

Vocations

Encouraging Priestly Vocations in the Parish

Every parish needs to have a concern for encouraging and fostering vocations. Fostering vocations is the responsibility of the whole Church.

Crucial to fostering vocations is prayer. Vocational work is very much the work of the Holy Spirit. We can all pray to the 'Lord of the harvest' that he will continue to call men and women to serve the Church through the Priesthood and religious life in our diocese and in the wider Church. 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, pray the Lord of the harvest will send out labourers into his harvest.' (Matt 9:38)

Daily prayer is the best way to obtain vocations. The need to pray is as urgent as the need for more vocations to the Priesthood and religious life.

What to pray for?

- We pray for the family, the first seminary.
- For an increase in vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life.
- For young men and women in your parish to assist them to discern their vocation and to use their names when praying for them.
- For seminarians for our diocese, and other seminarians of the other dioceses in Ireland.
- For the seminary staff and those who are involved with the formation of future priests.
- For the priests and religious of our diocese and especially your own Bishop.
- For all the faithful, who have the responsibility to foster and encourage vocations in the parish and in the family.

Prayers of the Faithful

We can pray for vocations during the Prayers of the Faithful every Sunday, We can also pray for vocations during the weekday Masses, again during the Prayers of the Faithful.

Prayer Cards

Prayer cards are provided by the Vocations Director praying for the family and for vocations. Prayer cards are a good reminder to pray daily for vocations. They are a wonderful resource that can also be given to the homebound, the sick and elderly, those who may not be able to attend Mass but do want to pray. Contact the Vocations Director to supply prayer cards so you can have them available.

Parishes can always produce their own prayer cards and offer their suggestions to the Vocations Director who is always searching for vocation prayers.

Adoration

Key to fostering vocations is time spent praying for them in Adoration. Many have discovered their vocation during adoration or they have become aware of their calling because of their close relationship with the Eucharistic Lord.

It would be wonderful if every parish had a set time for adoration for vocations. This would become a very fruitful devotion for our diocese.

Some parishes have the practice of the 40 hours devotions, once a year on the feast of Christ the King, another highly recommended practice.

Novena

The Diocesan Novena Masses for priestly vocations concludes on or around the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A different group from the parish each week can be responsible for the preparation of the Mass. It can involve the whole parish as well as the schools. It is a wonderful opportunity for the Celebrant of the Mass to focus on vocations and to talk about his own calling, which is such a powerful thing to do.

The Novena of Masses can be done very simply with every Mass

having a Mass intention. Why not offer nine Masses for vocations to the priesthood?

The faithful can also offer their own intentions during the Mass, another effective way of praying for vocations.

Children

Encourage children to pray for vocations, this is a most worthwhile practice. Children's prayers are powerful and it teaches them about the call that God gives to each person.

Parish Involvement

We can all do our part in planting seeds, by encouraging men and women to explore the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood and religious life. Many vocations have grown from a tap on the shoulder, an encouraging word or a question to a man or woman who you see has the qualities of a vocation.

Priests

Get your Priest or a religious to talk to the groups in the parish (St Vincent de Paul, St Josephs Young Priests Society, John Paul II groups), asking them to talk about their call and why they became a priest or religious. Every person has an unique calling from God. Testimonies are powerful examples showing how God works in our lives.

Vocations Director

Invite the Vocations Director to talk to your parish council or any group in the parish. Each group in the parish can have an interest in promoting vocations. Vocations could be on the agenda of every meeting. The Vocations Director can talk about ways of encouraging vocational work in the parish, prayer initiatives, the process for discerning a vocation and the formation of future priests in the seminary.

Opportunities

There are many wonderful opportunities prepared by the Church and the local Church to encourage vocations. Parishes can use these opportunities to encourage their young people to attend.

Many people have been touched by attending World Youth Day. Besides the blessing of being present with the Pope at Mass and devotions, World Youth Day is a superb

opportunity to grow in your Catholic faith and to discover your own particular vocation and calling.

Vocations Website

The Vocations website provides information and resources to encourage and foster vocations for the diocesan priesthood. Vocational work is very much about the Holy Spirit, who moves men's hearts to serve the Church in a special way in every age so we can all become

instruments for the Holy Spirit. (www.vocations.ie)

You

Men and women of all ages are being called to the priesthood and religious life. The wonder of a 'call' is in the hands of God.

Prepared by Fr Willie Purcell, National Vocations Coordinator and the Serra international vocations promotion organisation.



Family Prayer Service for Vocations

Gather in a comfortable space. Choose a song. Light a vocation candle.

Call to Prayer

As we gather, let us remember:
The light of Christ surrounds us.
The love of Christ enfolds us.
The power of Christ protects us.
The presence of Christ watches over us.
And wherever we are, God is with us.
And all is well!

Reading: 1 John 3:1-2 (Taken from the feast of the Good Shepherd)

Reflect and Share What does it mean to you to be a 'Child of God'?
Blessing (Bless each other with the sign of the cross on the forehead.)
Prayers of Intercession (Offer personal prayers)

Our Father

Conversation Starters

Take time to share with your family about the Christian vocation. These open-ended sentences can be used as conversation starters.

- A person I really admire is... because...
- My baptism means a lot to me because...
- Married couples live a Christian vocation by...
- Single people make a difference in the Church by...
- If God calls me to be a (priest, brother, sister, deacon) I would...

Called by Name

There is a Catholic custom for parents to choose a religious name

for their child/ren. Sometimes people also choose a Biblical or saint's name for confirmation. Take time to find out about the saints after whom family members are named. Check on the internet and/or in books with the lives of saints'. Talk about how the saint's lives give witness to the Christian vocation.

What qualities of that person do you want to live out also?

Personal Contacts

Invite your priest, sister, brother, deacon to dinner and talk about his/her vocation choice. Write a letter of appreciation to someone (priest, sister, brother, deacon, youth minister, parents, neighbour, teacher), thanking him/her for being a witness of Jesus.