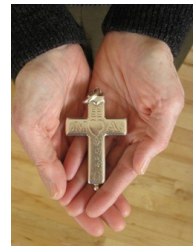


# The Work of a Vocations Director

## Father Willie Purcell

In Canon 385 we are told that the bishop is required to foster all vocations to ministry and religious life though with “a special care for priestly and missionary vocations”. Importantly the task of fostering vocations is not just the responsibility of the bishop but of the whole Christian community (Canon 233). In these two canons we see that the office of Vocations Director is a reflection of the bishop’s commitment to encouraging the growth of all vocations.

The 1997 document *In Verbo Tuo* which came out of The Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and to Consecrated Life in Europe reinforces the need for the community to foster a culture of vocations. This document encourages the support by dioceses of all vocations whether ordained or lay, but that this should include a particular support for priesthood and consecrated life.



So what does a vocations director do? It is the responsibility of the Vocations Director to recruit the next generation of priests for his diocese. Easier said than done. Some of the key areas are going around different parishes, youth groups, ecclesial youth movements and schools, talking to young people about vocations and the possibility that God indeed might be calling one of them to a vocation to the priesthood.

If a man expresses an interest in the priesthood, the vocations director meets with him personally to help him discern whether or not God may be calling him to the priesthood. In my diocese we have a monthly discernment group meeting where young men gather who have thought about the priesthood. The group meets at 7pm on the first Friday of each month for a Holy Hour with the diocesan community and then meets to reflect on different areas of priesthood and discernment.

Careers fairs in both secondary and third level colleges are also an opportunity to distribute literature and prayer cards for discernment. The vocations director also plans different diocesan events throughout the year to motivate young people to think about vocations.

Once a man decides to apply for seminary, it is the job of the vocations director to guide him through the application process, which includes an application form, a biography and an interview with the vocations board. If he’s accepted by the bishop to be a seminarian, then the process of formation begins and the journey towards priesthood gets underway. On ordination day, it is the role of the vocations director to formally present the candidate(s), in the name of God’s people, to the bishop for ordination to the priesthood.

The vocations director needs the help and prayers of all to pray for vocations and for our seminarians so that God may send us good and holy priests. For every vocations director it is a privilege to witness the formation of the future priests of our dioceses.

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