



NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK □ Nov 5-11, 2017

RESOURCES FOR PRIESTS

Scriptures for Nov. 5th

Overall themes: The grave responsibility of spiritual fatherhood and the joy of humble service

● First Reading: Malachi 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10

Summary: In the last book of the Old Testament, the prophet sharply reproaches the priests and leaders of the Israelites for their laxity and indifference toward God their Creator.

+The vocation angle: The “obedience of faith” is not just believing certain religious ideas are true, but shaping our entire lives in accordance with those truths. This gets very practical when applied to our vocations. If I give my whole life to God, what exactly does He want me to do? And if I am called to leadership in the Church, will I respond faithfully?

● Psalm 131:1-3

“In you, Lord, I have found my peace.” For those discerning their vocations, this psalm is a consolation and a guide. The question for young people is, “In what state of life will I find God’s peace?”

● Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13

Summary: St. Paul tenderly recalls his hard work in Thessalonica, and rejoices in the people’s response.

+The vocation angle: St. Paul loved the Thessalonians “as a nursing mother cares for her children.” Celibate priests, sisters, and brothers do not live loveless lives! Rather, like parents, they are filled with love toward their spiritual children, rejoicing when they grow into maturity in Christ.

● Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12

Summary: The Pharisees preach but do not practice, lording over those they lead. Jesus calls us instead to humble service: “The greatest among you must be your servant.”

+The vocation angle: When Pope Francis was elected, he bowed before the world and asked for prayers, showing that in the Christian life, there are different calls, but not different classes. The Father assigns differing roles, but has the same love for each of His children. Thus the question is not, “How can I rise above?” but “Who can I humbly serve?” In the best marriages, spouses put each other first. The most effective priests make parishioners their priority. The holiest nuns and brothers “do small tasks with great love.” The key to discovering one’s vocation is casting aside the quest for status and pleasure and focusing on *service*. After all, one of the titles of the Pope himself is “the Servant of the Servants of God.”



7 BASIC WAYS To Celebrate Vocation Awareness Week

- ❑ **Preach on vocations**—consider a special homily aimed primarily at young people. Stress that happiness is found in God’s will alone.
- ❑ **Visibly promote vocations**—place posters or banners in the narthex and parish hall.
- ❑ **Bulletin**—include a strong vocations message (see back page) or a special vocations insert.
- ❑ **Religious Education**—work with your DRE to ensure catechists know in advance so they can plan special lessons on vocations.*
- ❑ **Catholic School**—plan a special week with the principal.* Include an art or essay contest, and visits from sisters and seminarians, if possible. (One parish had seminarians Skype into the classroom!)
- ❑ **Youth Ministry**—make sure the Youth Minister has a vocations-themed meeting planned. Consider showing the new film *For Love Alone*.
- ❑ **Young Adults**—If you have Theology on Tap or a similar program, invite a young priest to tell his vocation story and talk about discernment.

**If the diocese subscribes to VocationLessons.com, be sure to remind your catechists and school teachers to use the vocation curriculum during Vocation Awareness Week.*



For vocation posters, displays, and bulletin inserts visit
www.vianneyvocations.com

The Proactive Pastor

Four ways to be the vocation director of your own parish

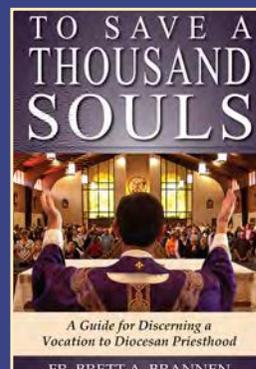
By Fr. Brett Brannen

There are a million ways that the Holy Spirit calls young men to become priests—but many of them require another priest! As Msgr. Tom Richter says in his profound booklet *Lend Your Own Voice to Christ*, “Who did Jesus give his greatest authority, power, influence, and responsibility to call men to the priesthood? The priest who has been appointed pastor of his soul!”

And yet, studies show that only about a third of U.S. priests actively invite young men to consider priesthood. I call them “proactive vocation pastors.” What do they do? Here are four top-level practices:

1. Make It Easy to Find Good Information

In the narthex of your church, make a strong appeal to the priesthood! Remember the axiom: “Out of sight; out of mind.” You cannot be called to something you never see. Would a man need a magnifying glass and two hours to find any information on priesthood in your narthex? At a minimum, include your seminarian poster and some easy-to-find brochures about priesthood and discernment.



Fr. Brett Brannen is a pastor in Savannah and leads retreats for seminarians and priests. He is the author of *To Save a Thousand Souls: A Guide to Discerning a Vocation to Diocesan Priesthood*, which has become a standard “catechism for discernment.” 430pp. vianneyvocations.com

2. Be on the Lookout for Candidates

Be on the lookout for a man who shows the signs. He’s always at Mass and around the church. He hangs around after Mass and likes to chat. He listens intently while you are preaching. He has a sense of reverence in prayer. He has a heart for service. Say to him: “I’ve noticed your prayerfulness and reverence around the church. I can see that you have a deep faith. I want to invite you to consider the priesthood. If Jesus is calling you, you would make an excellent priest.” Personally hand him a book or brochure and ask him to read it and come back to discuss.

3. Involve Young Men in Liturgy

Befriend and encourage a promising young man to serve Mass, so that he has a good reason to be around the sacristy. Teach him how to set up for liturgies like baptisms, exposition, and benediction. Consider making him a sacristan or your master of ceremonies.

4. Recommend Spiritual Direction

Encourage this man to start coming to spiritual direction, either to you or to another priest you recommend. He must be encouraged and taught to pray so that his intimacy with Jesus Christ will grow. If a man is not praying faithfully, Satan will use his greatest weapon of fear to scare him away from his vocation.

At some point, with the man’s permission, give his name to the Vocation Director. But don’t just “hand him off.” You’re still his pastor, the one who has inspired and mentored him. Keep up the connection, even if he’s moving toward applying to seminary.



A Father's Influence

When you speak, your spiritual daughters listen

By Sister Clare Matthiass, CFR

When I visit my home parish and greet our pastor with “Hello Father!” I can be sure I’ll get a “Hello Daughter!” right back! While he’s being light-hearted, he’s also recognizing the reality of our family bond within the Church.

As you know, each and every daughter in your parish family has a vocation. Sure, most are called to that holy sacrament that makes the world go around—marriage! But there are some called to the religious life (or to the consecrated life in one of its other forms).

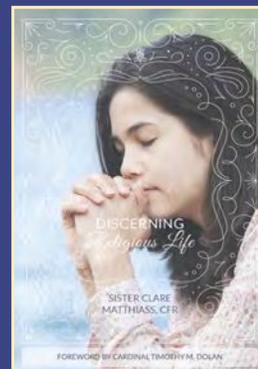
What you may not realize, father, is that you have a profound effect on the daughters within your parish. In fact, the longer I am in vocation work the more convinced I become that the parish priest is the single most important agent for women considering a call to consecrated life.

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You well know that youth today have many voices sounding in their ears, competing for influence in their lives. Their parents are doing their best to protect and guide them. Hopefully, their teachers are pointing them toward a life of virtue and not only toward achievement and academics. The society at large, though, especially through social media, has far overspent its “two cents” telling young women—your spiritual daughters—what will make them “happy.” But what about you, father? Have you let *your* voice be heard?

There is a felt impact when a young woman hears words like these from her parish priest:

- “When I see you week after week at Mass with your family, I can’t help but wonder if God might be calling you to Himself.”
- “Have you ever considered looking into the Religious Life? Even though we don’t have sisters in our parish, religious life is still alive and well, and God is still calling!”
- “I must ask you if being a sister has ever crossed your mind, because it crosses my mind when I see the way you serve so generously in the parish with our youth.”



Sister Clare is the Vocation Director for the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal and helped produce the film *For Love Alone*. Her new book *Discerning Religious Life* helps women discern their vocations with clarity, confidence, and joy. 200pp. vianneyvocations.com

These words have weight not primarily because of the message but because of the messenger. If I say these same things to the young lady in your parish, her internal warning alarm sounds and she thinks, “It’s her job to say that.” Or, “She probably says that to all the girls my age.” Or worse, “She’s trying to recruit me!” But for you, father, it’s different. You stand to gain nothing. When you speak, she listens differently. You’re a spiritual authority in her life, and you are delivering a message for her sake and not for your sake—and she knows it. Speak, father! Your daughters are listening.



Prayers of the Faithful

- During National Vocation Awareness Week, we pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. We pray to the Lord.
- For Catholic educators, that they will inspire students to remain open to God's call for their lives. We pray to the Lord.
- That young men from our parish will respond to the Church's tremendous need for priests. We pray to the Lord.
- That young women from our parish will remain open to consecrating themselves to God as religious sisters. We pray to the Lord.
- That Christian parents, as they live their own vocations to marriage, will encourage their children to consider becoming priests, brothers, or sisters. We pray to the Lord.
- That seminarians receive the graces they need to become holy priests who speak the truth with love. We pray to the Lord.
- For all priests and religious men and women who have served our parish, both living and dead. We pray to the Lord.

Items for the Bulletin

2017 National Vocations Awareness Week

Did you know that in our country, compared to 50 years ago, there are 20,000 fewer priests and 130,000 fewer religious sisters? At the same time, the Catholic population has continued to grow steadily. Many factors have contributed to the decline: growing secularism, a lengthened period of adolescence, attitudes about celibacy, etc. During Vocation Awareness week, please pray that young people in today's society will hear and respond to God's call. And do your part to encourage them to consider the priesthood and religious life.

One Vocation Leads to Another

"Let us not forget that Christian marriage is a vocation to holiness in the full sense of the word, and that the example of holy parents is the first condition favorable for the flowering of priestly and religious vocations." ~Pope Benedict XVI

Generous Single Life in Christ

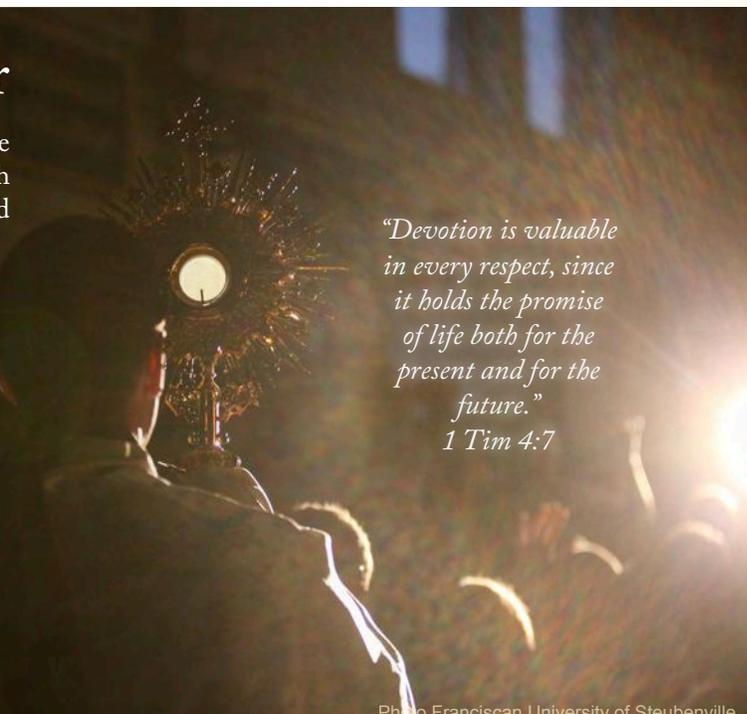
The Church recognizes that some people, for various reasons, are not called or cannot live in vocations such as marriage or consecrated life. Nonetheless, the Catechism says "they can contribute greatly to the good of the human family" (#2231). "Some live their situation in the spirit of the Beatitudes, serving God and neighbor in exemplary fashion." (CCC 1658).

Youth Vocations Holy Hour

Saint John Paul II said, "Young people, if they can be taught how to pray, can be trusted to know what to do with God's call" Consider holding a special vocations-themed Holy Hour for your youth ministry. Some tips:

- Prep teens before the Holy Hour begins.
- Plan good music to set a prayerful mood.
- Teens can handle a full hour, particularly if you give them 2-3 meditations followed by silent prayer.
- Offer confession concurrent with the Holy Hour.
- Be bold and direct in inviting teens to pray about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

The gospel of the rich young man is a good theme for your Holy Hour. Or for a guide, see *Holy Hour to Know My Vocation* at vianneyvocations.com



"Devotion is valuable in every respect, since it holds the promise of life both for the present and for the future."
1 Tim 4:7

Photo: Franciscan University of Steubenville