

Try the Alphabet!

The ABCs of Fostering, Supporting and Nurturing Vocations within the Home

Apostles. From the very beginning, help your children see that a Christian is meant to make a difference in the world around him, we are Christ's ambassadors. Light of the world and salt of the earth. Make them aware that their faith is a gift and talent to share.

Answer your children's questions about priesthood or religious life; never discourage them or ridicule them if they bring it up.

Baptism. Celebrate each one's Baptism Day as well as birthday – and yours too. Build family traditions around the celebration... a specially decorated Baptism Candle that you light for the occasion with a special prayer, displaying photos of their baptism, writing a card or saying a prayer for the priest who baptized them.

Bring your family to an Ordination Mass, Holy Hour, or prayer vigil for vocations.

Catechism. Teach, explain, challenge and have them memorize. Always connect it with life. Challenge your teenagers with Church History and Apologetics. Make them proud of their faith, give them answers, encourage discussion.

Confirmation. Be counter-cultural; make Confirmation the real beginning of personal and mature practice of the faith!

Challenge teens and young adults to consider a Church-related vocation. Tell them about the gifts for ministry you see in them. Encourage them to participate in at least one special vocation event (ordination, vocation retreat, Focus 11, etc.).

Discuss your own vocation to family life, explaining that God calls some people to priesthood or religious life, some to marriage, and some to life as single laypeople. You can talk about vocations firsthand!

Eucharist. Need we say more?

Encourage your children to be involved in the liturgical life of the parish as servers, lectors, musicians, etc. (and get them there on time!)

Explore the feelings you might experience should one of your children choose to give his or her life to God and discuss them with your spouse.

Find opportunities to affirm the gifts and talents of your children and help them relate their gifts to various career and life choices (including priesthood and religious life).

Gratitude. Make this a major element of all family prayer; cultivate their awareness of all God's gifts, both spiritual and material.

Generosity. Lead by example and teach your children to repay God's gifts by loving others and being generous to others as He is with us.

Have a priest come and bless your home.

Have your younger children make a cross to hang in each bedroom in your home.

Include the diocesan vocation prayer in your personal and family prayer, especially on Wednesdays.

Invite a priest, brother, sister or lay consecrated person to your home.

Jesus. From their earliest age, help them enter into a personal relationship with Jesus as their best friend. Encourage simple, direct prayer, a sense of his presence in everything they do.

Join together in prayer as a family; include a short vocations prayer when you pray before meals (especially on Wednesday).

Keep an eye open for TV shows and movies that present Gospel-centered role models. Watch them with your children and engage in a discussion.

Let your children see your own attitude of openness to and love for God's will.

Look for appropriate times to read and discuss with your children stories of calls in Scripture (e.g. Mary's response to God in Luke 1:26-39, Jesus' calling the Apostles in Mt 4:18-22, etc.).

Matrimony. Your marriage is one of the greatest keys to your children's individual vocations. Share with them the story of your own vocation, especially on your wedding anniversary, how you met, how you "knew", how you made your decision and the importance of faith in your life, all that you have to be thankful for.

Make time for teenagers in your life: your children and their friends, nieces and nephews, babysitters, etc. Never discourage.

Open their minds. Be sure your children learn. Foster their curiosity and love for creation and culture.

Patron saint. Help your children grow in their knowledge and devotion to their patron saint. The saints come from all walks of life and made a positive difference in the world--a goal as real today as it was in their time.

Play. Give sports and adventure their place.

Purity. Both the virtue of purity and consecrated celibacy require the positive appreciation of the gift of sexuality, as well as the awareness of our natural weakness in this area. Communication, timely instruction, good habits, your example, proper vigilance are all key.

Pray for the seminarians of your diocese by name (you can get their names, bios, and birthdays from the diocesan website. Even "spiritually adopt" one of them.

Pray as a couple for the specific vocation of each one of your children.

Prudence and Patience. Pray fervently for these gifts, so as to respect God's work and God's timing in the life of your child, and not to have any personal agenda beyond what is truly best for them. Children, not only parents, make mistakes!

Queen: Enthroned Mary as Queen of your home, form a prayer-chain with other families. (Check: "Pilgrim Queen")

Reconciliation or the Sacrament of Penance. We all need it. Lead by example.

Remember in prayer by name those who minister to your family and include in your family prayers petitions for those called to priesthood and consecrated life.

Scripture. Pull it out, read it actively as a family – commenting on it, applying it to life. Look for appropriate times to read and discuss with your children stories of calls in Scripture (e.g. Samuel, the Annunciation, Jesus calling the Apostles, etc.).

Service. Together, as a family, do things that serve others, especially those in most need. Seek out those in need and find ways to care for them.

Support and participate in any school or parish vocation activities.

Talk about your family's ethnic or cultural heritage and its values.

Talk positively about the priests, sisters, brothers, and deacons in your parish and share with your children the stories of the priests or sisters who have inspired you and how (e.g., priest at your wedding, or baptized your children, priests or religious from school, etc.).

Use books and videos to familiarize your children with saints who are priests or vowed religious. Use these lives of the saints as a springboard for discussion on these lifestyles.

Visit Christ in the Eucharist. Work in a visit to some shrine or famous church while on vacation and offer prayers together as a family.

Witness to your own vocation in your love and care for each other.

X, In Greek it's the first letter of "Christos", Christ, the Anointed One. Anointing is used in Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination and the Sacrament of the Sick.

You. Help your children grow out of the Me-mode and into the You-mode. Where "you" is God and neighbor.

Z, The last letter of the alphabet. The last letter in Greek is Omega, and Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. Make him the Beginning and End in everything you do.