



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Practical Ideas & Suggestions
to Promote Religious Vocations

All in the Family—Seedbed of Vocations

BY RHONDA GRUENEWALD

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven.”—Mt 5:16

With Thanksgiving and Christmas coming fast, our thoughts naturally turn to our families. Christ came to us in a family context. The Church is the family of God, and religious communities are families of faith founded on a charism given to a particular founder or foundress.

We know that the weaker our Catholic families are in terms of their faith, the less likely that priestly and religious vocations can blossom as the soil is malnourished and rocky. Parishes play a vital role in bringing families to Christ, but institutes of consecrated life, too, connect with families to encourage vocations.

For this final article of this series, I would like to explore how religious communities can work with families and be present with them in this journey of life so that young people can be exposed to the gift of consecrated life.

Arland Nichols, Founder of the John Paul II Foundation, rightly notes that, “It is the Christian family that strives to live the Faith fervently, that is open to a life of service, and that fulfills its duties to God and neighbor that becomes the rich soil that gives rise to children open to priesthood and religious life.”



How can a young man or woman ever consider a life given selflessly to God in service to the Church if he or she has never served others? If religious communities offered family service days at their convents or monasteries, this could give ample opportunity for the Holy Spirit to move and inspire. These days should be advertised in the bulletin of the nearby parish(es).

A successful day could only have 2 or 3 families in attendance, depending on the size of the community as you want plenty of interaction between the family and community members.

Of course, since children are involved, this must be a day of more than only working on small and large tasks; this day must be FUN! Play games like *Pin the Collar on the Priest* or the *Habit on the Sister*. Have a scavenger hunt that involves everyone in the group.

Play *Name that Saint* or *Vocations Jeopardy!* Laugh and have fun, being silly and interacting with the families. These games can be found at VocationMinistry.com.

No day with families would be complete without food. You could ask everyone to bring a sidedish or dessert, and have the community grill burgers for everyone. Perhaps consider inviting the local diocesan priests for dinner, too. Such interaction helps to develop relationships and may plant the seed of a possible vocation.

To top the day off, offer a time of prayer, whether that is a Mass, Holy Hour or evening prayer. Maybe a rosary is said while raking leaves or cleaning the gutters, making sure that anyone who wants to lead a decade or recite the Hail, Holy Queen has the opportunity to do so. Let the families take part in your life of prayer. Don't shy away

from giving them a glimpse of life in the monastery or convent.

Look for other ways to form relationships with families, whether that is attending the parish festival or having a festival of your own. Maybe your community could organize a family 5K walk/run with the finish line at the convent and food and games for all when they arrive.

Fr. John McCloskey beautifully explains that, “St. John Bosco was reported as saying that one out of every ten Catholic men has a vocation to the priesthood. We could say that he employed the word men in the inclusive sense and say that one out of every ten persons has a specific supernatural calling from God. Perhaps this is the Lord’s way of assuring a total tithing of His children. He has no interest in money but has a total commitment to His children as a loving Father.”



We want to inspire the families to desire vocations to the priesthood or consecrated life from their own families. We want each family to be inspired to pray “God choose from our home those who are needed for Your work, whatever that work may be.”

Since it is the one thing Jesus mentions about vocations in the Gospels to ask for more laborers, let us be beggars for more priests, beggars for more consecrated men and women, and beggars for more holy and sacramental marriages. Make

sure to pray daily for the families, especially those you know by name, that they may grow in grace and holiness. Remember that the seeds of priestly and religious vocations can only be nurtured in fertile soil that has been prepared through prayer. It is the spiritual fertilizer needed to foster such vocations so that their light might truly shine! ☁

Heavenly Father, Lord of the Harvest, call forth vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life from our diocese and our families. Inspire men to imitate Christ the Eternal High Priest in sacrificial service to Your Church. Move the hearts of men and women to offer themselves wholly to You in poverty, chastity, and obedience. Send them as laborers for Your harvest. Inspire the faithful to support them with prayer and sacrifice. Raise up holy families who foster openness to Your call. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Catholic Family Life Inspires Siblings to Embrace Calling

Dennis and Carol Cushing who will be married 62 years on February 11, 2018, gave birth to eight living children, Mary, Patty, Dennis Jr. Tom, Bob, Michelle, Elizabeth, and Matthew. Sr. Patricia Jean (Patty) entered the Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker in Walton, Kentucky on September 15, 1978. Her brother, Father Matthew was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in May of 2009.

Father Matt was 26 years old in 2002 when he left home to begin studies at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. In the spring of 2004 though, he left the seminary unsure of his calling. Shortly thereafter, Matt came for a visit to Kentucky to visit his sister.

While here the superior, Mother Celeste Marie took Matthew to see Most Rev. Roger Foys the acting Bishop of the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky. It wasn't until the summer of 2005 that the young man relocated to Kentucky where he lived in the guest quarters at the convent until entering St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe in the Fall to continue his priestly studies.

Father Matt was ordained a deacon in 2008 on the Feast of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary. One year later on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2009, at the age of 34 he was ordained a priest. Father Matt has been a priest in the Diocese of Covington, KY for eight years now. He has served as pastor of St. An-



thony Parish for five years and was recently reassigned as the chaplain of the Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker and pastor of All Saints in Walton in July of 2017 where brother and sister are now once again reunited.

Both Sister Patricia and Father Matthew attributed their vocations to the commitment of the parents in living the Sacrament of Marriage and their strong upbringing in the Catholic faith.