

## **BUILDING A CULTURE OF VOCATIONS BULLETIN INSERTS**

**IN TALKING WITH YOUR CHILDREN**, remember to raise the call to Church ministry? The process of answering God's call begins in childhood. Throughout adolescence and adulthood, the attitudes assumed in childhood begin to influence the course of one's life. A vocation or a talent will not grow to fruition unless it is nurtured in childhood and adolescence by a parent.

**CHILDREN OFTEN TALK** about what they want to be "when they grow up": doctors, lawyers, athletes, nurses, movie stars, teachers, carpenters. They may talk about these roles, but do they ever talk about being a priest, sister or brother? You are the hand of God — you can encourage your children to consider Church ministry.

**WHAT KINDS OF PEOPLE** become priests, sisters or brothers?

Are they people who don't relate well with other people? No. They are people who love others — people who find real satisfaction chatting with a 93-year-old parishioner, holding the hand of a cancer patient, listening to the troubles of a streetwise teen.

They are people with the courage to touch lives, hearts and souls in a high-tech, unchurched world.

Are you that kind of person?

**ALL TOO OFTEN WE** forget to express appreciation to those in service-oriented jobs, including priests, sisters and brothers. We forget because we think, "It's their job to help." Priests and religious aren't superhuman. They need genuine support from those they serve. Let them know how you feel.

**A STUDY COMMISSIONED** by the Knights of Columbus revealed that 75% of Catholic young people who had seriously considered religious life felt they were never encouraged to pursue that goal. Do you know someone who would make a good priest? Why not tell him so? Your encouragement may be all he needs.

**HOLINESS** is a challenge for all of us, whatever our specific vocations. We are called to be holy in all aspects of our lives. This is an ongoing process, often slowed by setbacks. When the saints were alive, they did not regard themselves as saints; rather, they knew they were sinners — and they strived to be saints. The process of becoming holy is, even for saints, filled with struggle. Know you are a sinner; strive to be a saint.

**CHRIST SPOKE** of the talents each one of us has, talents which must not be buried. Our calling is to take those talents, develop them fully, and then use them in establishing His kingdom on earth. Are you using your talents to fulfill your vocation to service? Take some time today to reflect on how you might use your special talents in the service of the Kingdom.

**FAMILY LIFE** can build values integral to a strong vocation — whether to priesthood, religious life or marriage. Teaching your children to value commitment, service and prayer will help them make strong vocation decisions as adults and live out those vocations with success and fulfillment.

**A MISCONCEPTION** among some Catholics is that the priest has an ideal job: he works one day each week, Sunday. They forget that the other six days a week, the priest works long and hard behind the scenes: bringing communion to the sick and elderly, counseling troubled families, visiting school classes, preparing individuals for sacraments. Often the job is frustrating, exhausting and thankless, but always of vital importance. Take some time this week and express appreciation to your priests for the difficult work they do.

**THE LOVING ENVIRONMENT** of a family draws forth an individual's greatest talents and gifts. We've come to realize that creating an atmosphere in which children can hear the Lord's call is one of the most significant responsibilities resting on our shoulders as parents. Our own lives must reflect the presence of God, His Word, and the love He offers His people.

**PARENTS**, do you encourage your children to develop their talents and gifts? Do you encourage your children to think of Church ministry as a possible life choice?

**PRAYER** is a moving force in vocation development. Prayer is effective; prayer is powerful; prayer is essential. Few are called to priesthood or religious life, but all are called to pray for vocations.

"Lord, your Church is in need. Touch the hearts of many within our parish with the desire to serve you. Call forth from this community sisters, brothers, deacons, priests and lay leaders. Help us to live lives that will nurture childhood trust into adult commitment. May this parish be a source of hope and a source of ministers for your Church, your people and your world. Amen."

**JESUS COMMANDED US** to pray for vocations with his words, "Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt. 9:38). Take on prayer for vocations as your personal effort to increase the number of priests, sisters, brothers, and lay ministers.

**WHAT IS A SISTER?** A Sister lives in a religious community that follows a constantly renewed tradition, patterned on the life and teaching of the founder of the community. The work she generally does will depend upon the ministries of that community as influenced by the needs of the Church and its people — for example: teaching, social work, administration, nursing, peace and justice ministry, etc.

If the lifestyle of a Sister sounds attractive to you contact the diocesan vocation office for more information.

**A VOCATION** must be nurtured for a lifetime, not just until ordination or the taking of vows. You can help nurture the vocations of priests, sisters and brothers by praying, listening, and expressing appreciation. A life of service needs support from those served.

**HOW** will you work out your life response to God?

**CELIBACY** is a gift and a promise to love very deeply and to express that love for others without using those physical expressions proper to marriage. The lives of many men and women religious are rich and loving within the context of celibate love as are the lives of happily married couples.

**IN A WORLD** waging war on poverty, men and women religious choose to live as Jesus did — simply. Because they share expenses and try to keep their personal and communal needs simple, they can get along very well on very little. Everyone has a vocation; pray for yours.

**A STUDY** of Catholic young people in the United States and Canada showed that 75% feel they were never encouraged to pursue the religious life.

**DID YOU KNOW...** that just because a young man goes to the Seminary doesn't automatically mean he will become a priest? Those young men are discerning whether they are indeed called into that particular kind of service to our LORD. They would appreciate your prayers for them!

**DID YOU KNOW...** we all have a "vocation"? The way we live our life is our vocation - Marriage, Priesthood, Religious life or the Single life! It is how YOU are meant to live and contribute to the Body of Christ! The important thing is to pray for discernment.

**DID YOU KNOW...** every member of the Church needs to consciously feel responsibility for promoting vocations, especially since God's voice may be drowned out by "other voices?" A wealth of vocation information is available at [uscbb.org](http://uscbb.org), the website of the U S Bishops.

**DID YOU KNOW...** "Nuns" are women religious who have professed solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and live a life of prayer and penance within cloistered communities? There is a difference between a "nun" and a "sister."

**DID YOU KNOW...** "Sisters" are women religious who also have taken traditional religious vows but are engaged in active ministries among the public? They usually live in a convent.

**PARENTS...** don't be afraid to encourage service in your children. Mothers are often the main influence in a man's discernment to the priesthood.

**DID YOU KNOW...** "Brothers" live in Religious Communities. They take vows and promise to use their talents to serve God wherever the Community decides they are needed. Brothers are not ordained.

**WHEN PEOPLE** wish to destroy religion, they begin by attacking the priest, because when there is no longer any priest there is no sacrifice, and where there is no longer any sacrifice, there is no religion. **St. John Vianney**

**THE FIRST WORD OF JESUS** in the Gospel was "come"; the last word of Jesus was "go." **Ven. Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen**

**HOW WOULD YOU REACT** if your son said he wants to be a priest?

- a. I would ask him if he's gone mad, and I would remind him that we must take into consideration what others might think.
- b. I would ask him to give it considerable thought and to have a university degree first.
- c. It would give me one of the greatest joys of my life, and I would support him fully.

**"IF PRAYING ALIENATED YOU**, took you away from your real life, beware: it would not be true prayer," Pope Benedict XVI said. "On the contrary, dialogue with God is the guarantee of truth, of truthfulness with oneself and with others and, therefore, of liberty."

**FAITH AND PRAYER** do not resolve problems, but enable one to address them with a new light and strength, in a way fitting to man, and also more serenely and effectively. **Pope Benedict XVI** Pray to hear God's call.

**IN A WORLD** where human frailty is acutely felt, they (religious men and women) remind us of God and bring Christ's redemptive love to all they meet. **Archbishop Robert J. Carlson of St. Louis**

**"THE SECRET OF A VOCATION**," Pope Benedict XVI told youth, "lies in the capacity and in the joy of distinguishing [God's] voice, of listening to and following His voice. But to do this, it is necessary to accustom our heart to recognize the Lord, to hear Him like a person who is near me and who loves me." Moments of "interior silence in the day-to-day routine" are essential, he said. "But once one has learned to hear this voice and to generously follow it, "one fears nothing, he or she knows and feels that God is with him or her, and that He is a Friend, Father, and Brother."

**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. **Pope Benedict XVI**

**HAVE YOU HEARD** of Serra Clubs? That is Serra Clubs, not Sierra Clubs! The mission of Serra is to pray for, foster and affirm vocations. It seeks to help the faithful understand that each person has a vocation and especially to help vocations to priesthood and religious life. Serra is named after Blessed Junipero Serra, who started a series of missions in California to bring Catholicism to them. Their website is [serraus.org](http://serraus.org).

### **PRAYER FOR MY VOCATION**

Heavenly Father, You have a great and loving plan for our world and for me. I want to do my part in your plan. Help me to see the signs that You give me. Open my heart to respond to You. Grant me the courage to follow your call. Give me the strength to serve You and your people with generosity and love. Amen.

**WE EACH HAVE A VOCATION** – the thing to do is answer the call. We each have something to give. *Dorothy Day*

**ST. THOMAS MERTON** prayed: “My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going, I do not see the road ahead of me...But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.”

**IF YOU ARE MARRIED** or soon to be married, you need to realize that your marriage is your vocation! Your marriage must come before all things except God!

### **WHAT IS A DEACON?**

A permanent deacon is a man ordained—like bishop or priest—to serve as Christ Jesus who “came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The word deacon comes from the Greek word for service: diakonia.

**WHAT QUALIFIES a man to be a Deacon?** Prayer. Humility. Service. Grace. Suffering. Love. A willingness to be changed and to offer his life in unpaid sacrificial service to God, to the Church, to any and all in need of God’s mercy.

### **HOW DOES a man become a Deacon?**

Through a process of discernment and formation that takes about four or five years. If a man is married, his wife and family must also come to embrace the joys and demands of having a husband and father who is a deacon.

**LIFE** is not merely summarized by “what are you willing to die for”, ask yourself “what am I willing to LIVE for?”

**"IT IS REALLY GOD HIMSELF**, the 'LORD of the harvest', who chooses his laborers. His call is always undeserved and unexpected. We are called to cooperate with his providence, and to use the powerful tool which he has placed in our hands: prayer. Jesus said 'Pray the LORD of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest!'"

**ALL THE MEMBERS** of the church are responsible for looking after priestly vocations. "The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community, and they should discharge it principally by living full Christian lives." (*Vat II*) **TO HAVE A FULL CHRISTIAN LIFE**, listen to the Word of God, participate in the Eucharist, exercise charity and pray!

**WHATEVER STATE OF LIFE** God calls us to, we bring with us an assortment of experiences, interests and gifts – however small they seem to us. We are called to put our lives at the service of the LORD and our neighbor, wherever we find ourselves.

Where and how is God calling you to spread His Good News – His Love?

**MISSIONS** - You can learn more about the Pontifical Mission Societies, including the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, at [onefamilyinmission.org](http://onefamilyinmission.org).

**VOCATION DIRECTORS**, whether of a diocese or religious order, are the interface between the congregations and the world. They also need your prayers and perhaps your help. Feel free to suggest a name to your pastor of someone you believe may be interested in pursuing a religious vocation.

**THE CHURCH INVITES** all of us to make a generous gift of our life through married life, intentional single life, priesthood or religious life. In what state can we flourish?

**THE VOCATION OF MARRIAGE** - When the Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a Christian vocation it is saying that the couple's relationship is more than simply their choice to enter a union which is a social and legal institution. A great internet resource is [foryourmarriage.org](http://foryourmarriage.org) – an initiative of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

**WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE PRIESTHOOD?** The answer is the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist! Through it the priest offers the most sublime of sacrifices, that of God the Son to God the Father, applying the merits of Calvary to our lives today.

**HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE MELCHIZEDEK PROJECT?**

In it, Catholic men meet to pray about their lives, listen for God's voice, and get serious about answering His call. The Project's handbook, "*To Save a Thousand Souls*" by Father Brett Brannen, is the ultimate guidebook for discerning a vocation to the Catholic priesthood.

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**SAINTS ARE MODELS FOR US** – and there are many websites offering great information! Some of them are [nccs-bsa.org/activites](http://nccs-bsa.org/activites) and [usccb.org](http://usccb.org).

**DID YOU KNOW** that the website, *missioninscripture.org* has reflections on our daily Scripture readings?

### **PRAYER FOR MARRIED COUPLES:**

God of life and love,  
You give us grace though married life.  
Help us to see You reflected in one another.  
Help us to know You, to serve You, to honor You  
Through all the challenges and joys  
Of this enduring partnership.  
Make us forgiving friends and generous companions.  
Help us guide each other toward You.  
May our union be the wellspring of a deeper union with You.

**IF WE LET CHRIST REIGN IN OUR SOUL**, we will not become authoritarian. Rather we will serve everyone. How I like that word, service! To serve my king and, through him, all those who have been redeemed by his blood. I really wish we Christians knew how to serve, for only by serving can we know and love Christ and make him known and loved. ***St Josemaria Escriva***

**GOOD EXAMPLE** is the most efficacious apostolate. You must be as lighted lanterns and shine like brilliant chandeliers among men. By your good example and your words, animate others to know and love God. ***St. Mary Joseph Rossello***

**THE EUCHARIST SHOULD BE THE HEART** of every vocational journey: it is here that the love of God touches us in Christ's sacrifice, the perfect expression of love, and it is here that we learn ever anew how to live according to the 'high standard' of God's love. Scripture, prayer and the Eucharist are the precious treasure enabling us to grasp the beauty of a life spent fully in service of the Kingdom.

***-Pope Benedict XVI***

**IF YOU WANT TO BE A CHANNEL** - you must first be a reservoir. **St. Bernard** Spiritual reading, study of Scripture and daily Mass help fill that reservoir! There a lot of great books in our Parish Library.

*PRAYERS:*

O Jesus, Savior of the world, sanctify your priests and seminarians.

O Jesus, our great High Priest, hear my humble prayers on behalf of your servants. Give them a deep faith, a bright and firm hope, and a burning love which will ever increase in the course of their life. In their loneliness, comfort them. In their sorrows, strengthen them. In their frustrations, point out to them that it is through suffering that the soul is purified, and show them that they are needed by the Church; they are needed by souls; they are needed for the work of redemption. Amen

O Loving Mother Mary, Mother of Priests and religious, take to your heart your children who are close to you because of the power which they have received to carry on the work of Christ in a world which needs them so much. Be their comfort, be their joy, be their strength, and especially help them to live and to defend the ideals of consecrated celibacy. Amen

**THE GREATEST LOVE STORY** of all time is contained in a tiny white host.  
**Ven. Archbishop Fulton J Sheen.**

**RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES** have bridged the gap between rich and poor for centuries. They have ministered to the poor and helped build community throughout the world. Vocations to religious life are always much needed, people who are willing to spend their lives in this much needed endeavor.  
**Fr Joseph Delargy OCSO:**

**THE CALL TO VOCATION** is God's, not ours. That is why it is important to pray for vocations. "PRAY therefore the LORD of the harvest send out laborers into his harvest."



**A PERSON** receives “a call” not just for his own benefit but also for the benefit of others, for the welfare and comfort of many.

**ANOTHER INTERESTING WEBSITE** for anyone interested in religious life, or just looking for good Catholic information is [anunslife.org](http://anunslife.org), sponsored by the congregation of the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM), a Roman Catholic religious community based in Monroe, Michigan.

**THE CALL TO VOCATION** is a call to follow Jesus – which can be done via married life and the single life as well. Often people are reluctant to share their feelings regarding their call, a natural response. Prayers help here as well.

**IT IS NOT UNCOMMON** to feel scared if you think God may be calling you to religious life. You may feel unworthy, not good enough, not holy enough, afraid of being rejected. There are good books available in the Parish Library – *To Save a Thousand Souls* and *Tuning in to God's Call* that help with these questions.

**WE HAVE TO ENCOURAGE** those considering a vocation to take a risk. Like falling in love and getting married, or remaining single, there is a decision to be made and often people are afraid of commitment.

**ALTHOUGH** there has been a noticeable decline in Mass attendance and an increase in secularism, there is a significant number of young Catholics who are deeply committed to their faith while working in the secular world.

**MYSTERIOUSLY** the Holy Spirit distributes charisms to build up the church. Charisms are free gifts given to individuals (as part of the body of Christ) helping the church carry out its mission. “There are different gifts but the same Spirit, there are different ministries but the same LORD; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” 1 Corith 12 4-7

**IN A WORLD** dominated by individualism, secularism and relativism, it is good to be reminded that in the final analysis it is not what we have but who we are that counts! It is good to be grounded in faith to make decisions in the light of truth.

**LAST THINGS FIRST** - at various times in the year, the Church reminds us that there will be an end to our lives and that there will be an account of how we have lived. Do you live with those last things in mind?

**IN THE MELCHIZEDEK PROJECT**, Catholic men meet to prayer about their lives, listen for God's voice, and get serious about answering His call. The Project's handbook, "To Save a Thousand Souls" by Father Brett Brannen, is the ultimate guidebook for discerning a vocation to the Catholic priesthood. Father Troy Przybilla is launching a group for men age 18 to 35 in the archdiocese.

**DID YOU KNOW** that there are special seminaries for men entering the priesthood later in life, seminaries where students range from ages 25 to 60? Many of these men have thought about being a priest at one time or another but, for whatever reason, pushed the idea to the back of their minds. They're ordinary people, men who have been electricians, teachers, barbers, policemen, social workers, businessmen, farmers, dentists. Some are widowers, even grandfathers. Diverse though their backgrounds may be, they now share one aim in life: to become a priest and serve God's people. Could you be one of them?

**WHAT KINDS OF** people become priests, sisters or brothers?

Are they uncommonly holy, unusually saint-like? No. They are people who make mistakes, people who aren't afraid to be human while in God's service.

Are they people who can't face the competition and cruelty of the "real" world? No. They are people who believe that through ministry they can immerse themselves in the world and make positive changes.

**IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**, Samuel was awakened from sleep by the voice of God calling his name. In the New Testament, Paul was knocked off his horse. Does God call in this way today? Usually not. One seminarian describes his experience of call: "I was very involved in my parish doing youth ministry and teaching C.C.D. and I was happy with that. But for some reason it wasn't enough. I had a nagging feeling that I wanted to do more for people."

Do you feel you may be called to priesthood, sisterhood, or brotherhood? Contact the diocesan vocation office.

**"COMMUNITY"** describes the life religious brothers and sisters choose. Community enables the individual to reach out to others with the strength and courage that comes from knowing, "I don't have to do it alone. Others stand with me in this. My abilities are complemented by their gifts, confidence, wisdom and vision." In community, sisters and brothers live out their vowed commitments, knowing that, though each member is unique, the binding force in life is each one's personal and communal relationship with Jesus.

**A GOOD WAY TO SERVE** our parish is to become part of our Parish Vocation Committee, to help generate an atmosphere that is positively directed toward

ministry and church vocations. The committee welcomes more members! Pray for vocations!

**WHAT WILL YOU DO** with your life? What are your plans? Have you ever thought of committing yourself totally to Christ? Do you think there can be anything greater than to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus? **Pope John Paul II**

#### **PRAYER TO KNOW GOD'S WILL**

May it please the supreme and divine Goodness to give us all abundant grace ever to know His most holy will and perfectly to fulfill it. **St. Ignatius Loyola**

**THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH** is full of saints who, precisely with prayer, were always able to find new, creative solutions to respond to concrete human needs in every century: health, education, work, etc. Their daring, was animated by the Holy Spirit and by a strong and generous love of brothers, especially of the weakest and most underprivileged. **Pope Benedict XVI**

**DID YOU KNOW...** offering up one's suffering and trials is a wonderful form of prayer? There are brochures in our parish library entitled "*Homebound and Suffering Prayer Apostolate for Vocations.*"

**IT DOES NOT MATTER WHEN** Jesus was aware of His mission, it's what He did when He became aware of it. Think of what He did in THREE years!! What can you do for the Body of Christ?

**A DEACON** is a man with a vocation (call) from the Holy Spirit to embody and make visible the service (diakonia) of Jesus in the Church and to the world.

The deacon's service is rooted in Love and makes God's love visible in a three-fold way: in the ministry of the Word, in the ministry of Sacrament, and in the ministry of Charity and Justice. Through the deacon's ministry, we see a clearer image (icon) of Christ the Servant. We see Love in action!

#### **WHO CAN BE A DEACON?**

A Catholic man actively living his faith, from any ethnic or social background, married or celibate (unmarried), engaged in almost any field of work, at least 35 years old at time of ordination, who humbly seeks to discern his vocation in and with the Church.

**AT WORLD YOUTH DAY 2012** Pope Benedict XVI reminded youth that "Joy is at the heart of Christian experience... The Church's vocation is to bring joy to the world, a joy that is authentic and enduring, the joy proclaimed by the angels to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born."

**SPIRITUAL EXERCISE** and food (reading, daily prayer) are just as important to the spirit as physical exercise and food is to the body! Is your spirit being fed – or just your body?

**IS JOY REALLY POSSIBLE?** Many people ask themselves this question. The quest for joy can follow many paths, some even dangerous. How can we distinguish between the things that give real and lasting joy from those offering simply immediate and illusory pleasure? How can we find true joy in life, a joy that endures and does not forsake us at moments of difficulty?

**DID YOU KNOW...** that Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen in 1951 inaugurated a World Mission Rosary, with each decade representing one of the five continents? Pope Benedict XVI declared this Year of Faith “to lead men and women out of the desert... toward friendship with Christ who gives fullness to life.” He has asked us to be part of a great Prayer Movement including the World Mission Rosary. You can read more at [onefamilyinmission.org](http://onefamilyinmission.org).

**WE AS BAPTIZED** Catholics believe God is at work in us. How we live our life is the goal of “discernment.” Discernment simply means good taste and judgment.

**RELIGIOUS ORDERS** are receiving younger members and those who are more educated than those of previous years. In a recent study surveying Religious Orders for men and women in the U.S., administered in 2011 by Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate and commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the findings brought great hope for Religious vocations:

**IN 2011**, the average age of women professing perpetual vows was 39, 4 years younger than those surveyed the previous year. This was the first year men were included in the survey and the average age of those entering Religious Orders was 42. When the participants were asked at what age they first considered a religious vocation, the average age was 19.

**OVER THE CENTURIES**, the Church has exhorted the faithful to do everything they can for the priests who trace their priestly ancestry to Christ’s ordination of the apostles at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday night. Catholics are to pray for priests. They are to make sacrifices for priests. They should have Masses said for priests. They should encourage priests to remain faithful to their high vocation and do everything in their power to ensure the sanctity of priests. *Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.* - [www.therealpresence.org](http://www.therealpresence.org)

**"GOSPEL"** means God has broken His silence, God has spoken, God exists. This fact as such is salvation, God knows us, God loves us, He has entered into history. Jesus is His Word, God with us, God shows us that He loves us, Who suffers with us until His death and He resurrects. This is the Gospel itself. God has spoken, is no longer the great unknown, but He showed Himself and this is salvation. ***Pope Benedict XVI***

**WHAT IS A SECULAR INSTITUTE?** Single or married lay men and women, and also some priests, belong to *secular institutes*. They make a commitment to live the "evangelical counsels" of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Members do not necessarily live together as a Community. Their goal is to be a transforming Christ-like presence in society.

**WHEN** suffering in body or spirit offer your pain in your own words for a vocation intention. Jesus offered his suffering on the cross for our sins. Consider offering yours to obtain grace for our seminarians and novices to persevere in vocation discernment and for generosity in the single life. There are free folders in the library entitled ***Homebound and Suffering Prayer Apostolate*** .