section by saying:* More important than the works that they do is that they live their consecration to God in community.

*After reading the first paragraph, ask:*

**Q:** Does anybody know who is in the picture on page 39?

**A:** Pope John Paul II

Religious men and women generally wear some visible sign of their commitment to Jesus to give a witness wherever they go that they belong to God. This is something that is closely united to their charity and mission. Some religious men and women wear a religious medal or a crucifix on a chain with normal clothes, while others wear special robes, sandals, or head coverings. The special clothes worn by members of some religious communities is called a habit. They may dress differently, but the important thing is that they all give witness to the presence of God in the world.



A mission to bring Christ to the world is to live in perfect charity.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “in the consecrated life, Christ’s faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly to give themselves to God who is loved above all” (CCC 916).

In order to live their vocation, their prayer life is essential. In prayer, they deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. All religious orders have some kind of formal prayer life that they follow together, such as adoration, meditation, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, or saying the Rosary. Contemplative Orders, like the Poor Clares, spend a lot of their prayer time in adoration before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Just as the sacraments are vitally important to all Christian disciples, frequent reception of the sacraments is central to religious life. Religious women and men try to go to Mass every day as well as to go frequently to Confession.

### EXAMPLES OF SAINTLY SISTERS, BROTHERS, AND PRIESTS

**Blessed Andre Bessette (d. 1857).** When Andre became a brother of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, he could not read and was in poor health. He was appointed as doorkeeper of their college in Montreal where he dedicated himself to humble service. Soon, miracles began to occur because of this holy man. Many people who came to him to ask for his prayers were miraculously healed. Brother Andrew always gave credit for the miracles to God through the prayers of St. Joseph. To thank St. Joseph for his prayers, his religious order built the largest church dedicated to him. Brother Andrew was beatified in 1992.



**St. Francis Xavier Cabrini (d. 1917)** was born in Italy and later immigrated to the United States. She established numerous hospitals, orphanages and schools in the U.S. and South America. Toward the end of her life, she miraculously healed several people. She died in Columbus Hospital in Chicago. The room where she lived, along with her clothes and simple possessions, can be seen just as it was during her lifetime.

*Then ask:*

**Q:** How does this quote from John Paul II apply to religious sisters, brothers, and priests? How does it apply to all of us as Christians?

**A:** The purpose of the religious life is not only to help others or to be holy yourself, but to be a light leading others to God. Religious men and women are living their lives so that people can see their belief in and love of God.

*After reading the paragraph on religious habits / visible signs of commitment ask:*

**Q:** Ask how can you tell that a person is a religious? What are some of the habits / visible signs of commitment that you have seen? (Answers will vary).

*After reading the last paragraph in the section ask:*

**Q:** What are some aspects of the spiritual life of religious communities?

**A:** Daily Prayer and receiving the sacraments often.

**Q:** Why do you think this is this important for their vocation as religious men and women?

**A:** It is important because it helps them to nurture their relationship with Jesus, who helps them to live out their vows and to better serve the people of God. Prayer helps them to serve others, and their service helps them to pray.

**Q:** Do you think they enjoy this part of their life (prayer and the sacraments)? Why or why not? How are prayer and the sacraments an important part of any vocation?

**A:** Answers will vary. Prayer and the sacraments keep us united to God.

### Biography of Bl. Teresa of Calcutta (pictured at the top of page 40)

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in 1910 in Skopje, Macedonia to a family of Albanian descent. When she was 18 years old, she joined the Sister of Loreto, an Irish community of nuns. Receiving the name Teresa after her patroness, St. Therese of Lisieux, she was sent to India as a teacher to young girls. In 1946, she received “a call within a call” which led her to follow Jesus more radically in service to the “poorest of the poor.” Mother Teresa’s mission, in founding the Missionaries of Charity, was to care for the men and women who, due to circumstances and poverty, were abandoned on the streets of Calcutta. To Mother, the greatest poverty in the world was to be unwanted and to have no one to care for you. Mother counted those countries who permit abortion as the poorest of the poor because they do not open their hearts to accept their own children. In providing the forgotten and the alone with a bed, food and love, Mother’s sisters became Jesus to them. Mother established foundations in over 123 countries, including a home for AIDS patients in New York along with others in the U.S. Mother Teresa died in 1997 and was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2003.

### Section Four: Examples of Sainly Sisters, Brothers, and Priests (5 minutes)

*Read examples of saintly brothers, sisters, priests out loud in class.*

*Afterwards, you can ask the students to turn back to page 39 and read the quote from John Paul II again, then ask:*

**Q:** How did these religious men and women act as a light to bring others to God? How are their lives a witness of their faith in Jesus? (Answers will vary).



Blessed Damien of Molokai (d. 1889) joined the Redemptorists, an order founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori. He left his homeland of Belgium to be a missionary in the Hawaiian Islands. He felt compassion for the lepers suffering on the isolated island of Molokai who had no priest to minister to them. He volunteered to live among them and to minister and help care for them. Eventually, he got leprosy himself and died of the disease. He once said, "I wish to sacrifice myself for the poor lepers."<sup>17</sup>



Henrietta Delille (d. 1862) was a Catholic African-American woman from New Orleans. She was born a free woman when slavery still existed in the United States. Henrietta founded a religious order, the Sisters of the Holy Family, to educate and care for young black girls. She established orphanages for the girls and founded homes for the poor and elderly as well. She was described as a woman "who for love of Jesus Christ had made herself the humble servant of slaves."<sup>18</sup>

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Why do we need so many different religious communities?
2. What are some good things you think about when you see a religious sister, brother, or priest in real life or in a movie?
3. What is the difference between a job and being called to a religious charism?

### VOCABULARY

Charism  
Habit  
Missionary

### Write about it!



#### Journal options:

- Using one of the above examples of saintly religious sisters, brothers and priests, answer the following questions: What are some ways that this person showed the world they were dedicated to God? How were prayer and the sacraments important for this person?
- How do you feel that God is calling you to express your faith? To what kind of service might God be calling you? As you pursue your own vocation, how important are prayer and the sacraments to you?
- How do you pray? Is God someone close to you, who you can talk to about anything? In what ways can you pray better?

## HOMework

1. For the first journal questions, you may also allow students to use the example of one of the founders of religious orders discussed in the previous lesson or of any other saint that was a religious man or woman that they might know of.
2. In the second journal question, you can help the students by suggesting a few different examples of ways to serve God and the Church. As for the second part of this question, ask the students to think about the role that prayer and the sacraments have in their lives now, as well as the importance that these two things will play in guiding their future decisions.
3. For the third question, you can challenge the students to think of something that they think they could NOT talk to God about and ask them why. Then encourage them to try to pray about it and see what happens.

## Let's Talk About It!

1. Why do we need so many different religious communities?

Discussion ideas:

The many different religious communities are an expression of the many gifts that God gives to humanity. They also show the many ways that we can serve each other and how God responds to the needs of the Church.

2. What are some good things you think about when you see a religious sister, brother, or priest in real life or in a movie?

Discussion ideas:

We think about their generosity in serving others and doing God's will. We think of how much they must trust God and love Him because they have left everything and followed Him. We wonder what their vocation story was and how they were called to do what they are doing.

3. What is the difference between a job and being called to a religious charism?

Discussion ideas:

What is the difference between a religious person who serves the poor and a social worker? What is the difference between a religious who helps the sick and nurse?

The difference is that a charism is a calling to a particular spirituality and way of life. It is lived out in every aspect of a person's life but particularly in the spiritual life, and it is done within a religious community. A job, though very important, can change and does not involve every part of a person's life for the rest of their lives.

## SUMMARY

The mission and consecration of a person called to this vocation are tied together in the specific charism to which the person is called. The person does not choose this vocation, but God invites them to it and helps them to live their vocation as a witness to the love of God.

# EXTRA MATERIAL

## FOR TEACHERS

### UNIT III LESSON 2

#### Biography of Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II was born Karol Jozef Wojtyla in Wadowice, Poland in 1920. Karol, who lost his mother, father and brother by the time he was 21, developed a close relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary. He had a great love of the theater and dramatics but a deeper love led him to the priesthood. In the midst of World War II, Karol secretly began his studies and was ordained in 1946 after the war ended. The post-war Communist government was antagonistic to the Church but Karol, who eventually became a Cardinal, bravely defended the Church and the people. As a key participant in the Second Vatican Council, Karol became more widely known yet it was still a shock to the world when he became Pope John Paul II in 1978. Reaching out to all people across the world, he met with over 17 million people during his General Audiences, made 104 pastoral visits outside of Italy and attended 19 World Youth Days. An assassination attempt on May 13, 1981 almost cost him his life but he showed the world what true forgiveness means when he visited his assailant in prison and forgave him. He is credited with having a major role in the fall of Communism which freed Eastern Europe from oppression. Burdened in his final years with Parkinson's Disease, he carried out his duties to the end, showing the value of a person comes not from wealth, looks or capabilities but rather as human being loved by God. Pope John Paul departed this world on April 2, 2005. His cause for sainthood was opened almost immediately after his death.

#### NOTES

##### The Importance of Prayer

Review the importance of prayer in discerning one's vocation. Prayer is vital as a foundation for anyone pursuing a serious relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. It is vital for a religious sister, brother, or priest to have a well-established prayer life. It is recommended that men and women who may be considering a religious vocation start by developing and growing in their prayer life as they seek to learn more about religious communities and whether God is calling them to this vocation. Without a prayer life that is an open dialogue with God, it is very difficult for a person to hear the voice of God guiding them and helping them to discern their vocation.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

##### Consecrated Life

It may be confusing to see the wide diversity of religious communities, each with their own mission, that exist in the Church but it is visible evidence of the Holy Spirit working through individuals for the one mission of the Church, which is to proclaim the Gospel to all the world. "The many different forms of consecrated life can be compared to a plant with many branches which sinks its roots into the Gospel and brings forth abundant fruit in every season" (Vita Consecrata). While consecrated men and women may seem to have unrelated missions, in truth they are tied to the one vine: "I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5). They are an inspiration to those in the world who work in various occupations but who are "fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). "There are many gifts but the same spirit; there are many ministries but the same Lord" (1 Cor 12:4, 5).

"Following the example of Mary of Bethany who 'sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching' (Lk 10:39), many men and women consecrate themselves to a total and exclusive following of Christ. Although they undertake various services in the field of human formation and care of the poor, in teaching or in assisting the sick, they do not consider these activities as the principal purpose of their life" because "the first and foremost duty of all religious is the contemplation of divine things and assiduous union with God in prayer" (Pope Benedict XVI, May 7, 2006).

Consecrated life is "a radical gift of self for love of the Lord Jesus and in him, of every member of the human family" (Vita Consecrata).

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

#### Make a brochure for a religious community

Have the students design their own brochure for a religious community based on the information they find in one of the vocation magazines or online. Then the class can send them to the religious community.

#### Religious Medal as a visible sign of commitment

Some religious communities do not wear habits, they wear medals as signs of their vocation. These medals often depict their charism, the way they pray, or the way that they serve the church. Design and draw your own religious medal that depicts symbolically the way that you would a) like to pray or b) like to serve the church. Then describe in 3-5 sentences, the meaning of your medal.

#### If the Habit Fits...

One possible activity associated with this lesson is to have a simple religious veil/habit (one for girls and one for boys) and have the kids try them on to see how they look. In their journals, students write about how they felt to wear them, and if it helped them to see religious life or the priesthood as a possibility for them

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Three : Lesson Three

### Overview:

This lesson focuses on the more practical aspects of joining a religious community. The lesson places an emphasis on the process of discernment, choosing which community is best for you, as well as the process of formation that an individual goes through in becoming a part of a religious community.

With the hypothetical question “what if you were called to a religious community?” and the discussion and activity that follow, we hope to make the experience of a vocation to the religious life a more feasible reality and to show the students what steps to take if they ever think they might be called.

The discussion of the process of formation is meant to show the students the effort, patience and perseverance required in becoming a religious sister, brother, priest.

### Objectives:

- To know several practical means to discern and pursue a religious vocation.
- To see the importance of responding to a vocation when one feels called.
- To describe the process of formation by which a man or woman joins a religious community.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	2
• Section 1: What If	2
• Section 2 : Finding the Order that Fits	5
• Section 3 : Try it Out	5
• Section 4 : Formation	5
• Section 5 : Priests in a Religious Order	5
• Discussion: Let’s Talk About It!	10
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Journals
- *Vision* Magazines (optional activity)

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Supplemental Material:

See page \_\_

- Web Sites Listing Religious Communities

### Optional activities:

See page \_\_

- Bulletin Board Idea: Formation Process
- Religious Communities Show and Tell
- Web sites for Religious Communities
- Organize a Vocations Fair

### Vocabulary:

Vocation Director  
Formation  
Novitiate  
Novice  
Temporary Vows  
Final Vows

## Becoming a Religious Sister, Brother, or Priest



### WHAT IF

Let's say you believe God is calling you to a religious vocation. Maybe you read a story or meet a religious person that sparks your interest. There is a little voice inside of you asking, "Could Jesus Christ be inviting me to follow Him in this way?" You would want to find out for certain whether Jesus was calling you, as well as what steps were necessary to become a religious sister, brother, or priest. There are many different religious communities, and each one has a process for joining.

### FINDING THE ORDER THAT FITS YOU

There are many ways to find information on different religious communities. You can ask someone who knows about the religious life: maybe a friend, family member, religious education teacher, priest or a religious sister or brother in your parish. You can look for more information on the internet or in magazines such as *Vision* or *Religious Ministries*. Religious communities also have "open house" days or weekend retreats where people can visit and learn more about the vocation firsthand. Opportunities for visiting religious communities or participating in retreats are often advertised in parish bulletins, the local diocesan newspaper, or on posters and fliers found in your Church. Most religious communities have websites which describe the community, provide information about upcoming events, and list the Vocation Director's name, phone number and e-mail address. Each religious order and diocese has a Vocation Director. Vocation Directors help women and men to determine if God is calling them to the religious life and if a particular order is the right fit for them.

### TRY IT OUT!

When God calls a person to a certain religious order or community, He will find a way to guide them to the place where they belong. When a person feels drawn to a certain religious community, they contact the Vocation Director to learn more about it. Together they can arrange a visit to get to know the community.

The community can get to know them too. In this way, the religious community determines if the person is a right "fit" for them. If both agree there is a fit, then the person may move into the community for a short trial period. It is hard to know if you are meant for that kind of



How do you know what fits you if you don't try it out?

community's web site? If so, what was it like? (Answers will vary).

*(Optional) Then say:*

At the end of the lesson we will talk about some web sites for religious orders that you can look up (see supplementary material at end of the chapter).

### Section 3: Try it out! (5 minutes)

*Begin by saying:*

**Q:** When you buy shoes, do you just grab any pair or do you try them on first to see if they fit?

**A:** No, first you choose shoes that you like, then you try them on to see if they fit

**Q:** Would you sign up for a sport you know nothing about? Or should you know what the sport is and how to play before you sign up?

**A:** Usually, people join a sport that they know something about.

## Unit Three Lesson Three

*Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.*

### Introduction: (2 minutes)

*You may choose to introduce the lesson by asking the following questions:*

How many of you ever wanted to join a sports team? What did you have to do? Did you have to go through registration, tryouts, or practice? So what if you wanted to join a religious community as a sister, brother, or priest? What would you have to do? Today we are going to talk about how people choose a religious community and what they have to do to join.

## Development

### Section One: What If (2 minutes)

*Teacher or student may begin reading the lesson aloud.*

### Section 2: Finding the order that fits you (5 minutes)

*Begin by asking:*

When you wanted to join a sports team, how did you know what sport you wanted to play, what team you wanted to join? what made you want to stay on the team? Did you feel like you belonged to part of something? Did you feel a sense of belonging? Now we are going to talk about how someone finds out what religious community God is calling them to join.

*After reading the section, review the definition of Vocation Director by asking:*

**Q:** Can anyone tell me what a Vocation Director does? Why would it be important to contact a vocation director if you thought you had a vocation?

**A:** A Vocation Director helps people discern their vocation. It is important to contact them because they know a lot about vocations and they can help you.

*Then ask:*

**Q:** Have you ever seen a religious

## Vision Magazine:

www.visionguide.info

## Religious Ministries:

www.religiousministries.com

life unless you try it out for a short time. While living in the community, visitors experience a balanced lifestyle dedicated to God with time for prayer, community life, recreation, and apostolic work. It is a joyful, happy lifestyle for those who are called to be in a religious community, but the only way to find out if you might be called to this lifestyle is to try it out.

### FORMATION

There is a special process for those who want to become religious sisters and brothers which is called formation. Each religious community has their own formation program to train the women and men to be sisters and brothers. At the beginning of the program, there is a period of time during which a person visits the community to discover if they are called to join. During this time, a woman is called a postulant and a man is called a candidate.

If they decide to continue in the formation program, there follows the novitiate which lasts between one and two years, in which a man or woman becomes a novice. At this point, they are given the title of "sister" or "brother." During the novitiate, a novice learns more about the charism of the community by participating in community life and apostolic service.

After the novitiate, if the novice decides to stay, they make temporary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are called "temporary" because they last only one year while the person continues training. At the end of each year, if they choose to remain part of the community, they renew their temporary vows. During this time they continue living and working as part of the community. They do this for several years until they are sure that they are definitely called to this vocation.

**Formation** is the process of training and spiritual development that takes place during the early months or years of joining a religious order.

After having determined over the years that a religious community is the right fit for them, a sister or brother professes their final vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, which they promise to keep for the rest of their lives. Their years of preparation and discernment allow them to be absolutely sure that this is truly the vocation God is calling them to.

Likewise, during this period, the religious community discerns whether God is calling a person to join their community. If so, they extend an invitation for a sister or brother to make their final vows, and the person becomes a permanent member of the community.

### PRIESTS IN A RELIGIOUS ORDER

Men who want to be religious priests begin seminary training during the first years living in the community. They take temporary vows, then final vows. Once they are permanent members of the religious community, they can then be ordained priests. A religious priest is a member of his community just like the brothers. They all live and work in community sharing the same charism, but only the religious priest celebrates the sacraments.



*St. Paul describes every Christian's life as a challenge that requires training in order to live it well: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"*

(2 Timothy 4:7).

### Then say:

Well it's the same with discerning which religious community to join.

*Continue reading the lesson aloud.*

### Section 4: Formation (5 minutes)

#### Begin by saying:

When you start playing a sport, you do not start playing games right away, you practice, you prepare. Even professional athletes have to train and practice. The same goes for playing a musical instrument in a band, or acting in a play. You have to practice and practice before you are ready to perform.

In the same way, during the process of joining a religious community there is a 'tryout' period, a 'practice' period and there is continual 'training.' This process is known as formation.

*Teachers' Note: With regard to the end of the first paragraph, in some cases, women are called candidates and men are sometimes called postulants.*

*After reading the second paragraph, ask:*

**Q:** Do you remember what charism means?

**A:** (teacher can give brief review. see page 39).

#### Then ask:

**Q:** Do you remember what vows are? What are the three vows religious brothers, sisters, and priests take?

**A:** A vow is a promise made to God to live in a particular way. Religious men and women make the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

*Continue reading aloud. After reading the last paragraph in this section say:*

A religious community can be compared to a woven cloth: all the strands must go in the same direction and work together. If they all went different directions, the cloth would not hold together.

In a religious community, all the members must work together. This is why the community must carefully discern if a new member fits and contributes to the community,

otherwise they could damage the quality of the cloth, and the damage could weaken the whole community.

### Section 5: Priests in a religious order (5 minutes)

*Teachers Note: Religious priests also go through a similar formation process as members of a religious order, only their formation takes place in the seminary with the focus of the priesthood added to the other elements of religious life. Formation of this type is very important for religious priests who prepare in a seminary to be ordained.*

*You may want to give a very brief review of the formation/preparation that takes place in the seminary from Unit II Lesson 4 (page 30) including classes, prayer, etc.*

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

### Class Discussion

1. You may want to provide some examples such as: if someone has said that they should think about it, maybe they read a story about a religious person that made the religious life sound like something they would like to try, maybe a teacher said something to them, maybe they have a particular interest in mass or prayer, maybe they admire a certain religious person, etc.

2. Possible answers: visit a religious community, attend a "come and see" day or retreat to learn about and experience for yourself what the community is like. Talk to several community members to hear their stories and discover what their experience of the community is. Keep praying so God can help you understand if what you learn and experience is the right fit for you.

3. Answers will vary. The temporary vows do help many people make the right decision.

## SUMMARY

God calls a person to a specific place, which they will know as they find information about a specific order and try it out. There is a process of training, and getting to know the lifestyle, before taking the lifelong vows. When a person finds the right fit, they will be happy living that vocation.

## HOMEWORK

Write about it!

1. Teachers Note: Make sure to tell the kids that if they have a question that they don't want to ask out loud they can put it on the question board anonymously and it will be asked along with all the other questions.

*There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him. The task of the shepherd, the task of the fisher of men, can often seem wearisome. But it is beautiful and wonderful, because it is truly a service to joy, to God's joy which longs to break into the world.*

— Pope Benedict XVI<sup>19</sup>



### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. What are some ways that God can show a person that they are called to be a religious sister, brother, or priest?
2. How could someone who is called to religious life discover which religious community is the right fit for them?
3. Religious men and women make temporary vows for several years before making their final vows. Do you think this helps them to make a lifelong commitment to a religious community? What motivates people to make a lifelong commitment?

### VOCABULARY

Vocation Director  
Formation  
Novitiate  
Novice  
Temporary Vows  
Final Vows

### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- Prepare one question that you want to ask the religious elder who will be speaking to your class.
- Imagine that you feel drawn to join a religious community. Use a *Vision* magazine ([www.visionguides.org](http://www.visionguides.org)), or other vocation publication, to find three religious communities that seem interesting. Write a paragraph for each one explaining the reason why you think that the religious order might be a "good fit" for you. (For example: "This religious order teaches in schools and I want to be a teacher." "This religious order works overseas and I love to travel." "They are missionaries and I am called by my faith and want to share it with others.")



### Bulletin Board Idea: Formation Process

The concepts introduced in this chapter will be very new for some of the students. They will be difficult for some to grasp. It is helpful to create visual examples of the basic formation process for your bulletin board. Begin with a woman or man at step 1 - thinking about religious life, then using cut out or drawn arrows show them at each stage until final vows.

Visit -> Candidacy/Postulancy -> Novitiate -> Temporary Vows -> Final Vows  
(candidate/postulant) (novice)

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

### Web Sites Listing Religious Congregations

Each of the web sites listed below has extensive lists of women's and men's religious congregations including their web sites and contact information. These will be useful for the Optional Activities in this section.

Religious Ministries Online Guide:  
<http://www.religiousministries.com/>

Archdiocese of Chicago web site:  
<http://www.archchicago.org/departments/vocation/home.shtm>

Diocese of Joliet / Vocations Online:  
<http://www.vocations.com>

Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR)  
[http://www.cmswr.org/member\\_communities\\_cmswr.htm](http://www.cmswr.org/member_communities_cmswr.htm)

### Religious Community Show and Tell

Have you ever seen any materials in your parish advertising religious communities? Ask the students to bring some of the available materials to class and to share it with the class.

### Web sites for Religious Communities

Ask the students to look up the web sites for three communities and describe in their journals:

- 1) what religious community they looked up,
- 2) what they on the web site,
- 3) what aspect of the web site interested them the most,
- 4) one thing they learned about the vocation to the religious life.

### Follow up activity: Organize a Vocations Fair

You can contact your local diocesan vocation director to learn about the opportunity for having several religious community representatives come to your school to set up a vocation fair.

Some schools team up together and gather students from two to four schools for a large vocation fair in a school gym. This takes more planning and may involve activities, speakers, music, whatever the vocation director and teacher would like.

This can take place well after the curriculum is over, as a way to remind the students of what they have learned.

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Three : Lesson Four

### Overview:

We have learned that there are many different forms of living a vocation consecrated to God. Today we welcome a sister who is dedicated to God in this way, who will tell us how she discovered her call, and what her life is like now. You should have already prepared questions for the end of class (teacher may collect questions at this point), but if the students think of other questions during the class period, they may ask them too.

### Objectives:

- To host a religious sister, invite her to share her vocation story, and learn what it is like to live the religious vocation.
- To show gratitude towards those who give their lives to serve as religious sisters
- To commit to pray for the sister, and to “adopt” her as the class’ special intention.

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	2
• Presentation	15
• Questions	10
• Discussion: Let’s Pray About It!	5
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Journals
- List of the Class’ Questions

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

- See page \_\_
- If You are Unable to Find a Religious Sister Speaker

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_
- You Could Make a Difference DVD
  - Vocation Testimonies of Religious Sisters Online

### Optional Activities:

- See page \_\_
- Religious Sister Video
  - Religious Sister Vocation Story
  - Habit or Plain Clothes?



## Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Religious Life

- (1) Do religious have fun? What do you do for fun?
- (2) Are religious allowed to go on vacation?
- (3) Why can't religious get married? Why did you not want to get married?
- (4) Do you miss not having kids, a family?
- (5) Can religious make money? And own stuff?
- (6) Can you be married and work for the Church?
- (7) Why can't women be priests?

## Speaker Suggestions For Religious

Religious sisters are asked to cover the following points in their talk to the class. These points can also be used as an outline for the speaker to follow during the talk.

- (1) Share some of the details of your upbringing that will help students relate to you: where you grew up, what schools you attended, your work experience and hobbies, what activities you were involved in as a youth.
- (2) Share your vocation story: when did you first think about religious life? When did you begin to respond to the call to religious life? How did you go about discerning and following your call to the religious life? What motivated you to follow your call?
- (3) Speak about your transition into the religious life, the choices that you made and the joys and challenges of pursuing your call to religious life.
- (4) Describe your experience of religious life. Speak about living in your community. Describe the ministries you have been involved in since joining religious life, with emphasis on the spiritual aspects of the work.
- (5) Speak about your current assignment. What is a typical day like? Speak about what you enjoy in ministry and religious life.
- (6) Speak about your own pursuit of God, including your prayer life, use of spiritual direction, retreats, and other practices that strengthen you in living your vocation. Speak about how you continue to discover God in your own life and in the people you minister to.
- (7) Speak about what you like to do in your free time, hobbies, favorite activities, or other things that will help the kids to view religious men and women as real people that they could be like one day.

Ask the teacher what the approximate length of your talk should be. Teachers are asked to have each student prepare one question in advance. This age group is usually very interested in asking questions.

While not avoiding the significance of this question, the speaker should try to accentuate the tremendous gifts that women currently contribute, and have historically contributed to the People of God, the Church, as well as current opportunities that many young girls aspire to in religious life.

- (8) There are typical questions surrounding religious habits: why do some religious wear them and others do not; why would a religious wear a habit; what is the meaning of a religious habit. Do you wear your habit when you swim?
- (9) Have you ever had a miracle happen in your life?
- (10) How do you know if God is calling you to be a religious?
- (11) How do you know which order God is calling you to?

Note: In the vocation curriculum, the class would have been introduced to the subjects of celibacy, prayer and religious vow of poverty.

Some students ask about the recent priest sexual abuse scandals. It is best to tell them the truth that some priests have unfortunately been involved in some very wrong (evil) acts that have caused pain to members of the Church, and the Church as a whole. However, this behavior is not from the priesthood inherently. Unfortunately, these horrible crimes are also done by married men and single men. These horrible actions by priests are a cause for the Church to reinvigorate herself with good, spirit filled priests to help bring about healing to those harmed and begin a new chapter in the life of the Church.

# Witness of a Religious Sister/Adopt a Sister

## Unit Three Lesson Four

### INTRODUCTION

We have learned that there are different ways of living a vocation to the religious life. Today we welcome a sister who is dedicated to God in this way, who will tell us how she discovered her call, and what her life is like now. You may have already prepared questions for the end of the talk, but if you think of others you may ask them as well.



LET'S PRAY ABOUT IT!  
Adopt a Sister Prayer

### SUMMARY

Hearing the story of this sister shows us that religious sisters were once students too, who did the same things you do. One day, she decided to say "Yes" to Christ's invitation and to dedicate her life to Him. Think of the good things she has done since the day that she decided to follow her vocation. Let us remember to pray for her, and all those who share her vocation. Let us also pray that God will show each of us our own vocation and give us the ability to say "Yes" like she did.

### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- What is one thing you found interesting about the speaker's presentation and why?
- What was one thing that you could relate to in her talk?
- After meeting this sister, would you be more likely to encourage a friend who wanted to become a sister? What are the good points you can tell her about this vocation?
- Try to imagine what the world would have been like if this sister decided not to follow her vocation. What good things would never have happened?



Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

### Introduction: (2 minutes)

Read aloud the introduction to the lesson provided in the Student Edition. Then introduce the visiting sister saying:

Let's welcome Sister (name) who is a part of the (name of religious community).

### Section 1: Witness of a Priest (15 minutes)

### Section 2: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (15 minutes)

### Summary:

Teacher or student may read summary aloud.

Religious women and men are ordinary people who are called to follow Jesus Christ and serve the Church in an extraordinary way. They heard God inviting them to the religious life and answered His call by discovering which religious community was right for them. Religious women and men spend years in formation, learning about their community, developing their spiritual life, and preparing themselves to make their final vows. When they make their vows, they consecrate their lives to Jesus Christ and to serving His people in the world, and by doing so enter into an intimate and loving relationship with our Lord.

### Homework Write about it!

As a continuation to the second question teacher can add:

**Q:** After meeting the sister, how would you react if you found out Jesus was calling you to be a religious brother or sister?

### Optional Activity Adopt-a-Sister

A great way for the class to continue to support the religious sister is the Adopt-a-Sister Activity. This activity appears on page 66. The Adopt a Seminarian / Sister activity is intended to remind students of what they have learned from the speakers.

Inform the class that you will be adopting the speaker. Post their pictures and biography in a prominent place and explain that the class will be adopting them by praying for them regularly, as a class and individually. As a class, you may use the Adopt-a-Seminarian/Sister prayer service. It is recommended to pick a regular time each week (or month) to pray the short prayer service. Individually, students can be encouraged to pray for the adopted seminarian and sister using their own words, followed by a formal prayer such as the Our Father and Hail Mary. The speaker, in turn, promises to pray for the entire class and the teacher. The pictures of the seminarian and sister can remain posted for the rest of the school year to remind the students who they have adopted.

Also, on page \_\_\_ you will find ideas for a bulletin board based on the witness of the seminarian and religious sister, and a list of Fun Facts to ask the speakers when they visit.

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

## UNIT III LESSON 4

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

### NOTES

In lieu of a religious sister speaking, a religious brother may speak on behalf of the men and women in religious life.

While the benefits of a live speaker cannot be emphasized enough, it is possible that there may not be a religious sister or brother available to speak to the class. If neither is available, there are many resources available on [www.WhatIsMyVocation.com](http://www.WhatIsMyVocation.com) that you can make use of in addition to the resources listed below.

### Supplementary Material

#### You Could Make a Difference DVD

*You Could Make a Difference* is a 17-minute DVD distributed by the USCCB featuring the stories of two priests and three sisters. This is an excellent resource that can be used if you are unable to arrange for a religious sister to visit the class. For more information on this DVD see the information listed at the beginning of the book.

#### Vocation Testimonies of Religious Sisters Online

The following web sites feature the stories of religious sisters:

Vocation.com

<http://www.vocation.com/content-n4y.htm>

Diocese of Toledo

<http://www.toledovocations.com/media.html>

Archdiocese of Melbourne, Australia

<http://www.catholicvocation.org.au/testimonies/sister.htm>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/vocations/articles/index.shtml>

#### Religious Sister Video

Have the students watch the story of one or more religious sisters that are available on DVD or online. Let the students know beforehand that they will be asked questions about the sisters' stories. After they have watched the video, ask the students to answer the following questions about one or all of the sisters' stories. They can write the answers in their Student Vocation Journals.

1. What was the religious sister's name?
2. What religious congregation did she belong to?
3. What kind of work does she do?
4. Does she wear a habit or not? Did she wear a religious medal?
5. What did her habit and/or religious medal look like?
6. When and how did she discover her calling to be a religious sister?
7. What did she do before she was a sister?
8. What was one thing that you found interesting in her story?

#### Religious Sister Vocation Story

On the vocation web sites listed on this page, there are several religious sisters' stories which can be printed out and read by the students (or read online). Divide the class into small groups and assign one story to each group.

Have the students read the story together then, as a group, answer the questions listed above and report their findings to the entire class. Choose one person to write down notes, and another to be the spokesperson. After the students have had adequate time to prepare their reports, each spokesperson presents the findings to the class.

#### Additional Discussion Question/Journal Option: Habit or Plain Clothes?

Two thoughts commonly held by religious communities are:

- 1) A religious habit of special clothes distinguishes who they are and acts as a witness of our faith in Jesus Christ and their choice to give everything in pursuit and service of him.
- 2) Plain clothes and a religious medal are worn by many religious as their founders (as well as Jesus and the early apostles) did not develop special clothes. They feel that living out their discipleship dressed as everyone else has its own message: that everyone is called to follow Jesus Christ.

If you were called to be a religious which would you choose and why?

# Lesson Planner

## Unit Three : Lesson Five

### Overview:

This is the final lesson of the curriculum. It serves as both a brief review of what has been learned, and a final challenge to the students to seek out their vocation in life, and to act on it when they discover it.

### Objectives:

- To review what has been learned in the course of the last fourteen lessons.
- To respond to Christ's invitation to follow Him
- To conclude the vocation curriculum with a prayer service

### Timeline of Lesson:

	Minutes
• Vocation Prayer	1
• Introduction	2
• Section 1: Listen	2
• Section 2 : Vocation to Christian Discipleship	5
• Section 3 : Single Life	2
• Section 4 : Marriage	5
• Section 5 : Priesthood	5
• Section 6 : Religious Life: Sisters, Brothers, and Priests	5
• Section 7 : It is Up to You	2
• Journal: Write About It!	Homework

### Special Preparation / Materials Needed:

- Student Edition Textbooks
- Student Journals
- Xeroxed copies of Unit III Lesson 5 for students to keep.
- Final Evaluation Sheets

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### Extra Material for Teachers

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### Notes:

- See page \_\_\_
- Vocation Survey
  - Thank You

### Supplemental Material:

- See page \_\_\_
- Pope John Paul II Quotes on Vocation

### Optional activities:

- See page \_\_\_
- Hand out Copies of Final Lesson
  - Complete Vocation Survey
  - Finish Student Vocation Journals
  - Final Prayer Service

## Conclusion: Jesus Christ is Calling You

### LISTEN

Jesus Christ is calling you. Even now you can hear Him in your heart if you will listen. He is inviting you to discover your vocation. This vocation is yours and no one else's. It is unique. It is the adventure of your life that will lead you to true happiness and to Heaven. All you have to do is say "Yes" to Jesus. Tell Him that you want to listen to His voice, that you want to know the mystery of your vocation, and that you accept the challenge of whatever vocation He is asking of you.

You have learned much about what a vocation is, how God reveals a vocation, as well as what the main types of vocations are. Now it is time to review what you have learned so that you can take this knowledge and apply it in your own life. By now, you have already begun considering what path God might be inviting you to. You must continue to discover the path God is guiding you to and take action to follow that path.

### VOCATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

God created you. He knows everything about you. He knows your future and your past, and He knows that you have the ability to be great. God created you to do great things, to find happiness with Him and to become a saint.

All Catholic Christians, from the moment they are baptized, are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Being a Christian disciple means forming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by getting to know Him, imitating Him in everything we do, and sharing our Faith with others. Getting to know Jesus means speaking to Him in daily prayer, participating in the worship of God at Mass, and receiving the sacraments often, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

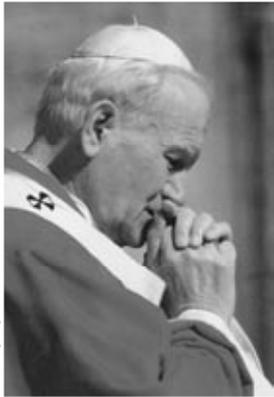
In addition to this calling that all Christians share to be disciples of Jesus, each individual person has a specific vocation. Your vocation is the path that God is inviting you to follow that will lead to your happiness on earth and your salvation in Heaven. The vocation you are called to bear fits how God made you. It is a special mission God sets apart just for you.

God respects your freedom and He created you to be free to follow your vocation. The main types of vocations are: single life, marriage, priesthood, or religious life (as a religious sister, brother, or priest).

Different people discover their vocations in different ways, some when they are very young. We must prepare ourselves to hear God's call by spending time listening to God. God speaks to us in prayer, whispering to us in our hearts during moments of silent conversation with Him. God speaks to us through the Church, through priests and religious sisters and brothers, through the sacraments and the Mass, and through the Bible. God also speaks to us in everyday life, through people we know, and through our experiences.

*True freedom is not doing what we want to do, but doing what we ought to do.*

— John Paul II



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Unit Three: Lesson Five

### Pope John Paul II Quotes on Vocation

"From eternity God has thought of us and has loved us as unique individuals. Every one of us He calls by name, as the Good Shepherd "calls his own sheep by name." However, only in the unfolding of history of our lives and its events is the eternal plan of God revealed to each of us. Therefore, it is a gradual process; in a certain sense, one that happens day by day." (Pope John Paul II, *Go In Peace*).

"Each person must discover his or her own personal vocation and respond to it with generosity. Every life is a vocation." Pope John Paul II, May 5, 2001

"There is widespread today a culture which leads young people to be satisfied with modest endeavors which are far below their potential. But we all know that really in their hearts is a restlessness and a lack of satisfaction in the face of (momentary) achievements; there is in them a desire to grow in truth, in authenticity, and in goodness; they await a voice that calls them by name." That voice is Christ who "alone can tell him the truth about life" (Pope John Paul II, XXX World Day of Prayer for Vocations).

## Unit Three Lesson Five

Begin the class with the Vocation Prayer.

### Introduction: (2 minutes)

*IN CLASS JOURNALING:*  
In their vocation journals, have the students do some brief journaling (2 minutes) in between each section.

### Section 01 Listen

#### IN CLASS JOURNALING

*After reading the section say:*

Practicing being a disciple will help us to be better disciples in the future. Just like in dancing, sports, music, or video games: the more you practice it, the better you will be at it.

You cannot suddenly decide one day that you want to play soccer, or play the piano if you have never done either before; these things take practice. Similarly, the longer you put off living as a Christian disciple, the harder it will be to do.

*After reading the section say:*

Jesus is calling you NOW to be a student, and to be a disciple. What does this mean to you? Being the best student you can be is what God is calling you to do. What are you doing to fulfill this?

### Section 02 Vocation to Christian Discipleship

#### IN CLASS JOURNALING

*After reading the first two paragraphs ask:*

Do you trust that God knows you? Do you believe that He knows what will lead you to find happiness with Him in your life?

Right now in your life, how can you form a better relationship with Jesus? Are you willing to follow Him and be his disciple? What does this mean at this point in your life?

*When you come to the end of the section, ask:*

Do you want to discover what specific vocation God is calling you to? Have you asked Him to reveal it to you? What are you doing at this time in your life to be better able to listen to God? When you hear God calling you to a specific vocation, how will you react? What will you do?

## Single Life

All people are single for some part of their lives. Some single people will later be married. Some will become priests or religious. God calls some people to remain single in order to serve others and the church. Single people have a special freedom that they can use to help others in a variety of ways. They must be ready for whatever God asks of them. They should live the virtues of charity and modesty and look to Jesus as their example of how to live a good single life.



## Marriage

Married people are called by God to find true happiness and become saints by helping their spouses to become holy, by teaching their children to love God as Christian disciples, and to sanctify the world around them in their everyday life. Marriage is a sign of the love that God has for us. Just as Christ gave Himself completely for his Church, a man and a woman give themselves to each other. When a man and a woman are married in the sacrament of Matrimony, they invite God to be the center of their family and they offer their love for each other as a gift to Him.



Parents are the first ones to teach children about God and every family should be a domestic church. All of society benefits from strong, loving families.

It is very important to find the right person to marry – the person who will help you to get to Heaven.

Deacons serve the Church by assisting the bishop and priests. Deacons may read the Gospel and preach during the Mass. They may also perform baptisms, witness marriages and lead wakes and funeral services. They cannot celebrate the Mass, hear confessions, or anoint the sick. This is a special vocation that is open to both married and single men.

## Priesthood

Jesus chose a special group of men from among his disciples to guide the Church and celebrate the sacraments. Becoming a priest is one of the seven sacraments known as Holy Orders. Whenever a priest offers the Mass or administers the sacraments, he acts *in persona Christi* which means "in the person of Christ." Before he is ordained a priest, a man makes three special promises: he promises to pray on behalf of his people, he promises obedience to his bishop, and he promises to remain celibate (not to marry).

Dioceesan priests live their vocation focused on the needs of the people in their parish and diocese. A dioceesan priest is called to be a shepherd for God's people and he plays an important part in the lives of the people in his parish.

A religious priest is a priest that belongs to a religious community. Religious priests take vows of poverty, charity, and obedience. Rather than serve a specific geographical area, such as a diocese, religious priests work with their religious community in their common mission wherever they are needed.

Men who are studying to become priests attend a special school called a seminary. The classes help a man prepare to become a priest. Seminarians are open to the vocation of priesthood, discerning their call while preparing for ordination.



## Section 03 Single Life IN CLASS JOURNALING

*After reading section ask:*

How are you preparing yourself for whatever vocation God is calling you to?

What are some ways that you can serve others and serve the Church? What are some ways that you can practice the virtues of chastity and modesty?

## Section 04 Marriage IN CLASS JOURNALING

*After reading section ask:*

Have students comment the section asking:

1. What have you learned about the vocation of marriage?
2. What are your thoughts on the vocation of marriage?
3. What do you think it would be like to live this vocation?

## Section 05 Priesthood IN CLASS JOURNALING

*After reading section ask:*

Have students comment the section asking:

1. What have you learned about the vocation of the priesthood?
2. What are your thoughts on the vocation of the priesthood?
3. If you knew someone who might be called to this vocation, what would you do to support them?
4. What did you learn from the priest's visit to the class?
5. What did you learn from the seminarian's visit to the class?

## Section 06 Religious Life: IN CLASS JOURNALING

*After reading section ask:*

1. What have you learned about the vocation of the religious life?
2. What are your impressions on the vocation of the religious life?
3. What do you think it would be like to live this vocation?
4. Is there any particular religious community that you found interesting?
5. What did you learn from the religious sister's (or nun's) visit to the class?

### Teacher Note:

*In the course of this summary, challenge the students not just to remember the correct answers, but to grasp the reality of living as a Christian Disciple each day and how important this is in discovering and pursuing their specific vocation, and in finding great joy and happiness in living it.*

*This concept is also an ongoing positive challenge for all Christian adults, teachers, principals, priests, and religious alike. Pray for your students and for one another. The love of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit will deepen our faith and discipleship.*

## Religious Life: Sisters, Brothers, and Priests

Religious sisters, brothers, and priests are individuals who live out their Christian faith as a member of a group that is known as a religious community (also called a religious order or religious congregation). The men and women who join religious communities consecrate their lives to God. They love and serve God in a life of prayer and service. When a man or woman decides to accept Christ's invitation to leave everything and follow Him, they make vows to live like Jesus in poverty, chastity, and obedience.

There are many different kinds of religious communities in the Church, and each community lives according to a particular set of guidelines which inspires and identifies their community and gives a focus to their prayer and work. A charism is the identifying characteristic of a religious community. Charisms are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to an individual or group for the good of the whole Church.



There are two main types of religious communities. Contemplative orders focus on prayer. Active or apostolic orders are devoted to the service of others.

When God calls a person to a certain religious order or community, He will find a way to guide them to the place where they belong. If someone feels that they are called to the religious life, they can find information about religious orders by talking to people they know, looking on the internet, or contacting a vocation director. Once they decide to try out a religious order, there is a period of formation where they can learn about the lifestyle, spirituality and charism of the community. When a person is sure God is calling them to join a particular religious order, they take final vows that will last the rest of their lives.



## IT IS UP TO YOU

Continue building your relationship with Jesus Christ as a true Christian disciple. Part of being a Christian disciple is to pray. Speak to Jesus every day and listen to what He wants to tell you. Tell Him that you want to follow the vocation that He has designed for you to become a saint. Ask Him to help you discover it. Learn to know Jesus in the Eucharist and go to confession regularly.

There are many ways to learn more about vocations. You can speak to people you know or find information that is available about different vocations. The more you know about vocations, the better you will be able to speak to others about vocations and help them to find God's plan for their lives.

When you feel God calling you to a vocation, you must act. Take the steps that are necessary to follow the path that God is calling you to. The world needs you. The Church needs you. Jesus Christ is calling you. He will help you to follow the path He has prepared for you if you trust in Him and hear His voice.

*May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*

Colossians 1:11-12

## Section 07 It is up to you. IN CLASS JOURNALING

*After reading the section ask:*

Do you have any final questions on any of the material that we have covered? If you ever have any questions about what we talked about in class, about your own life, or about your vocation, you should always feel free to talk about it with someone you trust, whether it is your parents, a teacher, a priest, or a religious brother or sister.

What steps do you plan to take in the future to find out what vocation God is calling you to?

## Additional Questions (optional)

Imagine if you were told that a person spent their time not watching TV, not on a computer game, not surfing web sites but at a Church group, or reading a book about the saints, or praying and reading the Bible. What if a person in this class told you they took part in those things on a regular basis? What would be your "honest" reaction?

Would you support a friend who wanted to become a sister/nun, a brother or a priest? What about a student in this classroom? Would you support each other? You might be the difference. Your support of a friend or family member might help them become the complete person God has planned for them to be in a specific vocation. You might help them have the courage to fulfill their vocation.

## SUMMARY

*End the class by saying:*

Let us end by telling God that we want to answer His call and ask His help to follow our vocation.

*End the class with the Closing Prayer service (see Optional Activities at the end of the lesson).*

## HOMEWORK

Hand in Student Vocation Journals.

# EXTRA MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

## UNIT III LESSON 5

# OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## NOTES

### Vocation Survey

The Vocation Survey is meant to provide the students who feel inclined toward a vocation to the diocesan priesthood or religious life with an opportunity to learn more about these vocations and local vocation events. It is extremely important, however, to consult with your principal as to the guidelines for any future contact with the students by a vocation director or local priest or religious in advising a student. Parental consent is a crucial part of these guidelines with regard to any communication or guidance for individual students. Speak to your principal, local parish priest, and diocesan vocation director about this matter.

### THANK YOU

THANK YOU for teaching this Vocation Curriculum and thank you for teaching about vocations! Continue to pray for your students' vocations so that they may become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

### Hand out Copies of Final Lesson

Make enough copies of Unit III Lesson 5 to hand out to all of your students. They will keep this for their own so that in the future, if they ever think that God might be calling them to a particular vocation or for any other reason wish to review the material covered in this curriculum, they can use this Lesson as a valuable reference and a guide.

Copies of the final lesson can be handed out when their journals are given back to them to keep.

### Complete Vocation Survey

Have the students complete the vocation survey which asks whether they want to find out more about vocations or if they would like to talk to someone about their vocation. Have the students complete the surveys individually, honestly, and discreetly so that they will feel comfortable expressing their vocational inclinations.

Once the surveys have been completed by the students, the surveys of the students who are interested in pursuing a possible vocation to the priesthood or religious life can then be given to the appropriate person in the parish or diocese. Check with your principal, parish priest, or diocesan vocation director to find out who is the most appropriate person to give this information to.

### Finish Student Vocation Journals

At the end of the final lesson, have the students turn in their Student Vocation Journals for the teacher to review it. These Journals can then be returned to the students along with a copy of the final lesson. These will be a valuable source of information for the students in the future as they continue to consider their vocation.

### Final Prayer Service

At the end of the final lesson, the class can end with a closing prayer service. This prayer service can be an adapted version of the Adopt-a-Seminarian/Sister prayer service or a prayer service devised by the teacher. For example, begin with the Vocation Prayer followed by a list of intentions, praying for all Christian Disciples, for priests and religious men and women, for all those discerning a vocation, for God's help in discerning our own vocations, and closing with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory Be.

## Glossary

**Apostles** – the twelve men chosen by Jesus to lead the Church in a special way. The twelve Apostles were the first to spread Jesus' message throughout the world. (Unit I: Lesson 1)

**Apostolic order, Active order** – a religious community that is active in the world, serving others in a variety of activities (Unit III: Lesson 1)

**Brother** – a member of religious community of men who is not a priest (Unit III: Lesson 1)

**Candidacy** – (also called postulancy) the first step in the formation of a religious brother, sister, or priest. This is a stage when a man or woman who is interested in learning about a religious community visits them for a determined period of time to see if they are a good fit for the community. During this time, a woman is called a postulant and a man is called a candidate. (Unit III: Lesson 3)

**Celibacy** – not being married. Priests, religious sisters and brothers choose not to be married in imitation of Jesus. (Unit II: Lesson 1)

**Charism** – the identifying trait of a religious community. Charisms are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to an individual or group for the good of the whole Church. Every religious order has a special charism which forms their identity and mission. The charism is the motivating spirit that is the heart of a religious community. (Unit III: Lesson 2)

**Chastity 1)** the virtue that guides the way we express love with our bodies and controls our sexual desires according to our particular vocation. (Unit I: Lesson 4); **2)** For single people, chastity means avoiding sexual relations outside of marriage, and respecting the dignity of those around us. (Unit I: Lesson 4); **3)** For married people, chastity includes giving themselves body and soul only to their wife or husband for as long as they both live. (Unit I: Lesson 4); **4)** For a religious sister, brother, or priest, chastity is the vow with which they promise their body and soul only to Jesus. They enter into a loving and exclusive relationship with Him and He, in turn, gives them special graces and the intense and intimate love of His own heart. (Unit III: Lesson 1).

**College seminary** – (also called minor seminary) a special college for men who are interested in the priesthood. The college seminary offers classes that help seminarians learn about God and the Church. The seminary also provides many ways for the seminarians to grow spiritually. (Unit II: Lesson 4)

**Consecrate** – To consecrate something means to set it aside or devote it to a holy purpose. To consecrate one's life to Jesus Christ means to devote it entirely to Him. (Unit III: Lesson 1)

**Contemplative order** – religious communities that serve God through meditation, prayer and solitude (Unit III: Lesson 1)

**Deacon** – men, either married or single, who are called to a special vocation called the diaconate. Deacons serve the Church by assisting the bishop and priests. (Unit I: Lesson 5)

**Diocese** – a geographical area in the Church which is assigned to a bishop (Unit II: Lesson 1)

**Discern** – to try to discover something God is calling us to. This process takes time to sense and understand (Unit II: Lesson 4)

**Disciple** – A Christian disciple is someone who follows Jesus Christ by trying to be like Him in everything they do. (Unit I: Lesson 1)

**Discipleship** – Christian discipleship means living as a Christian disciple. (Unit I: Lesson 1)

**Domestic church** – The Church teaches that the family is like a small household church, which is called the domestic church. (Unit I: Lesson 5)

**Eucharist** – another name for Holy Communion (Unit I: Lesson 1)

**Final Vows** – after a long period of preparation, a religious sister, brother, or priest makes permanent vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience that they promise to keep for the rest of their lives. These are known as final vows. (Unit III: Lesson 3)

**Formation** – the special process of preparation to become religious sisters and brothers and priests. Each religious community has their own formation program. (Unit III: Lesson 3)

**Habit** – the special clothes worn by members of some religious communities. These clothes usually have a special meaning or purpose for those who wear them. (Unit III: Lesson 2)

**High school seminary** – a special school for high-school boys considering the priesthood (Unit II: Lesson 4)

**Holy Orders** – the sacrament by which a man becomes a deacon, priest, or bishop (Unit I: Lesson 5)

In persona Christi – whenever a priest administers the sacraments, he acts in persona Christi, which is a Latin phrase meaning “in the person of Christ.” (Unit II: Lesson 1)

Lay people – anyone who is not a deacon, priest, or bishop is a lay person. (Unit I: Lesson 4)

Liturgy of the Hours – a series of prayers made up of psalms, scripture passages, and intercessions that are prayed at certain times throughout the day. Priests make a promise to pray these prayers everyday. Religious sisters and brothers also pray the Liturgy of the Hours. (Unit II: Lesson 2)

Major seminary – a special school for seminarians who have finished college. A major seminary prepares seminarians to become priests. (Unit II: Lesson 4)

Marriage – in the vocation of marriage, a man and a woman promise before God to love and honor each other for the rest of their lives. Married people are called by God to: become saints, help their spouses to become holy, teach their children to love God, and be witnesses of their Christian faith in the world. (Unit I: Lesson 5)

Meditation – a type of prayer in which we focus our minds on a religious image, idea, or scripture passage (Unit II: Lesson 2)

Minor seminary – see College seminary.

Missionary – any person, but especially a member of a religious community, who is sent to preach the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus, usually in a foreign country. (Unit III: Lesson 2)

Modesty – being decent and appropriate in dress, words, and behavior. This means respecting our bodies and the bodies of others. The Church teaches us that modesty protects our most intimate selves. (Unit I: Lesson 4)

Monasteries – places where members of a religious order live together. There are separate monasteries for communities of men and for communities of women. In monasteries, members of a religious order can live a life of prayer and pursue a spiritual union with God. (Unit III: Lesson 1)

Monastery – a place where members of a contemplative religious order live together. There are separate monasteries for communities of men and for communities of women. In a monastery, members of a religious order can live a life of prayer and pursue a spiritual union with God. (Unit III: Lesson 1)

Monk – a man who is a member of a contemplative religious community (Unit III: Lesson 1)

Novice – a man or woman who is in the novitiate period of their formation. This means that they have completed the candidacy or postulancy period but have not yet taken temporary vows. (Unit III: Lesson 3)

Novitiate – part of the formation program of religious communities. It lasts between one and two years, during which a person learns about the charism of the community by participating in community life and discerns whether they are called to be a part of the community. During this time a man or woman is called a novice. (Unit III: Lesson 3)

Nun – a member of a contemplative religious community of women. (Unit III: Lesson 1)

Obedience – 1) one of the promises made by diocesan priests before they are ordained is obedience to the bishop. Obedience does not mean blindly following orders; it means faithfully doing God’s will. For a diocesan priest, doing God’s will includes following the guidance of his bishop in serving the needs of the diocese. (Unit II: Lesson 1)

2) one of the vows taken by members of a religious community is obedience to their religious superior. For a religious brother or sister, this means listening to and following God’s will for their life. This is done with the guidance of their religious superior. Obedience includes going wherever one is needed and giving oneself completely in service to God’s people. (Unit III: Lesson 1)

Ordination – the ceremony in which a man receives the sacrament of Holy Orders. Through this sacrament, a man becomes a deacon, a priest, or a bishop. When a man receives this sacrament, we say he is ordained. (Unit II: Lesson 1)

Priest – a man chosen by Christ from among His disciples and called to guide the Church and celebrate the sacraments. Those who God calls to the priesthood imitate Christ in a particular way by completely dedicating themselves to the Church. (Unit II: Lesson 1)

Postulancy – see Candidacy.

Poverty – one of the vows taken by members of a religious community. Poverty as a vow does not mean being poor; it means sharing possessions in common with the community. Religious men and women who live this vow only have things that can help them in their mission. (Unit III: Lesson 1)

Reconciliation – another name for the sacrament of confession. (Unit I: Lesson 1)

Religious community, Religious order, Religious congregation – a group of individuals who make vows to live their Christian faith together in a particular way as members of a community. (Unit II Lesson 1, Unit III: Lesson 1)

Religious superior – the head of a religious community (Unit II: Lesson 1)

Sacred bond – the bond of love and responsibility between a man, a woman, and God that becomes a reality in the sacrament of marriage, when the man and woman vow before God to live faithfully as husband and wife for the rest of their lives. (Unit I: Lesson 5)

Sanctification – to sanctify means to make holy, or to bring closer to union with God (Unit II: Lesson 2)

Seminarians – men who are preparing to be ordained as priests (Unit II: Lesson 4)

Seminary – a special school for men who are preparing to be ordained as priests (Unit II: Lesson 4)

Single life – living in the world without being married, ordained, or joining a religious community; it can be either a stage of life that a person will live until God calls them to another vocation, or a permanent vocation for those who remain single their whole lives. Single people enjoy a special freedom to serve God and others with their whole hearts. (Unit I: Lesson 4)

Sister – a member of an active or apostolic community of women (Unit III: Lesson 1)

Spirituality – a particular way of living one's faith in God. Prayer and service are two important parts of every Christian disciple's spirituality. (Unit II: Lesson 2)

Temporary Vows – vows that a religious brother or sister make during their formation before making their final vows. These vows last only one year while the person continues training. At the end of the each year, if they choose to remain part of the community, they renew their temporary vows until they are ready to make their final vows. (Unit III: Lesson 3)

Vocation – a plan or way of life that God invites us to live. (Unit I: Lesson 2)

Vocation Director – a person whose job it is to help others discern if God is calling them to the vocation of the priesthood or religious life. (Unit III: Lesson 3)

Vow – a special promise made to God to live in a particular way (Unit I: Lesson 5, Unit II: Lesson 1, Unit III: Lesson 1)





Visit our web site:  
[www.WhatIsMyVocation.com](http://www.WhatIsMyVocation.com)

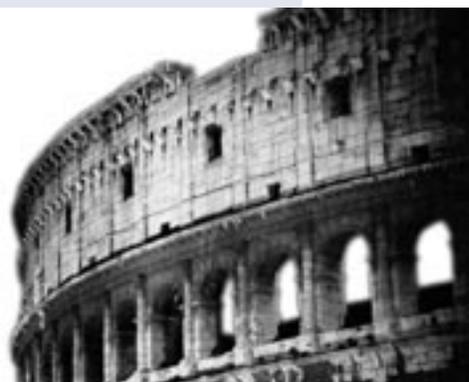
# The Vocation to the Religious Life

## WHAT IS A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY?

Religious sisters, brothers, and priests are individuals who live out their Christian faith as members of a larger group known as a **religious community** (also called a **religious order** or **religious congregation**). They make special promises to love and serve God for the rest of their lives, dedicated to a life of prayer and service.

There are many different kinds of religious communities in the Church. Each community lives according to a particular set of guidelines which inspires and identifies them and gives a focus to their prayer and work.

## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE CHURCH



*The early martyrdom had ended. A new kind of martyrdom had begun. People give their lives for Christ every day.*

Read Matthew 19:16-21

During the early centuries of the Church, about 1,700 years ago, there were Christians who were inspired by the gospel to sell all that they had, leave their homes, and dedicate their lives completely to God in a special way. They left behind everything so that they could follow Jesus without distractions.

Eventually, as more people chose to live in this way, they began to form communities and live together in places called **monasteries**. As a community, they could help each other provide for their daily needs and work together to support the life of the whole community. Some religious

communities were made up of all men, and others were formed by women. In each community, the members lived a life of prayer and pursued a spiritual union with God. Ever since that time, religious communities have been an important part of the Church and religious life continues to be a very attractive vocation for many people.

## PRAYER AND ACTION

Today, there are two main types of religious communities. Some religious communities serve God through meditation, prayer and solitude. These are known as **contemplative orders**. The men and women in these communities live in monasteries. Women's monasteries are also called convents. They live away from the distractions of the world so that they may devote their lives to praying for the needs of the Church. In contemplative communities of women, the members are known as **nuns**. In contemplative communities of men, the members are known as **monks**. The members of

the community also work to support their communities by farming or making and selling goods such as music cd's, communion hosts for mass, and works of art.



Read Luke 8:1-3



## Contemplative – Prayer Apostolic – Active

The second type of religious community is active in the world, serving others in a variety of activities. These communities are known as **active** or **apostolic orders**. In these orders, women are called sisters, and men are usually called brothers unless they are ordained priests. These communities work both in the Church and in the world. They usually have a particular focus such as teaching in schools, caring for the sick, helping

the poor, doing missionary work in far off countries, or working in the media. These communities also spend time in prayer. Their community prayer and common mission unite them.

### CONSECRATED TO GOD

The men and women who join religious communities **consecrate** their lives to God as a way of seeking holiness. To consecrate something means to set it aside or devote it to a holy purpose. To consecrate one's life to Jesus Christ means to devote it entirely to Him.

When a man or woman decides to accept Christ's invitation to leave everything and follow Him in a more radical way, they make vows to live like Jesus in poverty, chastity, and obedience. They participate in a ceremony where they make this commitment, much like a married couple exchanges their vows on their wedding day. They promise Christ that they will live the rest of their lives dedicated exclusively to Him.

The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience help religious men or women to be free from earthly attachments and distractions. These vows help them to live simply, to be more open with God, and to depend more on Him.

**Poverty** as a vow does not mean being poor. It means sharing possessions in common with the community. Religious men and women who live this vow only have things that can help them in their mission.

**Obedience** is listening to and following God's will in one's life. This is done with the guidance of the religious superior. The vow of obedience also requires going wherever one is needed and giving oneself completely in service to God's people.

**Chastity** for a religious sister, brother, or priest means that they give their body and soul only to Jesus. They enter into a loving and

*The priest, deacon, catechist and religious must...proclaim, be witnesses. But naturally, for this they must listen...on the one hand, with their soul open to Christ, interiorly listening to his Word so that it is... transformed and forms [their] being; and on the other, listening to today's humanity, our neighbours, those of [their] parish, those for whom [they] have been given a certain responsibility.*

– Pope Benedict XVI<sup>15</sup>



Photo courtesy of Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus

**Consecrate:**  
to set aside,  
devote to a certain  
purpose, make  
sacred.



**Jesus teaches that obedience is the key to a successful mission, even when obeying means accepting the cross.**

*“The world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me.”*

- John 14:31

exclusive relationship with Him. Jesus Christ, in turn, gives them special graces and the intense and intimate love of His own heart. Just as married people remain faithful to their spouses, religious men and women remain faithful to Jesus and do not marry or date other people. They avoid becoming intimately attached to people in a way that would distract them from their relationship with the Lord. By doing this, they remain free to love and serve God and neighbor with an undivided heart. Religious men and women may have family and friends with whom they spend time and form loving, friendly relationships.

## RELIGIOUS PRIESTS

A religious priest and a diocesan priest are different. A diocesan priest serves the people of a single diocese under the authority of his bishop. A priest in a religious order ministers to people according to the mission of his community. For example, if the religious order runs schools, then the priest might teach. If a religious priest is part of a missionary order, he might live in a foreign country. If he works in a monastery, he might do farm work in addition to his priestly duties. Like a diocesan priest, a religious priest celebrates the sacraments, and may work in a parish setting supported by his community of religious brothers and priests.

Religious brothers are not priests. They make vows and have responsibilities within their religious community but they are not ordained and do not celebrate the sacraments. A man may choose to be a brother rather than a priest because he wants to fully devote himself



to contemplation or to a particular kind of work such as teaching. Their vocation and ministry is similar to that of religious sisters.

## WHERE DO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES LIVE?

Religious orders may live together in a community house. Each house may include a chapel, private rooms for sleeping, a kitchen, a dining room, and community rooms for socializing. Some houses have guest rooms for visitors.

A religious sister, brother or priest is not geographically bound by the parameters of the diocese. They live and work wherever the mission of the religious community and the needs of the world call them.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Do you have religious sisters, brothers, or priests in your parish? Do you know other religious sisters, brothers, or priests?
2. What are some forms of service that religious communities do that you think would be fun or interesting to do? Why does the Church need some religious orders to be active in the world?
3. St. Therese of Lisieux was a religious nun in a contemplative order called the Carmelites. She prayed very much for the Church's missionaries. Though she never worked in a foreign mission during her lifetime, she played an important role in helping the Church's missions. Why were her prayers important? Why do we need contemplative religious communities that are dedicated to prayer?



### VOCABULARY

Religious community  
Religious order  
Religious congregation  
Monasteries  
Contemplative order  
Nun  
Monk  
Apostolic order  
Active order  
Sister  
Brother  
Consecrate

## Write about it!



### Journal options:

- Read about the life of a founder of a religious community or a well-known religious sister, brother, or priest. Answer the following questions about them:
  1. What do you admire about the religious sister, brother, or priest that you read about?
  2. What about their lives inspires you?
  3. What would our world be like with more people like them?

*If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to (the) poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*

(Mt 19:21)

# A Charism for Every Need of the Church

There are thousands of people who dedicate their lives to God through the vocation to the religious life. They appear in many forms, ways, and clothing. There are many different religious orders. Each one has a unique identity, mission, spirituality, and set of guidelines for living. Part of being open to a vocation to the religious life is considering which religious order God may be calling you to join.

## WHAT IS A CHARISM?

A **charism** is the identifying trait of a religious community. Charisms are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to an individual or group for the good of the whole Church. Every religious order has a special charism which forms their identity and mission. The charism is the motivating spirit that is the heart of a religious community.

Religious orders are known for the outward expression of their charism. For example, Dominicans are known for the charism of preaching, and Franciscans for simplicity of lifestyle and serving the poor. Paulists and the Daughters of St. Paul are known for using communication technology to spread the Gospel. The Blessed Sacrament Fathers have a great devotion to the Eucharist because their founder felt called to pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament serve the poor because their foundress, St. Katherine Drexel, used her vast fortune to minister to Native Americans and African Americans.

## WORK AND APOSTOLATE

Due to the variety of charisms, there is a variety of ways that religious people serve the Church. All religious orders work to fulfill their specific mission. Contemplative orders work within the confines of a monastery. This allows them to focus on their primary mission: to pray for the needs of the Church. Active or apostolic congregations work in the world. They preach the Gospel, teach in schools, operate hospitals, manage publishing companies, or run retreat centers. Some apostolic orders send members as missionaries throughout the world to preach the Gospel to people who do not know Jesus.

The needs of people in the world are many. Likewise, there are many different religious congregations to serve them. Religious men and women have a mission to serve God's people.

## LIVE IN PERFECT CHARITY

Even more important than their work, God calls religious men and women to truly live their consecration to God in charity and community with others. Pope John Paul II asked all consecrated persons: "Live to the full your dedication to God, so that this world may never be without a ray of divine beauty to lighten the path of human existence." The call to the religious vocation is not only to serve others or to pursue one's own holiness, but to be a light of God in the world.

In a world where many people do not know God, it is a great witness to see people living a religious vocation that demonstrates their belief in, and love for God. In a world where there is hatred and violence, it is inspiring to see communities of people of different cultures and classes coming together to live in joy and charity. They inspire us to live our own faith in the same way.



Photo courtesy of Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus

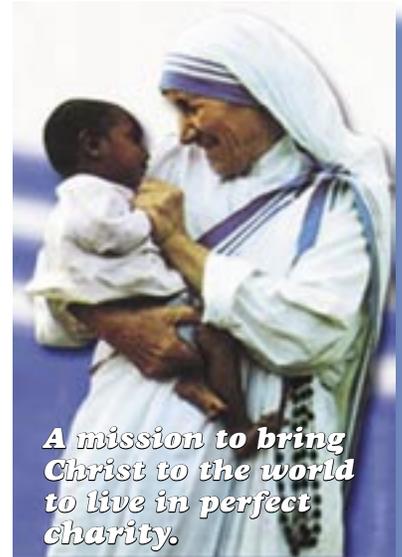
*“Live to the full your dedication to God, so that this world may never be without a ray of divine beauty to lighten the path of human existence.”*

Pope John Paul II<sup>16</sup>

Religious men and women generally wear some visible sign of their commitment to Jesus to give a witness wherever they go that they belong to God. This is something that is closely united to their charism and mission. Some religious men and women wear a religious medal or a crucifix on a chain with normal clothes, while others wear special robes, sandals, or head coverings. The special

clothes worn by members of some religious communities is called a **habit**. They may dress differently, but the important thing is that they all give witness to the presence of God in the world.

In order to live their vocation, their prayer life is essential. In prayer, they deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. All religious orders have some kind of formal prayer life that they follow together, such as adoration, meditation, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, or saying the Rosary. Contemplative Orders, like the Poor Clares, spend a lot of their prayer time in adoration before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Just as the sacraments are vitally important to all Christian disciples, frequent reception of the sacraments is central to religious life. Religious women and men try to go to Mass every day as well as to go frequently to Confession.

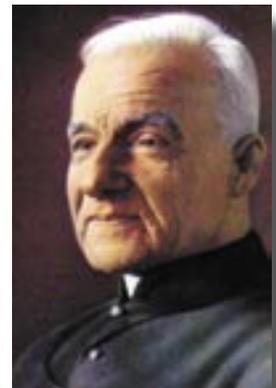


*A mission to bring Christ to the world to live in perfect charity.*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “in the consecrated life, Christ’s faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly to give themselves to God who is loved above all” (CCC 916).

## EXAMPLES OF SAINTLY SISTERS, BROTHERS, AND PRIESTS

**Blessed Andre Bessette** (d. 1937). When Andre became a brother of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, he could not read and was in poor health. He was appointed as doorkeeper of their college in Montreal where he dedicated himself to humble service. Soon, miracles began to occur because of this holy man. Many people who came to him to ask for his prayers were miraculously healed. Brother Andrew always gave credit for the miracles to God through the prayers of St. Joseph. To thank St. Joseph for his prayers, his religious order built the largest church dedicated to him. Brother Andrew was beatified in 1982.



**St. Frances Xavier Cabrini** (d. 1917) was born in Italy and later immigrated to the United States. She established numerous hospitals, orphanages and schools in the U.S. and South America. Toward the end of her life, she miraculously healed several people. She died in Columbus Hospital in Chicago. The room where she lived, along with her clothes and simple possessions, can be seen just as it was during her lifetime.



**Blessed Damien of Molokai** (d. 1889) joined the Redemptorists, an order founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori. He left his homeland of Belgium to be a missionary in the Hawaiian Islands. He felt compassion for the lepers suffering on the isolated island of Molokai who had no priest to minister to them. He volunteered to live among them and to minister and help care for them. Eventually, he got leprosy himself and died of the disease. He once said, “I wish to sacrifice myself for the poor lepers.”<sup>17</sup>

**Henriette Delille** (d. 1862) was a Catholic African-American woman from New Orleans. She was born a free woman when slavery still existed in the United States. Henriette founded a religious order, the Sisters of the Holy Family, to educate and care for young black girls. She established orphanages for the girls and founded homes for the poor and elderly as well. She was described as a woman “who for love of Jesus Christ had made herself the humble servant of slaves.”<sup>18</sup>

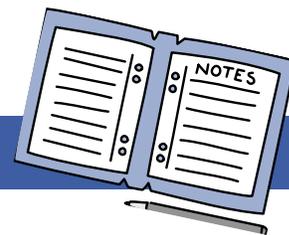


### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Why do we need so many different religious communities?
2. What are some good things you think about when you see a religious sister, brother, or priest in real life or in a movie?
3. What is the difference between a job and being called to a religious charism?

### VOCABULARY

Charism  
Habit  
Missionary



### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- Using one of the above examples of saintly religious sisters, brothers and priests, answer the following questions: What are some ways that this person showed the world they were dedicated to God? How were prayer and the sacraments important for this person?
- How do you feel that God is calling you to express your faith? To what kind of service might God be calling you? As you pursue your own vocation, how important are prayer and the sacraments to you?
- How do you pray? Is God someone close to you, who you can talk to about anything? In what ways can you pray better?

# Becoming a Religious Sister, Brother, or Priest



## WHAT IF

Let's say you believe God is calling you to a religious vocation. Maybe you read a story or meet a religious person that sparks your interest. There is a little voice inside of you asking, "Could Jesus Christ be inviting me to follow Him in this way?" You would want to find out for certain whether Jesus was calling you, as well as what steps were necessary to become a religious sister, brother, or priest. There are many different religious communities, and each one has a process for joining.

## FINDING THE ORDER THAT FITS YOU

There are many ways to find information on different religious communities. You can ask someone who knows about the religious life: maybe a friend, family member, religious education teacher, priest or a religious sister or brother in your parish. You can look for more information on the internet or in magazines such as *Vision* or *Religious Ministries*. Religious communities also have "open house" days or weekend retreats where people can visit and learn more about the vocation firsthand. Opportunities for visiting religious communities or participating in retreats are often advertised in parish bulletins, the local diocesan newspaper, or on posters and fliers found in your Church. Most religious communities have websites which describe the community, provide information about upcoming events, and list the Vocation Director's name, phone number and e-mail address. Each religious order and diocese has a **Vocation Director**. Vocation Directors help women and men to determine if God is calling them to the religious life and if a particular order is the right fit for them.

## TRY IT OUT!

When God calls a person to a certain religious order or community, He will find a way to guide them to the place where they belong. When a person feels drawn to a certain religious community, they contact the Vocation Director to learn more

How do you  
know what fits  
you if you don't  
try it out?

about it. Together they can arrange a visit to get to know the community. The community can get to know them too. In this way, the religious community determines if the person is a right "fit" for them. If both agree there is a fit, then the person may move into the community for a short trial period. It is hard to know if you are meant for that kind of



## **Vision Magazine:**

www.visionguide.info

## **Religious Ministries:**

www.religiousministries.com

life unless you try it out for a short time. While living in the community, visitors experience a balanced lifestyle dedicated to God with time for prayer, community life, recreation, and apostolic work. It is a joyful, happy lifestyle for those who are called to be in a religious community, but the only way to find out if you might be called to this lifestyle is to try it out.

## FORMATION

There is a special process for those who want to become religious sisters and brothers which is called **formation**. Each religious community has their own formation program to train the women and men to be sisters and brothers. At the beginning of the program, there is a period of time during which a person visits the community to discover if they are called to join. During this time, a woman is called a postulant and a man is called a candidate.

If they decide to continue in the formation program, there follows the **novitiate** which lasts between one and two years, in which a man or woman becomes a **novice**. At this point, they are given the title of “sister” or “brother.” During the novitiate, a novice learns more about the charism of the community by participating in community life and apostolic service.

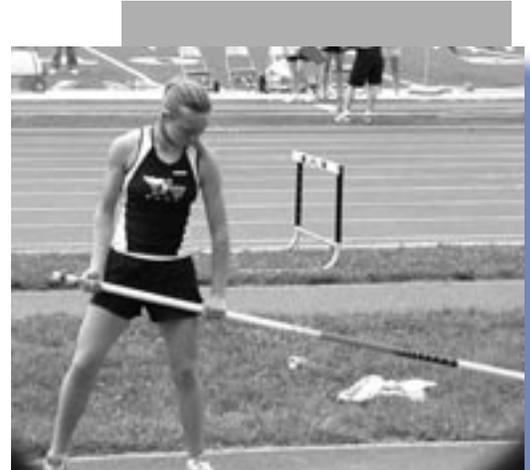
After the novitiate, if the novice decides to stay, they make **temporary vows** of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are called “temporary” because they last only one year while the person continues training. At the end of each year, if they choose to remain part of the community, they renew their temporary vows. During this time they continue living and working as part of the community. They do this for several years until they are sure that they are definitely called to this vocation.

### **Formation**

is the process of training and spiritual development that takes place during the early months or years of joining a religious order.

After having determined over the years that a religious community is the right fit for them, a sister or brother professes their **final vows** of poverty, chastity and obedience, which they promise to keep for the rest of their lives. Their years of preparation and discernment allow them to be absolutely sure that this is truly the vocation God is calling them to.

Likewise, during this period, the religious community discerns whether God is calling a person to join their community. If so, they extend an invitation for a sister or brother to make their final vows, and the person becomes a permanent member of the community.



*St. Paul describes every Christian's life as a challenge that requires training in order to live it well: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"*

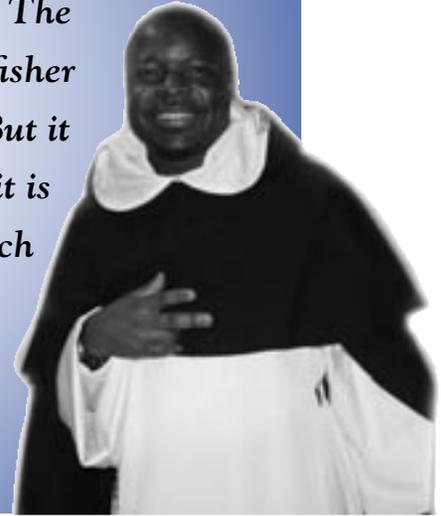
(2 Timothy 4:7).

## PRIESTS IN A RELIGIOUS ORDER

Men who want to be religious priests begin seminary training during the first years living in the community. They take temporary vows, then final vows. Once they are permanent members of the religious community, they can then be ordained priests. A religious priest is a member of his community just like the brothers. They all live and work in community sharing the same charism, but only the religious priest celebrates the sacraments.

*There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him. The task of the shepherd, the task of the fisher of men, can often seem wearisome. But it is beautiful and wonderful, because it is truly a service to joy, to God's joy which longs to break into the world.*

– Pope Benedict XVI<sup>19</sup>



### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. What are some ways that God can show a person that they are called to be a religious sister, brother, or priest?
2. How could someone who is called to religious life discover which religious community is the right fit for them?
- 3 Religious men and women make temporary vows for several years before making their final vows. Do you think this helps them to make a lifelong commitment to a religious community? What motivates people to make a lifelong commitment?

### VOCABULARY

Vocation Director  
Formation  
Novitiate  
Novice  
Temporary Vows  
Final Vows

### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- Prepare one question that you want to ask the religious sister who will be speaking to your class.
- Imagine that you feel drawn to join a religious community. Use a *Vision* magazine ([www.visionguide.org](http://www.visionguide.org)), or other vocation publication, to find three religious communities that seem interesting. Write a paragraph for each one explaining the reason why you think that the religious order might be a “good fit” for you. (For example: “This religious order teaches in schools and I want to be a teacher.” “This religious order works overseas and I love to travel.” “They are missionaries and I am excited by my faith and want to share it with others.”)



# Witness of a Religious Sister/Adopt a Sister

## INTRODUCTION

We have learned that there are different ways of living a vocation to the religious life. Today we welcome a sister who is dedicated to God in this way, who will tell us how she discovered her call, and what her life is like now. You may have already prepared questions for the end of the talk, but if you think of others you may ask them as well.



**LET'S PRAY ABOUT IT!**

**Adopt a Sister Prayer**

## SUMMARY

Hearing the story of this sister shows us that religious sisters were once students too, who did the same things you do. One day, she decided to say "Yes" to Christ's invitation and to dedicate her life to Him. Think of the good things she has done since the day that she decided to follow her vocation. Let us remember to pray for her, and all those who share her vocation. Let us also pray that God will show each of us our own vocation and give us the ability to say "Yes" like she did.



*Write about it!*

### Journal options:

- What is one thing you found interesting about the speaker's presentation and why? What was one thing that you could relate to in her talk?
- After meeting this sister, would you be more likely to encourage a friend who wanted to become a sister? What are the good points you can tell her about this vocation?
- Try to imagine what the world would have been like if this sister decided not to follow her vocation. What good things would never have happened?

# Conclusion: Jesus Christ is Calling You

## LISTEN

Jesus Christ is calling you. Even now you can hear Him in your heart if you will listen. He is inviting you to discover your vocation. This vocation is yours and no one else's. It is unique. It is the adventure of your life that will lead you to true happiness and to Heaven. All you have to do is say "Yes" to Jesus. Tell Him that you want to listen to His voice, that you want to know the mystery of your vocation, and that you accept the challenge of whatever vocation He is asking of you.

You have learned much about what a vocation is, how God reveals a vocation, as well as what the main types of vocations are. Now it is time to review what you have learned so that you can take this knowledge and apply it in your own life. By now, you have already begun considering what path God might be inviting you to. You must continue to discover the path God is guiding you to and take action to follow that path.

## VOCATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

God created you. He knows everything about you. He knows your future and your past, and He knows that you have the ability to be great. God created you to do great things, to find happiness with Him and to become a saint.

All Catholic Christians, from the moment they are baptized, are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Being a Christian disciple means forming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by getting to know Him, imitating Him in everything we do, and sharing our Faith with others. Getting to know Jesus means speaking to Him in daily prayer, participating in the worship of God at Mass, and receiving the sacraments often, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

In addition to this calling that all Christians share to be disciples of Jesus, each individual person has a specific vocation. Your vocation is the path that God is inviting you to follow that will lead to your happiness on earth and your salvation in Heaven. The vocation you are called to best fits how God made you. It is a special mission God sets apart just for you.

God respects your freedom and He created you to be free to follow your vocation. The main types of vocations are: single life, marriage, priesthood, or religious life (as a religious sister, brother, or priest).

Different people discover their vocations in different ways, some when they are very young. We must prepare ourselves to hear God's call by spending time listening to God. God speaks to us in prayer, whispering to us in our hearts during moments of silent conversation with Him. God speaks to us through the Church, through priests and religious sisters and brothers, through the sacraments and the Mass, and through the Bible. God also speaks to us in everyday life, through people we know, and through our experiences.

*True freedom is not doing what we want to do, but doing what we ought to do.*

– John Paul II

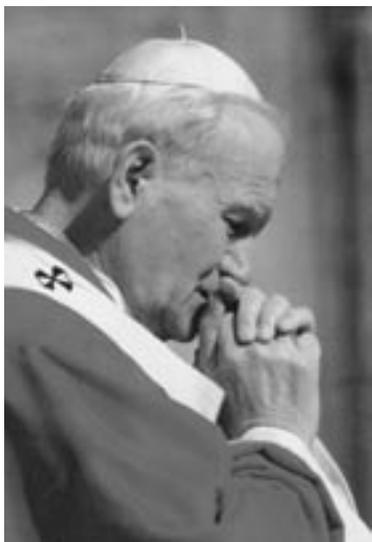


Photo courtesy of Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus

## Single Life

All people are single for some part of their lives. Some single people will later be married. Some will become priests or religious. God calls some people to remain single in order to serve others and the church. Single people have a special freedom that they can use to help others in a variety of ways. They must be ready for whatever God asks of them. They should live the virtues of chastity and modesty and look to Jesus as their example of how to live a good single life.



## Marriage

Married people are called by God to find true happiness and become saints by helping their spouses to become holy, by teaching their children to love God as Christian disciples, and to sanctify the world around them in their everyday life. Marriage is a sign of the love that God has for us. Just as Christ gave Himself completely for his Church, a man and a woman give themselves to each other. When a man and a woman are married in the sacrament of Matrimony, they invite God to be the center of their family and they offer their love for each other as a gift to Him.



Parents are the first ones to teach children about God and every family should be a domestic church. All of society benefits from strong, loving families.

It is very important to find the right person to marry – the person who will help you to get to Heaven.

Deacons serve the Church by assisting the bishop and priests. Deacons may read the Gospel and preach during the Mass. They may also perform baptisms, witness marriages and lead wake and funeral services. They cannot celebrate the Mass, hear confessions, or anoint the sick. This is a special vocation that is open to both married and single men.

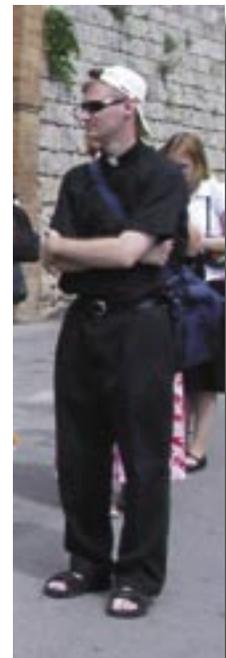
## Priesthood

Jesus chose a special group of men from among his disciples to guide the Church and celebrate the sacraments. Becoming a priest is one of the seven sacraments known as Holy Orders. Whenever a priest offers the Mass or administers the sacraments, he acts *in persona Christi* which means “in the person of Christ.” Before he is ordained a priest, a man makes three special promises: he promises to pray on behalf of his people, he promises obedience to his bishop, and he promises to remain celibate (not to marry).

Diocesan priests live their vocation focused on the needs of the people in their parish and diocese. A diocesan priest is called to be a shepherd for God’s people and he plays an important part in the lives of the people in his parish.

A religious priest is a priest that belongs to a religious community. Religious priests take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Rather than serve a specific geographical area, such as a diocese, religious priests work with their religious community in their common mission wherever they are needed.

Men who are studying to become priests attend a special school called a seminary. The classes help a man prepare to become a priest. Seminarians are open to the vocation of priesthood, discerning their call while preparing for ordination.



## Religious Life: Sisters, Brothers, and Priests

Religious sisters, brothers, and priests are individuals who live out their Christian faith as a member of a group that is known as a religious community (also called a religious order or religious congregation). The men and women who join religious communities consecrate their lives to God. They love and serve God in a life of prayer and service. When a man or woman decides to accept Christ's invitation to leave everything and follow Him, they make vows to live like Jesus in poverty, chastity, and obedience.

There are many different kinds of religious communities in the Church, and each community lives according to a particular set of guidelines which inspires and identifies their community and gives a focus to their prayer and work. A charism is the identifying characteristic of a religious community. Charisms are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to an individual or group for the good of the whole Church.



There are two main types of religious communities. Contemplative orders focus on prayer. Active or apostolic orders are devoted to the service of others.

When God calls a person to a certain religious order or community, He will find a way to guide them to the place where they belong. If someone feels that they are called to the religious life, they can find information about religious orders by talking to people they know, looking on the internet, or contacting a vocation director. Once they decide to try out a religious order, there is a period of formation where they can learn about the lifestyle, spirituality and charism of the community. When a person is sure God is calling them to join a particular religious order, they take final vows that will last the rest of their lives.

## IT IS UP TO YOU

Continue building your relationship with Jesus Christ as a true Christian disciple. Part of being a Christian disciple is to pray. Speak to Jesus every day and listen to what He wants to tell you. Tell Him that you want to follow the vocation that He has designed for you to become a saint. Ask Him to help you discover it. Learn to know Jesus in the Eucharist and go to confession regularly.

There are many ways to learn more about vocations. You can speak to people you know or find information that is available about different vocations. The more you know about vocations, the better you will be able to speak to others about vocations and help them to find God's plan for their lives.

When you feel God calling you to a vocation, you must act. Take the steps that are necessary to follow the path that God is calling you to. The world needs you. The Church needs you. Jesus Christ is calling you. He will help you to follow the path He has prepared for you if you trust in Him and hear His voice.

*May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*

Colossians 1:11-12

# Glossary

**Apostles** – the twelve men chosen by Jesus to lead the Church in a special way. The twelve Apostles were the first to spread Jesus' message throughout the world. *(Unit I: Lesson 1)*

**Apostolic order, Active order** – a **religious community** that is active in the world, serving others in a variety of activities *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Brother** – a member of religious community of men who is not a priest *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Candidacy** – (also called **postulancy**) the first step in the formation of a religious brother, sister, or priest. This is a stage when a man or woman who is interested in learning about a religious community visits them for a determined period of time to see if they are a good fit for the community. During this time, a woman is called a postulant and a man is called a candidate. *(Unit III: Lesson 3)*

**Celibacy** – not being married. Priests, religious sisters and brothers choose not to be married in imitation of Jesus. *(Unit II: Lesson 1)*

**Charism** – the identifying trait of a **religious community**. Charisms are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to an individual or group for the good of the whole Church. Every religious order has a special charism which forms their identity and mission. The charism is the motivating spirit that is the heart of a religious community. *(Unit III: Lesson 2)*

**Chastity** 1) the virtue that guides the way we express love with our bodies and controls our sexual desires according to our particular **vocation**. *(Unit I: Lesson 4)*; 2) For single people, chastity means avoiding sexual relations outside of marriage, and respecting the dignity of those around us. *(Unit I: Lesson 4)*; 3) For married people, chastity includes giving themselves body and soul only to their wife or husband for as long as they both live. *(Unit I: Lesson 4)*; 4) For a religious sister, brother, or priest, chastity is the vow with which they promise their body and soul only to Jesus. They enter into a loving and exclusive relationship with Him and He, in turn, gives them special graces and the intense and intimate love of His own heart. *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*.

**College seminary** – (also called **minor seminary**) a special college for men who are interested in the priesthood. The college seminary offers classes that help seminarians learn about God and the Church. The seminary also provides many ways for the seminarians to grow spiritually. *(Unit II: Lesson 4)*

**Consecrate** – To consecrate something means to set it aside or devote it to a holy purpose. To consecrate one's life to Jesus Christ means to devote it entirely to Him. *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Contemplative order** – **religious communities** that serve God through meditation, prayer and solitude *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Deacon** – men, either married or single, who are called to a special vocation called the diaconate. Deacons serve the Church by assisting the bishop and priests. *(Unit I: Lesson 5)*

**Diocese** – a geographical area in the Church which is assigned to a bishop *(Unit II: Lesson 1)*

**Discern** – to try to discover something God is calling us to. This process takes time to sense and understand *(Unit II: Lesson 4)*

**Disciple** – A Christian disciple is someone who follows Jesus Christ by trying to be like Him in everything they do. *(Unit I: Lesson 1)*

**Discipleship** – Christian discipleship means living as a Christian **disciple**. *(Unit I: Lesson 1)*

**Domestic church** – The Church teaches that the family is like a small household church, which is called the domestic church. *(Unit I: Lesson 5)*

**Eucharist** – another name for Holy Communion *(Unit I: Lesson 1)*

**Final Vows** – after a long period of preparation, a religious sister, brother, or priest makes permanent vows of **poverty, chastity, and obedience** that they promise to keep for the rest of their lives. These are known as final vows. *(Unit III: Lesson 3)*

**Formation** – the special process of preparation to become religious sisters and brothers and priests. Each religious community has their own formation program. *(Unit III: Lesson 3)*

**Habit** – the special clothes worn by members of some religious communities. These clothes usually have a special meaning or purpose for those who wear them. *(Unit III: Lesson 2)*

**High school seminary** – a special school for high-school boys considering the priesthood *(Unit II: Lesson 4)*

**Holy Orders** – the sacrament by which a man becomes a deacon, priest, or bishop *(Unit I: Lesson 5)*

**In persona Christi** – whenever a priest administers the sacraments, he acts *in persona Christi*, which is a Latin phrase meaning “in the person of Christ.” *(Unit II: Lesson 1)*

**Lay people** – anyone who is not a deacon, priest, or bishop is a lay person. *(Unit I: Lesson 4)*

**Liturgy of the Hours** – a series of prayers made up of psalms, scripture passages, and intercessions that are prayed at certain times throughout the day. Priests make a promise to pray these prayers everyday. Religious sisters and brothers also pray the Liturgy of the Hours. *(Unit II: Lesson 2)*

**Major seminary** – a special school for seminarians who have finished college. A major seminary prepares seminarians to become priests. *(Unit II: Lesson 4)*

**Marriage** – in the vocation of marriage, a man and a woman promise before God to love and honor each other for the rest of their lives. Married people are called by God to: become saints, help their spouses to become holy, teach their children to love God, and be witnesses of their Christian faith in the world. *(Unit I: Lesson 5)*

**Meditation** – a type of prayer in which we focus our minds on a religious image, idea, or scripture passage *(Unit II: Lesson 2)*

**Minor seminary** – see **College seminary**.

**Missionary** – any person, but especially a member of a religious community, who is sent to preach the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus, usually in a foreign country. *(Unit III: Lesson 2)*

**Modesty** – being decent and appropriate in dress, words, and behavior. This means respecting our bodies and the bodies of others. The Church teaches us that modesty protects our most intimate selves. *(Unit I: Lesson 4)*

**Monasteries** – places where members of a religious order live together. There are separate monasteries for communities of men and for communities of women. In monasteries, members of a religious order can live a life of prayer and pursue a spiritual union with God. *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Monastery** – a place where members of a contemplative religious order live together. There are separate monasteries for communities of men and for communities of women. In a monastery, members of a religious order can live a life of prayer and pursue a spiritual union with God. *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Monk** – a man who is a member of a contemplative religious community *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Novice** – a man or woman who is in the novitiate period of their formation. This means that they have completed the **candidacy** or **postulancy** period but have not yet taken **temporary vows**. *(Unit III: Lesson 3)*

**Novitiate** – part of the formation program of religious communities. It lasts between one and two years, during which a person learns about the **charism** of the community by participating in community life and **discerns** whether they are called to be a part of the community. During this time a man or woman is called a **novice**. *(Unit III: Lesson 3)*

**Nun** – a member of a contemplative religious community of women. *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Obedience** – 1) one of the promises made by diocesan priests before they are **ordained** is obedience to the bishop. Obedience does not mean blindly following orders; it means faithfully doing God’s will. For a diocesan priest, doing God’s will includes following the guidance of his

bishop in serving the needs of the diocese.

*(Unit II: Lesson 1)*

2) one of the **vows** taken by members of a religious community is obedience to their **religious superior**. For a religious brother or sister, this means listening to and following God's will for their life. This is done with the guidance of their religious superior. Obedience includes going wherever one is needed and giving oneself completely in service to God's people. *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Ordination** – the ceremony in which a man receives the sacrament of **Holy Orders**. Through this sacrament, a man becomes a deacon, a priest, or a bishop. When a man receives this sacrament, we say he is ordained. *(Unit II: Lesson 1)*

**Priest** – a man chosen by Christ from among His disciples and called to guide the Church and celebrate the sacraments. Those who God calls to the priesthood imitate Christ in a particular way by completely dedicating themselves to the Church. *(Unit II: Lesson 1)*

**Postulancy** – see **Candidacy**.

**Poverty** – one of the vows taken by members of a religious community. Poverty as a vow does not mean being poor; it means sharing possessions in common with the community. Religious men and women who live this vow only have things that can help them in their mission. *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Reconciliation** – another name for the sacrament of confession. *(Unit I: Lesson 1)*

**Religious community, Religious order, Religious congregation** – a group of individuals who make vows to live their Christian faith together in a particular way as members of a community. *(Unit II Lesson 1, Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Religious superior** – the head of a **religious community** *(Unit II: Lesson 1)*

**Sacred bond** – the bond of love and responsibility between a man, a woman, and God that becomes a reality in the sacrament of **marriage**, when the man and woman vow before God to live faithfully as husband and wife for the rest of their lives. *(Unit I: Lesson 5)*

**Sanctification** – to sanctify means to make holy, or to bring closer to union with God *(Unit II: Lesson 2)*

**Seminarians** – men who are preparing to be ordained as priests *(Unit II: Lesson 4)*

**Seminary** – a special school for men who are preparing to be ordained as priests *(Unit II: Lesson 4)*

**Single life** – living in the world without being married, ordained, or joining a religious community; it can be either a stage of life that a person will live until God calls them to another vocation, or a permanent vocation for those who remain single their whole lives. Single people enjoy a special freedom to serve God and others with their whole hearts. *(Unit I: Lesson 4)*

**Sister** – a member of an active or apostolic community of women *(Unit III: Lesson 1)*

**Spirituality** – a particular way of living one's faith in God. Prayer and service are two important parts of every Christian disciple's spirituality. *(Unit II: Lesson 2)*

**Temporary Vows** – vows that a religious brother or sister make during their formation before making their **final vows**. These vows last only one year while the person continues training. At the end of the each year, if they choose to remain part of the community, they renew their temporary vows until they are ready to make their final vows. *(Unit III: Lesson 3)*

**Vocation** – a plan or way of life that God invites us to live. *(Unit I: Lesson 2)*

**Vocation Director** – a person whose job it is to help others discern if God is calling them to the vocation of the priesthood or religious life. *(Unit III: Lesson 3)*

**Vow** – a special promise made to God to live in a particular way *(Unit I: Lesson 5, Unit II: Lesson 1, Unit III: Lesson 1)*

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*Then I heard  
the voice of the  
Lord saying,  
“Whom shall I  
send? Who will  
go for us?” “Here  
I am,” I said,  
“send me!”*

Isaiah 7:8

A single person has many opportunities to live the call to serve others; the only thing they need is a generous heart and openness to the Lord's call. God gives each person the opportunity to live this unique vocation in a holy way.

These activities and many others offer a single person the opportunity to serve God and others as a part of their vocation.

In recent years, many new groups and movements have sprung up to help **lay people**, both married and single, to live their discipleship more intensely through prayer, service, and spiritual growth. There are also various volunteer organizations that offer exciting opportunities for people to give one or two years in full-time service to the Church. Many young people choose to volunteer after graduating from high school or college.

Some religious communities (also called congregations) have branches specifically for lay people who wish to live like members of the community. For example, secular Franciscans follow the example of St. Francis in his detachment from material things. Third Order Carmelites seek to live their vocation by praying and listening to the word of God. There are many other religious communities that have ways for lay people to be involved and grow within their vocation to marriage or the single life.

*A lay person is  
someone who  
is not a deacon,  
priest, or bishop.*

## THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY

**Chastity** is a very important part of every vocation because it prepares a person for whatever God might be calling them to in the future. Chastity also helps single people to live their single vocation to the fullest extent. Chastity is the virtue that guides the way we express love with our bodies. Our bodies are a gift from God, so we must learn to use them appropriately and not to disrespect our own bodies or other people's.

**Chastity** is the  
virtue which controls  
our sexual desires,  
according to one's  
particular vocation.

An important part of chastity is that all sexual relations are meant to be between a man and a woman who are married. Our faith teaches us that sexual acts outside of marriage are immoral and sinful. In the Bible, St. Paul says, “Shun immorality...Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?” (1 Cor 6:18-19).

Chastity frees one's heart in a special way, increasing our love for God and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Everyone is called to live the virtue of chastity, even married people by their faithfulness to their spouse. “People should cultivate chastity in the way

that is suited to their state in life – which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner.”<sup>6</sup>

Chastity also requires us to live the virtue of **modesty**. Modesty means respecting your own body by not exposing it inappropriately and not using it to cause others to fall into temptation. It also means respecting others by avoiding the temptation to look at or desire their bodies disrespectfully. The Church teaches us that “modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing.”<sup>7</sup> Modesty also helps us avoid unhealthy curiosity.

**Modesty** protects  
our most intimate  
selves. This means  
being decent and  
appropriate in dress,  
words, and behavior.

Why should we practice modesty? We should do so because “modesty protects the intimate center of a person.”<sup>8</sup> Your “intimate center” is your whole self, what you think and feel; it is your personhood, and what makes you who you are. When you expose your body by dressing or acting inappropriately, it causes people to disrespect who you really are. People

no longer look at you as a person; they look at you as an object, a thing. This can affect the way people treat you, and the respect they have for you. By dressing and acting modestly, you express that you are a unique, intelligent person who is beautiful on the inside, as well as on the outside, and that you must be respected for who you are.



## JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus is the prime example of a single person living in the world. Jesus combined an active ministry with private prayer showing us that we too can do our jobs, go to school, have friends and yet still lead a holy life if we turn to God regularly for our guidance and direction. He showed us that this is the best way to find fulfillment on earth and in Heaven.

*Long live Christ the King!*

## SAINTS WHO WERE SINGLE



**St. Maria Gorretti** (b.1890) was born in Italy and was murdered by a young man in 1902 when she bravely resisted his forced sexual advances. On her deathbed, she forgave him. Her murderer experienced a conversion because of her example, and when he was released from prison, he testified on her behalf at her beatification. Maria was declared a saint in 1950, and is the Patron Saint of Teenagers.



**St. Kateri Tekawitha** (b. 1656) was born to a Christian mother in the Mohawk tribe. Kateri was orphaned at age four and raised by her uncle who did not like Christianity. Her family tried to force her to marry but she felt called to remain single in service to God. At age nineteen, she asked a priest to baptize her and escaped to Canada where she dedicated the rest of her life to God.



**José Luis Sanchez del Rio** (b. 1915) lived in Mexico at a time when the government was persecuting Catholics. He joined the Cristeros, a group of Mexican Catholics who fought against the religious persecution. At the age of 14, he was captured by the federal army and put in prison. The soldiers told José Luis that if he did not give up his faith in Christ they would execute him, but he was not afraid and he kept his faith in Jesus Christ. The soldiers cut the skin from his feet and forced him to walk through the town. They would stop along the way and tell him that if he would cry out “Death to Christ the King” they would spare his life. Every time he answered, “Long live Christ the King!” Finally, they arrived at the cemetery and they asked him one last time to deny his faith. He refused and cried out “Long live Christ the King!” He was then shot and killed for bearing witness to his faith in Jesus Christ. José Luis has been declared a martyr and was beatified in November 2005 on the feast of Christ the King.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. What are some ways that you, as a single person, can avoid selfishness? Based on your talents and the needs of your community, how could you be the most helpful? What are the benefits of being unselfish?
2. What are some ways that single people live the virtue of chastity? How can you be modest in the way you dress and act?
3. It is natural to be attracted to other people. What is the respectful way to think about and treat someone who we are attracted to? How does the way that we look at other people affect our ability to live modestly?

### VOCABULARY

Single life  
Lay people  
Chastity  
Modesty



## Write about it!

### Journal options:

- Chastity is a great Christian teaching that the world does not always understand. Do you ever see movies, television shows, or magazines that show lifestyles that are not chaste or modest? How does this affect the way people look at and think about other people? What would the world be like if nobody respected each other or if everyone treated each other as objects instead of human persons?
- Many young single people volunteer for a year in various church-related organizations around the world. Would you ever consider spending a year or two doing volunteer service? Describe what type of service you would be interested in doing.



## Becoming a Good Spouse

If you plan on being married in the future, what qualities would you look for in a husband or wife? Honesty? Kindness? Trustworthiness? If you want these things in a spouse then they will probably want them from you. So if you plan on being married in the future, start becoming a good spouse now.

# The Vocation of Marriage



## GOD HAS A PLAN FOR MARRIED PEOPLE

Louis Martin and Zelig Guerin were both good Catholics. They loved God so much that they wanted to dedicate their whole lives to serving God. Louis wanted to be a monk, and Zelig wanted to be a nun. However, both discovered that God had different plans for them. God was calling them to the vocation of **marriage**. They eventually met each other, fell in love, married, and raised five children.

All five daughters became nuns, the most famous being St. Therese of the Child Jesus, who is called the Little Flower. The reason we have this famous saint today is because her parents realized that the most important thing in life was to follow their vocation to marriage.

Married people are called by God to: become saints, help their spouses to become holy, teach their children to love God, and be witnesses of their Christian faith in the world.

## WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

The vocation of marriage is a special gift that God chooses to give many people. In marriage, a man and a woman promise before God to love and honor each other for the rest of their lives.

In the Gospel, Jesus compares His love for the Church to the love of a groom for His bride. This is why a good Christian marriage reminds us of the true love that Christ has for the Church and helps us to understand it better. Christ gave up everything, leaving his home and his mother and eventually giving up his whole life for us, the Church. In the same way, the Bible tells us that “a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This holds true for both husbands and wives. Just as Christ gave himself completely for his Church, a man and a woman give themselves to each other. This gift of self is pure, sincere, beautiful, and complete for as long as they live.

Marriage is more than just a promise of love. In the Catholic Church, marriage is a sacrament. It is a **sacred bond** of love and responsibility between a man, a woman, and God. In the sacrament of matrimony, the man and woman make special promises to God called **vows** to live faithfully as husband and wife for the rest of their lives. God unites them in a sacred bond and fills their souls with the graces they need to love each other and form a family. When a man and a woman are married in the sacrament of matrimony, they invite God to be the center of their family and they offer their love for each other as a gift to Him.





## THE SPECIAL MISSION

Married people are called to help each other to get to Heaven. God created Eve as a “helper” for Adam because He knew that two people who were united in love could help each other to get to Heaven (Gen 2:18-25). A husband and wife are also called to teach others to love God, especially their children and the people around them. A married couple is like a team that together bears witness to God’s love in the world by the way they live out their faith at home, at work, and in the Church. Like single people, married couples can also serve God in church-related careers or as volunteer workers.

The vocation to marriage also includes the children that may be raised by a married couple.

One of the greatest miracles is the ability to bring children into the world and to cooperate with God in forming them as Christian disciples. If the man and woman truly love each other, their love will extend to any children that God sends them, and their hearts will be open to the gift of every new life. Louis and Zelig Martin did not know that their youngest child would be a great saint. They simply welcomed the new baby that God gave them and taught her to love God.

Parents are, by word and example, the first ones to teach their children about God. The Church teaches that the family is like a small household church, which is called the “**domestic church.**” Each family is a domestic church where its members learn how to be good Christians: to love, to forgive, and to help others. God entrusts little children to married couples so that they will love them and teach them the Christian Faith. Parents provide for the material and emotional needs of each child. Most importantly they should care for the eternal life of each soul by helping them fulfill the vocation that they are called to, especially nourishing any religious vocations their children might have.

It is the task of each family to form Christian disciples and it is the task of every Christian disciple to build a better world. Therefore, if every Christian family lived as God intended, the world would be a much better place.

*The Lord  
God said:  
“It is not  
good for the  
man to be  
alone.”*

*Genesis 2:18*



## HOW DO I KNOW WHOM TO MARRY?



Marriage is not only a matter of marrying someone who is attractive and fun, but finding someone who will truly help you to love God. If a couple agrees to be disciples of Jesus Christ, it will help them to stay together for the rest of their lives. So it is very important to find the right person to marry, who shares the same Christian faith that you do.

Those who know that they are called to marriage may ask themselves, “How do I know who is the right spouse for me?” If marriage is a God-given vocation, God will be the guide to help us

fulfill it. You must ask Him for help in choosing a spouse. Christ tells us, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7). Jesus assures us that if we trust in Him, He will help guide us in finding a good person to marry.

**Vow:**  
a special  
promise made  
to God

## WHAT IS A DEACON?

Being a **deacon** is a special vocation that is open to both married and single men. Deacons serve the church by assisting the bishop and priests. Deacons may read the Gospel and preach during the Mass. They may also perform baptisms, witness marriages and lead wake and funeral services. They cannot celebrate the Mass, hear confessions, or anoint the sick.

Like any vocation, a man must determine whether God is calling him to be a deacon. Before a man can become a deacon there is a preparation period in which they learn about the faith and about service in the Church. A man is ordained a deacon through the sacrament of **Holy Orders**. This is the same sacrament that priests and bishops receive but in a different degree. A deacon is ordained for life, but only to the ministry of the diaconate, which is different from the priesthood.



## EXAMPLES OF MARRIED SAINTS



**Venerable Pierre Toussaint** (d.1853) was a black slave who moved to New York with his Catholic slave owners, the Berards. When the Berards became poor, Pierre supported them through his income as a hairdresser. Granted his freedom, he married and became well-known for his charitable acts. He is buried with honor in New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral.

**St. Thomas More** (d.1535) was married with four children when he was Lord Chancellor of England under King Henry VIII. The King refused to recognize the Pope as head of the Church and wanted to create his own church by declaring himself the head of the Church of England. Thomas wanted to remain faithful to the Catholic Church, so he resigned his position in the government. King Henry viewed this as an act of treason and had Thomas arrested, put in prison, and finally sentenced him to death. Before he was beheaded, Thomas More declared that he was "the King's good servant but God's first."<sup>9</sup>





**St. Gianna Molla** (d.1962) was a married doctor, born in Italy, who gave special attention to mothers, their babies, the poor, and the elderly. When pregnant with her fourth child, she was advised to abort the baby to save her own life. She refused to kill her baby even though she knew it would mean giving up her own life. She died seven days after giving birth to a healthy baby girl. Her daughter read this prayer at her beatification: “Thank you mother, for having given me life two times: in conception and when you permitted me to be born, deciding for my life. Intercede and help always all mothers and all families that come to you with confidence.”<sup>10</sup>

### LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. How can a married person help their spouse to go to Heaven? How can they help their children become holy?
2. What are some ways we can help our parents be good mothers and fathers? How can we help them be good husbands and wives?
3. What are some characteristics that would make someone a good spouse? What are some things married people can do to build a strong family?

#### VOCABULARY

Marriage  
Vow  
Sacred bond  
Domestic church  
Deacon  
Holy Orders

### Write about it!



#### Journal options:

- If God called you to marriage, describe what your ideal family would be like. What are some challenges involved in raising a Christian family? How can these challenges be overcome?
- In the Bible, St. Paul writes “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her” (Eph 5:25-26). What does this tell us about the love of Christ for the Church? What does it tell us about the love between a husband and wife?

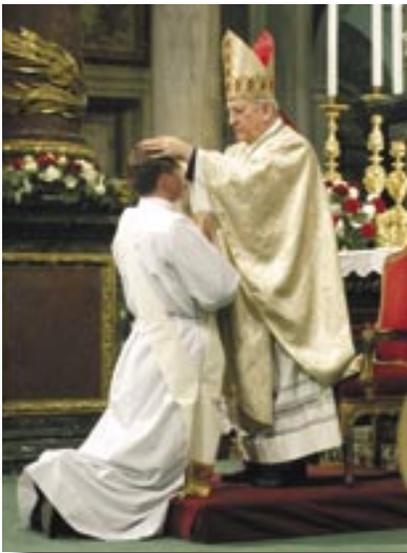
# Priesthood: What is a Priest?

## THE GIFT OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Jesus Christ knew that it would be difficult to live the Christian life here on earth, so He gave us the Church and the sacraments to help us along the way. He also chose a special group of men from among his disciples to guide the Church and celebrate the sacraments. These men were the first priests. Today, he continues to call certain men to the priesthood so that they can fulfill these special duties. All people are called to be disciples of Christ, but those who God chooses for the priesthood imitate him in a particular way. They live like Jesus did here on earth by completely dedicating themselves to serving the Church.

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit.*

*John 15:16*



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## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

The priesthood is so important to the life of the Church that becoming a priest is one of the seven sacraments. This sacrament is known as Holy Orders. When a man receives this sacrament, we say he is ordained, and the ceremony is known as an **ordination**. In the sacrament of Holy Orders, a priest is ordained by a bishop to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ in a special way. "A priest is a man chosen and called by Christ from among God's faithful people to serve them in the person of Christ, the head of the Church, by forming, leading, teaching and sanctifying them as a community."<sup>11</sup>

## PRIESTLY PROMISES

In order to fully dedicate himself to his mission, a priest promises to live in a way that will help him be more Christ-like.

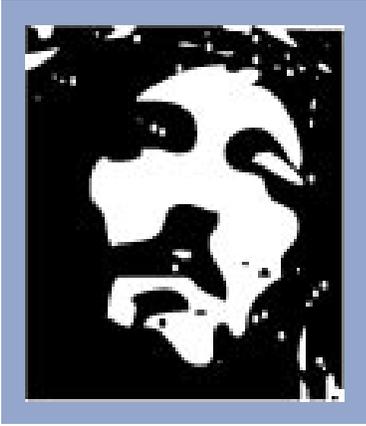
Before he is ordained a priest, a man makes three special promises: he promises to pray certain priestly prayers everyday, he promises **obedience** to his bishop, and he promises to remain celibate his whole life.

The promise of daily prayer is an important part of a priest's life. Prayer helps a priest to remain close to God and connected in prayer to the people he serves. Every single day priests say a special set of prayers called the Liturgy of the Hours. We will more learn about this in the next lesson.

Another priestly promise is obedience to the bishop. Just as a priest guides the people he serves, he looks to his bishop and the pope for guidance because God has called them to lead the Church. A priest promises to remain loyal to his bishop and to follow the teachings of the Church. Obedience does not mean blindly following orders; it means paying



Thy  
Be I



attention to God's will and for a priest, part of doing God's will is obeying his bishop.

Priests promise to live a celibate lifestyle as part of their commitment to God. **Celibacy** means not being married. Just as married people promise to give their whole self, body and soul, to their spouses, celibate priests promise to give themselves completely to God.

God gives priests special help to live this calling, despite any limitations or shortcomings they might have. God knows that they are not perfect. God calls whomever He wants, and promises to help them live their promises no matter what their strengths or weaknesses. A priest is only able to live his priestly promises with Jesus' help. Even if a priest had lots of personality, intelligence, and skill, without Jesus' help, he would be unable to fulfill his mission as a priest.

## THE PRIESTLY MISSION

By definition, the priest is called to be, like Jesus, a priest, prophet and king: a priest to offer the sacrifice of the Mass, a prophet to preach the faith, and a king to lead his people to Heaven like a shepherd guides his flock. Jesus Christ is the one acting in and through the priest when he celebrates the Mass or any of the sacraments. Whenever a priest administers the sacraments, he acts *in persona Christi*, which is a Latin phrase meaning "in the person of Christ." The main responsibility of a priest is to allow the Lord's presence and grace to work through him for the salvation of all people and for God's glory.

A priest brings Christ to us when he:

- Celebrates the Mass, transforming the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.
- Preaches and teaches about Jesus
- Anoints the sick and the dying
- Forgives sins through the sacrament of Reconciliation
- Baptizes new Christians
- Celebrates marriages
- Consoles the grieving, sad and depressed
- Performs wake and funeral services
- Receives new Catholics into the Church
- Prays with and for his parish
- Cares for the poor and homebound



*The "arch" before the words diocese or bishop denote the importance and large number of people in a diocese, governed by the bishop.*

## DIOCESAN PRIESTS IN SERVICE TO THE CHURCH

There are two basic types of priests: diocesan priests and religious priests. A diocesan priest serves within a geographical area called a diocese (or archdiocese) usually as a pastor or an associate pastor of a parish.

Diocesan priests live their vocation focused on the needs of the people in their parish and diocese. A diocesan priest promises obedience to the bishop of the diocese. Most diocesan priests live and minister in parishes, although some serve in hospitals or universities, some teach in schools, some work in the diocese's offices, and some serve in other special assignments such as chaplains for police or fire departments.

As a pastor, a diocesan priest is called to be a shepherd for God's people. A pastor plays an important part in the lives of the people in his parish. He shares in their times of joy, such as baptisms and weddings, as well as in difficult times, during sickness and death. The pastor helps to run the parish and its programs. The diocesan priest is called to live in and among God's people everyday as their shepherd.

## PRIESTHOOD WITHIN A RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION

A religious priest is a priest that belongs to a religious community. A religious community (also called a religious order or congregation) is a group of individuals who make **vows** to live their Christian faith together in a particular way. They focus their service to the Church by fulfilling a specific mission.

A religious priest is ordained as part of a **religious community** and makes special promises called vows that are different than a diocesan priest's promises. Religious priests take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The vow of poverty means that they do not own material possessions for themselves. Instead they share things in common with their community, such as houses or cars. They also use some basic things, such as clothes, shoes, or watches that will help them in their service to the Church. The vow of obedience that a religious priest makes is to follow the head of the religious community, known as the **religious superior**. The vow of chastity is similar to the promise that diocesan priests makes to remain celibate, meaning he does not get married.

Rather than serve a specific diocese, religious priests work with their religious community in their common mission spread over a wide area, perhaps even worldwide. A religious priest administers the sacraments. He works with other priests and religious brothers in a variety of ministries. Their work may include parish ministry, missionary work, work with the poor, counseling, vocational guidance, teaching, or hospital chaplaincy. Religious priests and communities are the focus of the next unit.



Priestly vows:  
*Prayer*  
*Celibacy*  
*Obedience*

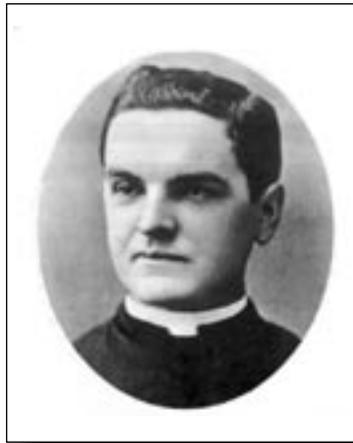


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*Remember that you are chosen from among God's people and appointed to act for them in relation to God. Do your part in the work of Christ the Priest with genuine joy and love, and attend to the concerns of Christ before your own.*

– Rite of Ordination<sup>12</sup>

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## SAINTLY PRIESTS

**Fr. Michael McGivney** (d.1890) saw the need for a worldwide organization of men who could help the Church support widows, orphans and other needy individuals. To accomplish this work, he founded the Knights of Columbus, the largest organization of its kind in the world with over 12,000 councils. Fr. McGivney was born and raised in Connecticut and he played an important role in the history of American Catholicism. The process for declaring his sainthood has begun.



**Fr. Nelson Baker** (d.1936) lived in an era when many families were too poor to care for all of their children and were sometimes forced to abandon them. To provide these children with a loving home, Fr. Baker established an orphanage. His orphanage became so well known that children sometimes arrived by train with a note pinned to their coat which read, “Fr. Baker’s, Lackawanna” (New York). During the Great Depression he served over a million free meals a year to those suffering from hunger. He has been declared a Servant of God, the first step on the road to being declared a saint.

### VOCABULARY

Ordination  
Obedience  
Celibacy  
Vows  
In persona Christi  
Religious community  
Religious superior

### LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. How did the priests mentioned above contribute to the Church? How were their lives important?
2. In what way has your parish priest, or any priest, affected your life?
3. What would happen to the Church, the People of God, if there were no priests?
4. What are some ways that priests follow the example of Christ?



### Write about it!

#### Journal options:

- What are some reasons to be thankful to God for the priesthood?
- Write a “Thank You” letter to God, or directly to your favorite priest for all the things that the priestly vocation does for us.

# The Spirituality of Diocesan Priesthood

## PRIESTHOOD: A CHALLENGE OF LOVE

“To sail when the wind is favorable is no great thing, but when the wind is unfavorable, it becomes a real challenge. In a society that pursues success, a career, [excessive pleasure], financial standing, the young man who responds to the priestly call tries to orient his life another way, seeking not what is [passing] but enduring values. And this is the challenge that young men love: to go against the current.”<sup>13</sup> Priests face many joys and challenges in living out their vocation to bring Christ to the world. A priest receives his strength from his spiritual life and his relationship with Jesus Christ.

*“Do not be afraid.”*

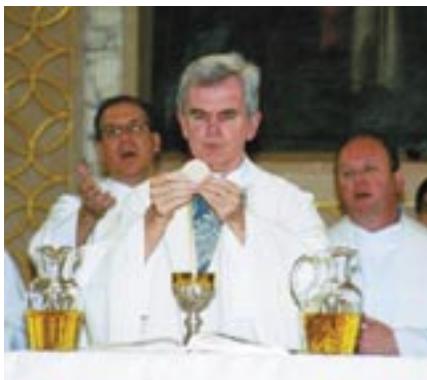
## A LIFE OF PRAYER AND SERVICE

A priest's life is essentially one of prayer and service. These two parts make up a priest's **spirituality**. He prays so that he can serve with the strength and inspiration he needs. He serves so that God may work through him to assist His people. The spirituality of a diocesan priest is centered on his personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the call to bring Him to the members of the local faith community, his parish. The diocesan priest is called to be in and among the people of his parish, for his own fulfillment and the benefit and **sanctification** of his parishioners. His life is marked by the characteristics of love, generosity and self-sacrifice.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A priest must be a spiritual man, whose trust and hope are solely in the Lord. They give a witness of how we should trust in God above all things. A priest must be a man whose faith rests firmly in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His joy in the risen Lord comes from his experience of Jesus working in his own life. This allows him to stand firm and strong as he leads the Christians under his care.

A priest receives great joy from serving others, but he must remember that at the root of his vocation is his relationship with God. To nourish it and keep it strong he has to pray every day. Here are some of the many ways a priest prays each day:



### **Celebrating the Eucharist.**

During the Mass, a priest offers up his prayers and our own prayers to God through His Son Jesus in the celebration of the Eucharist.

**Praying the Liturgy of the Hours.** Priests pray the **Liturgy of the Hours**. This is a series of prayers made up of psalms, scripture passages, and intercessions that help a priest to lift his eyes towards God at certain times throughout the day.

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.** Adoration is a way to spend time with Jesus, who is present in the Eucharist, listening and praying without the distractions of everyday life. Every day of the sixty years of his priesthood, Archbishop Fulton Sheen prayed for one hour in front of a tabernacle.

**Features of a priest's life:**  
*Love*  
*Generosity*  
*Self-sacrifice*

**Praying the Rosary.** The rosary is a **meditation** on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The rosary is also a way to ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for our needs and for the Church.

In addition to daily prayer, a priest reads religious or spiritual books. He goes on an annual spiritual retreat to renew himself and his ministry. A priest should also have a spiritual director with whom he can talk about his faith and about spiritual matters. Priests also go to confession on a regular basis.

## AT THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

A diocesan priest must be a man at the service of others, “For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). As Jesus taught us, the greatest gift we can give is to lay down our life for a friend. Priests lay down their lives for their people every day. In little ways, they give their time, energy, and lives to those who need help, thus being like Christ here on earth.

Diocesan priests live their unique spirituality in and among the people they serve. All people are called to a relationship with Jesus Christ, to a life of prayer and service, and so the priest is an example and a guide for others to follow. A priest is with his parishioners in all the moments of joy and sadness that come throughout their lives. He is there, in the role of a shepherd, like Jesus, to lead and accompany God’s people on their journey of faith. The priest strives to increase the holiness of the people of God so they may in turn sanctify the world. In growing in his own spiritual life, he becomes more like Christ, and is a visible sign to other people of happiness in this life and of our final goal: eternal life.

**Meditation:** *A way of prayer in which we focus our minds on a religious image, idea or scripture passage.*

### LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Why is it important for every Christian disciple to pray daily? Why is it especially important for a priest to pray daily?
2. What benefits does the priest get out of prayer? What would happen if a priest stopped praying?
3. How does a priest’s prayer life affect his ability to serve? What are some ways that your parish priest serves your community?

### VOCABULARY

Spirituality  
Sanctification  
Consecration  
Liturgy of the Hours  
Meditation

## Write about it!

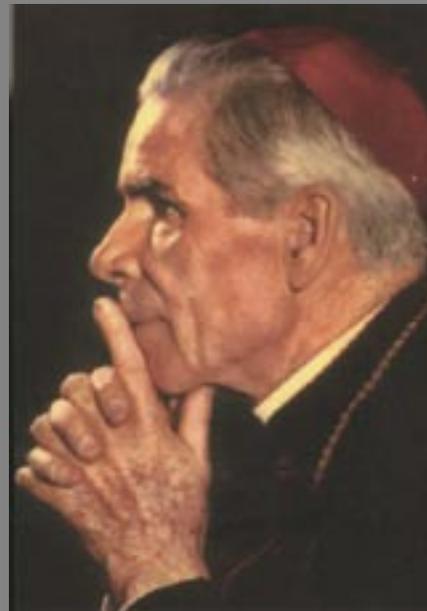


### Journal options:

- Write this bible passage in your journal and memorize it:  
“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (Jn 15:13).  
What are some small ways that you can give your life to serve others everyday?
- Write how this bible passage applies to the priesthood. How does it apply to the vocation of marriage? What about the single life?

## Can You Solve This?

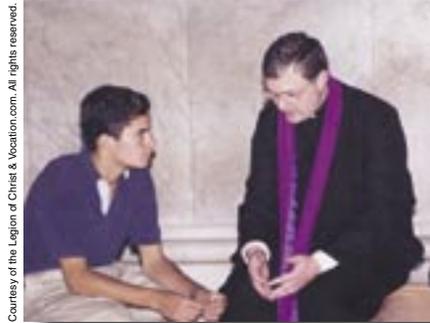
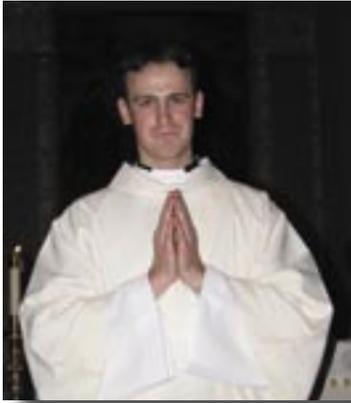
If Archbishop Fulton Sheen prayed in front of a tabernacle for one hour every day of his priesthood, and his priesthood was 60 years, how many hours did he spend adoring Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? (Hint: there are 365 days in every year. Also, there is no need to calculate for leap years unless you want to.)



# Witness of a Priest

## INTRODUCTION

We have learned a lot about the mission and spirituality of a priest. Today, we welcome a diocesan priest who will tell us what it is like to live his vocation, and how he discovered what God wanted him to do in his life. At the end of the discussion, there will be an opportunity to ask Father any questions that you may have about the priesthood.



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Courtesy of Frank Casella.



## SUMMARY

Priests are chosen by God to serve God's people in the Church. A priest is like every other disciple trying to follow the Lord as best he can by living the command to love God and love his neighbor as himself. Ultimately, a priest is trying like everyone else to be holy and become a saint. The importance of prayer and regular reception of the sacraments are as important for a priest as they are for all disciples who desire to grow closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Write about it!



#### Journal options:

- What did you learn about priests today?
- How did the talk help you understand the life of a priest?
- What was one thing that you could relate to in what he said?

# How Does a Man Become a Priest?

## COME AND SEE

John and Andrew were two friends from a small town. One day, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, they were standing near the road when Jesus walked past them. Something about Him caught their attention, though they did not quite know what it was, so they began to follow him. As they began to follow Him, Jesus turned and asked them, "What do you seek?" They wanted to find out who He was and where He came from; they wanted to learn all about Him, so they responded "Rabbi, where are you staying?" Jesus wanted them to experience being Christian disciples for themselves so He invited them to follow Him saying, "Come and see!" From that day forward they became disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus makes the same invitation to any young man who is interested in following Jesus more closely in the priesthood, or even just learning more about it. Jesus invites them to come and see what it is like, try it out, and discover if it is their vocation.



Come  
and See!

Read John 1:35-39

## STEPS TO BECOME A PRIEST, SISTER, OR BROTHER

**Step 1:** Find out! Learn about the different kinds of priests, sisters, and brothers to see if you might be interested in a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

**Step 2:** Act! Contact a **Vocation Director** and take part in vocation activities in order to learn more about the diocesan priesthood or religious communities.

**Step 3:** Join! Join your diocese or a religious order to begin training to be a priest, sister or brother. During this time of preparation you can discover whether or not it is your vocation. This is a rewarding experience, even if you discover that it is not your vocation.



## THE SEMINARY

Men who are preparing to be ordained as priests attend a special school called a **seminary**. These men are called **seminarians**. Historically, there have been three types of seminaries. The first kind is a high school seminary for boys considering the priesthood. The second is called a minor seminary or college seminary and it is for college-aged men who are interested in the priesthood. The high school and college seminaries are not required but highly recommended for boys and young men interested in being priests. This early preparation is a way for them to explore their vocation with other people who are also **discerning** the priesthood.

The third is a major seminary for seminarians who have

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finished college. A major seminary is the final preparation for seminarians before becoming priests. These seminarians take classes to learn about our Catholic faith, as well as classes to practice celebrating mass and hearing confessions.

Many dioceses do not have their own seminaries, so they send their seminarians to minor or major seminaries located elsewhere.

In addition to classes, seminarians learn how to pray and are trained in spiritual practices. They begin serving at parishes or as chaplains in various places including hospitals, jails, nursing homes, and juvenile detention centers. They also enjoy sports and other school activities just like everyone else.

Being a seminarian does not automatically make someone a priest. Studying at a seminary simply means that a man is open to being called to the

priesthood and wants to try it out to see if it fits. By attending a seminary, a man opens his heart to accept a possible vocation and gives to God a greater opportunity to call him. Seminaries are environments in which men can openly consider and discern a possible calling to the priesthood while receiving the support they need to do it.

During this time, some seminarians may determine that God is not calling them to be priests. They are free to go and find whatever vocation God wants for them. These men are usually glad that they were in the seminary because it allowed them to deepen their faith, receive a good education and develop life-long friendships. They know that they have been open and generous with God and they are confident that He will continue to guide them.

A seminarian who does seek the diocesan priesthood is ordained by a bishop after he completes his training at the major seminary. His ordination to the priesthood includes the promise of a life-long commitment to serve the people of God as a priest of Jesus Christ in the local diocese. At his ordination, he joyfully reaches the goal of his preparation, but his adventure is just beginning!

*To **discern** means to try to discover with God's help something that takes time to sense or understand.*

***Discernment** is the process of discovering your vocation.*



### The Seminaries of the Archdiocese of Chicago:

**Mundelein Seminary**

[www.usml.edu](http://www.usml.edu)

**St. Joseph College Seminary**

[www.stjoseph.luc.edu](http://www.stjoseph.luc.edu)

**Archbishop Quigley Preparatory Seminary High School**

[www.quigley.org](http://www.quigley.org)

**Archdiocese of Chicago vocation website:**

[www.chicagopriest.org](http://www.chicagopriest.org)



# Giving God the first chance.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

### Activity A: Find out!

Imagine yourself in the future, beginning to think that God is calling you to a religious vocation. Even if you never thought about it before, it is possible that it could happen! Listed below are some ways to find out more information about what a vocation really means and how to pursue it.

**Instructions:** Choose three options that you would pursue in order to find out more information about a religious vocation.

- Ask my Religious Education teacher
- Ask my school principal
- Call a Vocation Director
- Search the Internet for vocation websites
- Write a letter to a Vocation Director
- Check ads in Catholic magazines or newspapers
- Ask my parish priest
- Ask a religious sister
- Email a Vocation Director
- Read a book or magazine about vocations
- Ask my Mom or Dad
- Ask my friends or classmates

### Activity B: Just do it!

If you think you may have a religious vocation, even if it is just a feeling or a hunch, it is important that you do something about it and take steps to pursue it. Below are some ways that will help you learn more about the lives of priests, sisters, and brothers.

**Instructions:** Which of these would you find interesting to do right now or in the future?

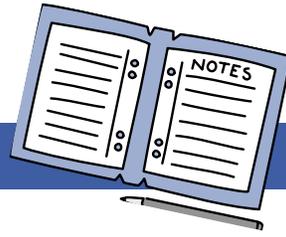
- Volunteer alongside sisters, brothers, or priests at your parish or elsewhere to learn more about what they do.
- Have a conversation with a religious sister, brother or priest. Find out what they do and how they live.
- Go on a retreat weekend for people who want to learn more about being sisters, brothers or priests.
- Join a service program and work alongside sisters, brothers and priests as a full-time volunteer for a year.
- Visit a seminary or convent where people prepare for the priesthood or religious life. Take a tour and see what it is like to live there.
- Find out about the prayer life of priests, sisters and brothers. Pray with them or get a copy of their prayers and pray them to see if their spiritual way of life fits you.
- Read about the lives of sisters, brothers and priests in books, magazines, or on the internet to learn about how they lived.

#### VOCABULARY

Vocation Director  
Discern  
Seminary  
Seminarians



## Write about it!



### Journal options:

- In preparation to meet the seminarian who will speak tomorrow, each student should prepare at least one question to ask the seminarian.

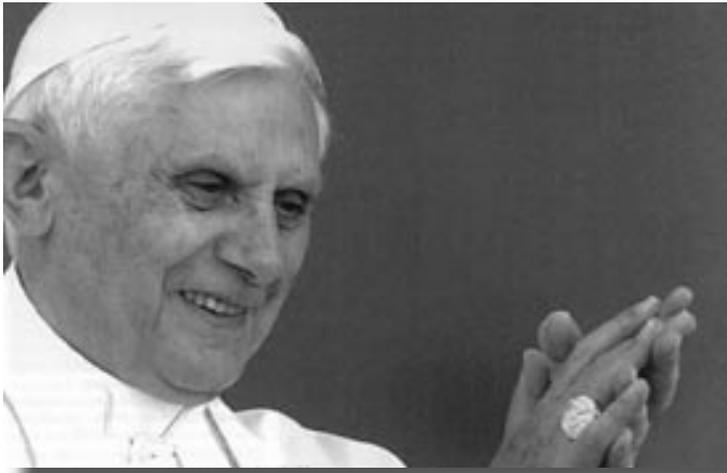


Photo courtesy of Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus

*If we let Christ into our lives,  
we lose nothing, nothing,  
absolutely nothing of what  
makes life free, beautiful  
and great. No! Only in this  
friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship  
is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in  
this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so,  
today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of  
long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people:  
Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives  
you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a  
hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ  
– and you will find true life.*

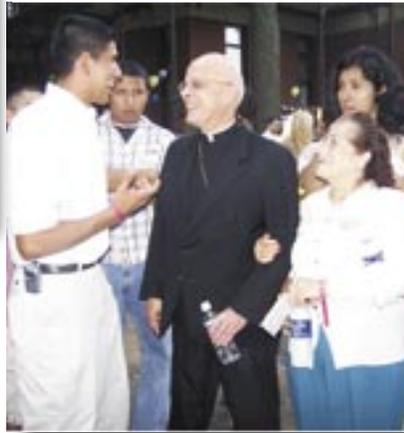
– Pope Benedict XVI<sup>14</sup>

# Witness of a Seminarian

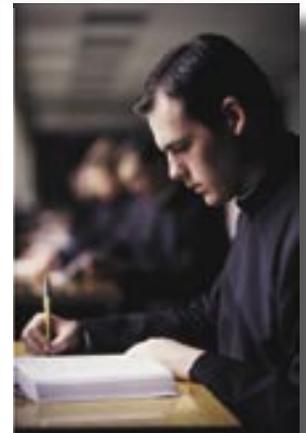
## Adopt a Seminarian

### INTRODUCTION

We have learned about seminarians, and how they prepare to be priests. Today we welcome a seminarian, who will tell us what led him to the seminary and what his life is like. If you have already prepared questions for the seminarian, then you may ask them at the conclusion of his presentation.



**LET'S PRAY ABOUT IT!**  
Adopt a Seminarian Prayer

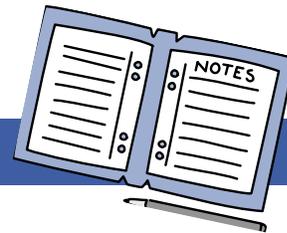


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### SUMMARY

Seminarians are men whom God has called to actively prepare for the priesthood. Some of them are 100% sure that this is the vocation God has blessed them with, while other seminarians are still trying to listen to the voice of the Lord and to determine what God is calling them to do. Seminarians need our prayers and support as much as we need theirs.

### Write about it!



#### Journal options:

- What is one thing you found interesting about the speaker's presentation and why?
- What was one thing that you could relate to in what he said?
- What do you most admire about the seminarian?
- Why is it important to pray for him?