



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Practical Ideas & Suggestions
to Promote Religious Vocations

The Importance of Prayer in Vocation Promotion

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 the annual World Day of Prayer for Vocations fast approaching on May 7, 2017, I am reminded of the one thing that Jesus said we are to do about vocations: *“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the Master of the Harvest to send out laborers to His vineyard”* (Lk 10:2). Our Lord asks us to pray! In this spirit and with that goal in mind, let’s discuss how religious communities and institutes of consecrated life can let their light shine through prayer.

Each community must take every opportunity to share with their supporters and neighboring parishes their mission and the need for more “laborers”—*sisters, brothers and priests*. Here are several ways to invite others to join you during your daily prayer activities to foster relationships that can bring about prayer and awareness for your community.

1. Mass—Does your community or institute offer Mass at your chapel? If so, make sure that those you encounter know about this opportunity to pray with and for you. When you meet people at a parish festival or weekly bingo night, invite that individuals or families to join you for Mass whenever they can. On occasion, consider inviting an individual or family to stay for breakfast after



Mass. Maybe you can attend Mass at a nearby parish? Cultivate relationships with those you encounter so that you might specifically invite them to pray for an increase in vocations. The deeper the relationship the more fervent the prayer for this special intention.

2. Eucharistic Adoration—Pope Francis said that, “There can be no promotion of vocations or Christian mission apart from constant contemplative prayer. The Christian life needs to be nourished by attentive listening to God’s Word and, above all, by the cultivation of a personal relationship with the Lord in Eucharistic adoration, the privileged “place” for our encounter with God.”

We know this to be true. Now, we just need to make sure others know it, too. A number of religious communities have Perpetual Adoration in their chapels, or at least some time

set aside of Eucharistic adoration each week at your convent or monastery or at a nearby parish. Schedule a regular Holy Hour for Vocations, in conjunction with a parish or Catholic group, and invite everyone you know to unite with you in prayer for an increase in vocations to your community. If they cannot be there physically, they can join you spiritually at home or away.

3. Rosary for Vocations—Our Blessed Mother, the Queen of Vocations, has a vested interest in seeing your community or institute thrive! Of course, you could hand out a *Rosary for Vocations* pamphlet, but even more powerful could be doing so as part of a Perpetual Rosary. This includes friends and benefactors each taking a specific time (e.g. 3:00-3:20 P.M.) to pray the Rosary for the intention of an increase of priestly and vocations, especially your community; three friends are needed to cover each daily hour. This can take many forms, happening specifically for one day or one week, the whole month of May, or even year-round. The idea is to storm Heaven with this special request!

4. Lord of the Harvest Booklet: We know that Pope Saint John Paul II had a heart for vocations, which

can be seen in his World Day of Prayer for Vocations messages from 1979 to 2005. The IRL publishes a small booklet of prayers compiled from these his heartfelt statements of faith in the Lord of the Harvest, underscoring the prominent themes of the annual messages. They serve as reminders to all of the urgent need to earnestly implore Heaven so that many young people will generously respond to the call to serve the Church as priests, religious and missionaries. Start handing out this booklet to all who visit your convent, monastery or friary and carry them around with you, giving them to all you encounter. Place a sticker inside with contact information, including a prayer request, specifically asking that many more young men and women to say “yes” to the Lord of the Harvest!

5. Holy Souls in Purgatory—

Intercessory prayers are powerful! I recently stayed with the Sisters of St. Francis and the Holy Eucharist in Independence, Missouri. I noticed many pictures of their deceased members, even a display of the history of their community and foundress. I say that every consecrated religious should intentionally enlist the help of those members who have passed away, asking for their intercession for an increase in vocations to their community, as well as the Church as a whole. How about each member picking a dearly departed sister, brother, or priest, and specifically asking them for their help? Those already with the Lord have a much better perspective of the needs of the community. We need to invoke their assistance.

6. Prayer Pilgrimage—Pilgrimages feed the soul! Your religious

community could orchestrate a special prayer pilgrimage to the closest Marian Shrine or a special church or chapel to specifically pray for vocations. Make sure to include friends and benefactors, parishioners from nearby parishes, even young people from local groups. Place a blurb in parish bulletins for a month or so prior to the event. If young children will be attending, make sure to have some fun activities planned after prayer, too. Perhaps some of the families could bring a picnic lunch. Remember that building long-lasting relationships with such individuals and families is crucial! The more they know you and your community, the more likely they will pray for your institute to thrive! They will also spread the word to the young people, who are discerning their vocations.☺

Partners in Prayer Can Indeed Move Mountains for Vocations!

Let me share with you a story that should inspire us to include frequent prayer for vocations in our work—a *True Hundredfold Story*...

In Lu, Italy, a group of devout Catholic mothers saw the lack of priests and religious in their small Italian village. The deepest desire of many of these mothers was for one of their sons to become a priest or for a daughter to place her life completely in God’s service. They gathered for weekly adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and after Masses to pray, begging the Lord of the Harvest for vocations.

In about sixty years, over one-third of its population became priests or sisters! There were 323 consecrated religious who came from its less than 1,000 inhabitants between 1881 and the 1940s.



Through the powerful prayer of these mothers, an atmosphere of delight and Christian devotion developed in the families that helped the children to recognize their vocations more readily.

In Scripture Our Lord instructs us, “faith can indeed move moun-

tains” (Mt 17:20). Do we really believe it?

Let us recruit partners in prayer, who visit our communities and who in nearby parishes to pray that young people say “yes” to a priestly or religious vocation. Let our light shine brightly through prayer!