

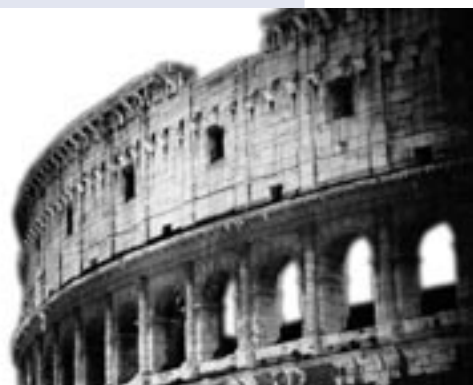
The Vocation to the Religious Life

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 XVI¹⁵



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!

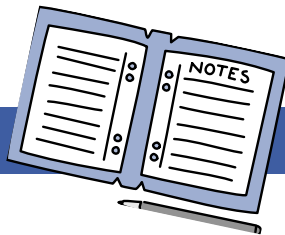
1. Do you have religious sisters, brothers, or priests in your parish? Do you know other religious sisters, brothers, or priests?
2. What are some forms of service that religious communities do that you think would be fun or interesting to do? Why does the Church need some religious orders to be active 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 II¹⁶

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."¹⁷

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."¹⁸



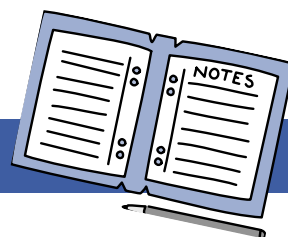
LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

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.

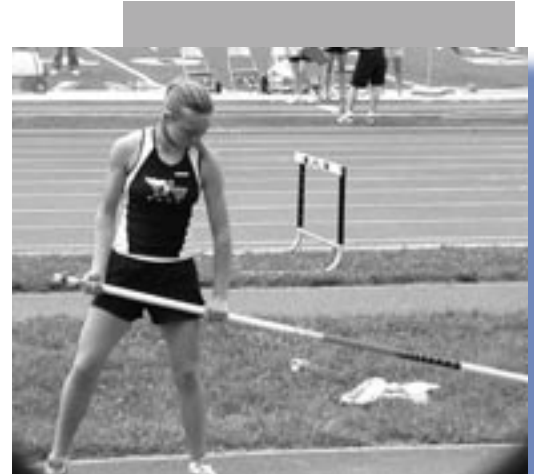
After the novitiate, if the novice decides to stay, they make **temporary vows** of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are called “temporary” because they last only one year while the person continues training. At the end of each year, if they choose to remain part of the community, they renew 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 XVI¹⁹



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?

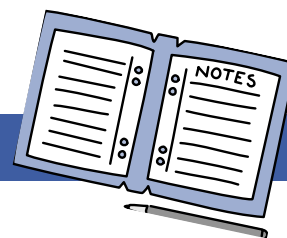
VOCABULARY

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), 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.

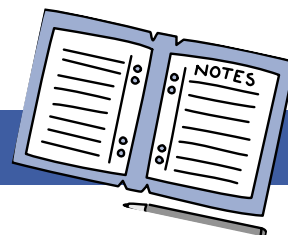


LET'S PRAY ABOUT IT!

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)*

Bibliography

1. Saint John Gabriel Perboyre, cf. Rev. John Freund, C.M., *Lives, times, and words of extraordinary Vincentians*, The Vincentian Center for Church and Society, <http://www.vincenter.org/res/wordperbwords.html>, accessed 01 December 2005.
2. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 35.
3. Archbishop Fulton Sheen, quoted in "Why Confession", *Catholic Faith Alive! Website*, <http://www.cfalive.org/ReadYConfession.htm>, accessed 01 December 2005.
4. Saint Teresa of Avila, *Prayer for Guidance*, cited in Jacquelyn Lindsey, Catholic Prayer Book, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2002.
5. John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 85.
6. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana*, 11.
7. United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, (1994). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (English Translation). William H. Sadlier, Inc., New York, paragraph 2522.
8. *Ibid*, paragraph 2533.
9. From "Letter of Erasmus to Ulrich von Hutten," cf. Greene, James J. and Dolan, John P. *The Essential Thomas More*, New York: Mentor, 1967.
10. Gianna Emmanuela Molla, *Address to the Second World Meeting of the Holy Father with Families*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 October, 1997.
11. Bishop Donald Wuerl, Pastoral Letter on the Ministerial Priesthood, *To walk in the Footsteps of Jesus*, September 30, 1998.
12. United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, *Rite of Ordination*, 14.
13. Archbishop Csaba Ternyiac, from an interview with Vatican radio quoted in the article "Priests Reminded That They Are a Sign of Contradiction: Congress of the Congregation for Clergy Is Under Way in Malta," *Zenit News Agency*, 19 October 2005. Cited from website: <http://www.zenit.org/english>, accessed 01 December, 2005.
14. Benedict XVI, "Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI", *Mass for the Inauguration of the Pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI*, Vatican, 24 April 2005.
15. Benedict XVI, *Address to the Clergy of Rome*, Vatican, 13 May, 2005.
16. John Paul II, *Vita Consacrata*, 109.
17. Attributed to Blessed Damien of Molokai (1840-1889).
18. Archbishop Francis Bible Schulte, *Introduction for the Cause of Mother Delille's Beatification*, November 1997.
19. Benedict XVI, "Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI", *Mass for the Inauguration of the Pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI*, Vatican, 24 April 2005.

inside back cover
blank

