



*Our Mission is to provide information, prayerful support, and encouragement to generate interest in the priesthood and other religious life pursuits, and to nurture the discernment process.*

## **DISCERNER'S PACKET**

## What is Discernment?

Discernment is the process of discovery through which an individual learns how God calls him or her to love and serve him through prayer, reflection, and discussion.

# Steps of Discernment

## 1. Prayer/Sacraments:

- Spend time in prayer daily, at least 10-15 minutes and at regular times each day. Begin by praying the Morning and Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Visit your closest adoration chapel often, asking God to bring clarity to your vocation call.
- Lean on our Blessed Mother Mary, asking her for her powerful intercession. Consider consecrating yourself to Jesus through the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- Frequent the sacraments as you conform your heart to look more like Christ's. Everyone's circumstances are different, so adopt going to daily Mass if your schedule allows.
- Go to confession regularly (at least once a month).

Here are some prayers for you during this time, and I hope you will pray it often.

### Prayer to Know One's Vocation

*Lord, my God and my loving Father, you have made me to know you, to love you, to serve you, and thereby to find and to fulfill my deepest longings. I know that you are in all things, and that every path can lead me to you. But of them all, there is one especially by which you want me to come to you.*

*Since I will do what you want of me, I pray you send your Holy Spirit to me: into my mind, to show me what you want of me; into my heart, to give me the determination to do it, and to do it with all my love, with all my mind, and with all my strength right to the end.*

*Jesus, I trust in you. Amen. (www.usccb.org N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Feb.)*

### Vocation Prayer for Discernment

*God, I know you love me and have great plans for me. But sometimes I am overwhelmed by the thought of my future. Show me how to walk forward one day at a time.*

*May I take heart while I search openly, learn about all the choices, listen to others for advice, and pay attention to my own feelings. By doing these things, may I hear your call to my vocation that will let me love as only I can, and let me serve others with the special gifts that You have given me. **Amen.***

## 2. Participate Fully in the Life of the Church

- If you are not already, register at a parish.
- Volunteer at your parish: Server, EMHC, Usher, Lector, Greeter, Youth Ministry Leader, etc.
- Help serve the community, such as at a homeless shelter, visiting nursing homes or helping religious organizations.
- Invite your priest to a family dinner to see how he interacts with families.

- Contact a priest and ask to follow along during his hospital or nursing home rounds to see what that's like.
- If you are in college or young adult- Lead a Young Adult's group. Check out [www.YoungAdultMinistryInABox.com](http://www.YoungAdultMinistryInABox.com)

### 3. Research

Use the following books and resources to help you discern fully God's will in your life.

#### Book References for Men and Women

- *Catholic Bible*
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- *Tuning into God's Call* by Father Andrew Carl Wisdom and Sister Christine Kiley- Beginner
- eBook: *How to Discern God's Will for Your Life* by Bishop Robert Barron- Beginner
- *God, Help Me: How to Grow in Prayer* by Jim Beckman- Beginner
- *Vocations Anonymous: A Handbook for Adults Discerning Priesthood and Religious Life* by Sr. Kathleen Bryant, RSC, D. Min.- Beginner
- *True North: A Roadmap for Discernment* by Joel Stepanek- Beginner
- *When God Asks for an Undivided Heart* by Andrew Apostoli, CFR- Intermediate/Advanced

#### Book References for Men

- *To Save a Thousand Souls: A Guide for Discerning a Vocation to Diocesan Priesthood* by Fr. Brett Brannen- all levels of discernment
- *A Living Sacrifice: Guidance for Men Discerning Religious Life* by Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P. and Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P. - all levels of discernment
- *Is Jesus Calling You to Be a Catholic Priest?* By Reverend Thomas J. Richter – 10 Spiritual Lessons- Beginner
- *Radical Surrender, Letters to Seminarians* by Fr. Michael Najim- Intermediate

#### Book References for Women

- *Catholic Bible*
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- *Discerning Religious Life* by Sr. Clare Matthiass, CFR- Beginner
- *Called by God: Discernment and Preparation for Religious Life* by Rachael Marie Collins- Beginner
- *And Mary's Yes Continues; Religious Vocations in the New Millennium* by the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist- Intermediate
- *"And You are Christ's" The Charism of Virginity and the Celibate Life* by Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M. – Intermediate/Advanced

## Website References

Check out resources online that are specifically geared to help you find your way. Your diocesan office of vocations may have excellent resources on their own website, too.

- If you are on Facebook, like/follow the page Vocation Ministry, then under groups, you will find a women's discernment group: [The Veil](#) and a men's discernment group: [The Collar](#), where you will receive support from hundreds of other men and women who are traveling the road less traveled. Vocation Ministry: Seedbed is a Facebook group for parents of discerners or those who have already said YES to either life as a priest, sister, monk, brother, nun, etc...
- <http://www.vocationnetwork.org/match> – Check out your Vocation Profile. Whether you are interested in becoming a sister, brother, priest from a religious order, diocesan priest, or secular institute/consecrated life this quick online survey will consider where you are spiritually and your gifts and match you with a possible community or order with which you might have a match.
- [www.Vocationquest.org](http://www.Vocationquest.org) – Website for women discerning a call to become a Sister. Take an online retreat that will help you discern more fully if you have a call to be a religious sister.
- <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discerning-women/prayer-and-discernment-resources.cfm>- USCCB recommendations for women as they discern
- [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discerning-men/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discerning-men/index.cfm) - USCCB recommendations for men as they discern
- [www.vocationministry.com/discerning-](http://www.vocationministry.com/discerning-) list of resources such as books and videos for both men and women
- <https://www.melchizedekproject.com/podcast/> - Listen to a series of discernment podcasts given by Fr. Brett Brannen.

## 4. Speak to Your Pastor or Trusted Priest/Sister

Share with your pastor that you are discerning. Being your shepherd, he wants to know and support you as part of his flock. He may have vital advice and wants to pray for you as you discern more fully. If you feel more comfortable speaking with a priest, if you are male, or a sister, if you are female, then do so. You need a supportive ear from someone who has discerned their vocation in a real way.

## 5. Find a Spiritual Director

Speak with your priest about finding a suitable spiritual director who can guide you through this process more deeply. Go to [www.spiritualdirection.com](http://www.spiritualdirection.com) for blogs, podcasts, videos, and articles about finding, selecting, and initiating a spiritual direction relationship. You will also find a collection of articles about the process and expectations.

## 6. Contact Vocation Director or Religious Order

- Find an online directory or women's orders here: <https://cmswr.org/vocations/vocations-directory/>
- Find your Diocesan Vocation Director here: <http://ncdvd.org/find-a-local-vocation-director/>
- Find a free discernment magazine online or in print called Vision- [www.vocationnetwork.org](http://www.vocationnetwork.org)
- Find an online directory for all forms of consecrated life for men and women [www.vocationnetwork.org/en/directory/community\\_search](http://www.vocationnetwork.org/en/directory/community_search)

## **7. Participate in Diocesan Vocation Programs**

Speak with your Vocation Director to see what programs are offered. Many dioceses host summer camps for middle school students and retreats for high school students. Participate in any discernment groups they may offer, as well. If you are seriously discerning a call to diocesan priesthood, most dioceses offer Come and See weekends to stay at a seminary and see a day in the life of a seminarian in person.

## **8. Extended Stay with Order/Community**

To fully know whether an order is right for you, consider attending a discernment retreat with them, perhaps for a weekend or even a week. Such a retreat is a good way to test your vocation. You can get to know the order/community, its charism, and discover whether God may be calling you to its way of life. Many communities hold retreats for groups for just this purpose, or you may be able to visit them as an individual.

## **9. Apply to Seminary/Religious Order**

If you and your spiritual director both think that you are on the path to a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life, contact your diocesan office of vocation or the order to discuss your possible vocation further. They want to help you along this journey to being what God wants you to be and will walk you through every step of the application process.

*Thank you for taking the time to discern, discover through prayer and time, your vocation. God only wants your ultimate happiness, so make sure to take the time to find out which vocation will bring you that kind of joy. With the help of the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother's powerful intercession, you will receive the grace needed to continue this journey.*