

Appendix K: Parish Vocation Committee Guide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE OVERVIEW**

- II. STEPS IN FORMING A PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE**

- III. PRESENTATION BY A PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE MEMBER AT MASS**

- IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE**

- V. 20 SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR A PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE**

- VI. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF VOCATION AWARENESS**

- VII. RESOURCES**

I. PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Parish Vocation Committee is to assist the parish community in fulfilling and advancing its mission of fostering vocations, reminding parish members to respond to God's call in their lives, especially to ordained ministry and consecrated life. The Parish Vocation Committee will take the lead in shepherding the whole parish through initiatives of prayer, promotion, mentoring and invitation.

FUNCTIONS

- ◆ The Parish Vocation Committee relates to the Parish Pastoral Council through the Education Commission. This Committee also should work in close collaboration with the Archdiocesan Office of Priestly Vocations and its current initiatives and programs.
- ◆ The principal activity of this Committee is vocational awareness ministry. Committee members will promote and advertise vocations in the parish in a variety of ways, including a parish campaign of prayer, posters, bulletin articles, prayers of the faithful, speakers, etc. Members of the Parish Vocation Committee should attend workshops offered by the Office of Priestly Vocations and seek to stay informed about vocation trends and programs offered.
- ◆ The Parish Vocation Committee will seek to provide vocation resource materials to the parish and to Religious Education and school programs, especially during *National Vocation Awareness Week*, *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, *Priesthood Sunday*, *World Day for Consecrated Life* and other special dates designated for vocations.
- ◆ The Committee will seek input from the parish to identify potential candidates for priesthood and religious life and will help the parish extend a personal invitation to them to consider that vocation. Members should be aware of events sponsored by the Archdiocese of Detroit Office of Priestly Vocation such as the *Be My Guest Dinner with the Archbishop*, *Discernment Weekends/Overnights*, *Day of Discernment; Jr./High School Vocation Awareness Days* and *Come and See Weekends*. The Committee members should also be aware of discernment events sponsored by various religious orders present in the Archdiocese of Detroit.
- ◆ The Committee should set yearly action steps that flow from objectives set by the Education Commission and are derived from the goals set by parish leadership. The action steps should be reviewed and enhanced at regularly scheduled meetings.

STRUCTURE

The Parish Vocation Committee should draw its membership from all dimensions of parish life. It is essential to receive input and support from the Pastor and members of the pastoral team/staff. If possible a priest, deacon or consecrated sister or brother should be a part of the committee. Persons who take to heart the Church's need for leadership should be invited, along with parents and youth who sense this important concern for the future of the Church. The Committee should identify its own chair and spokesperson to the Education Commission.

II. STEPS IN FORMING A PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE

1. Understand the reasons for forming the Parish Vocation Committee:

- A. Canon Law 233 §1. *The duty of fostering vocations rests with the entire Christian community so that the needs of the sacred ministry in the universal Church are provided for sufficiently. This duty especially binds Christian families, educators, and in a special way, priests, particularly pastors.*
- B. Forming a Parish Vocation Committee and promoting vocations is part of the Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese of Detroit and important for the vibrancy and future of the Church.

2. Get Organized:

- A. Study the Vocations Chapter of the Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese of Detroit.
- B. Meet with the pastor or Chairperson of the Education Committee to discuss the responsibility of the Parish for promoting vocations and the need to form a Parish Vocation Committee to implement the plan.

3. Identify People to Join the Committee

- A. Review the following attributes of a PVC member and invite individuals to the first meeting;
 - 1) Has a passion for the promotion of Church vocations
 - 2) Is willing to be present and support parish vocation events
 - 3) Is open to on-going personal formation in vocations awareness
 - 4) Is willing to pray on a regular basis for vocations
- B. Reach out to people in multiple ways
- C. Recommended size of the committee is between 8-10 members.
- D. Suggested members:
 - 1) Parents or relatives of priests, religious or seminarians;
 - 2) Religious sisters, brothers or priests who work or are members of the parish;
 - 3) Members of Serra Club
 - 4) Members of Knights of Columbus
 - 5) Parishioners who serve the parish as Lectors, EME's, catechists, or are involved with youth or young adult ministry

4. Inform the parish about the work of the Parish Vocation Committee

- A. Place an article in the bulletin about the new Parish Vocation Committee;
- B. Speak at each Mass on a given weekend to inform the parish about the new committee and invite people to join.
- C. Display information about the committee in a prominent place in the parish.

5. At the first meeting:

- A. Select a chairperson.
- B. Study the *Archdiocese of Detroit Pastoral Plan for Vocations* and the *Parish Vocation Committee Guide*.
- C. Establish goals and objectives for the year.

III. PRESENTATION BY PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE MEMBER AT MASS

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah 6:8 – “Then I hear the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” ‘Here I am,” I said; “send me!”

Good morning/evening! My name is _____. I am a member of the newly formed Parish Vocation Committee in our parish.

Every parish in the Archdiocese of Detroit is being asked to form a Parish Vocation Committee and to make fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life a priority of ministry for the coming years.

Jesus said “The harvest is abundant, the laborers are few!” If we do not strive to help others hear and answer God’s call in their lives now, especially to the priesthood than we will have no one to blame but ourselves when we no longer have priests to provide the sacraments, nor religious sisters and brothers to serve the needs of our Church. God has not stopped calling, rather it is the people of God who have chosen to stop listening. We can change this, we must change this!

I invite you today to respond as Isaiah did “Here I am, send me” and prayerfully consider joining our newly formed Vocations Committee and our effort to promote, nurture and increase vocations in our parish and the Archdiocese of Detroit.

The primary purpose of the Parish Vocation Committee is to assist the parish community in fulfilling and advancing its mission of fostering vocations, reminding us all to respond to God’s call in our lives, especially if God is calling any of us to the ordained ministry or consecrated life. The Parish Vocation Committee will take the lead in shepherding the whole parish through initiatives of prayer, promotion, mentoring and invitation.

Members of the committee will attend a workshop provided by the Office of Priestly Vocations, and our members will be officially installed by our pastor at Mass on _____.

Please pray for the success of this committee and to pray for an increase in vocations every day. If we become the persistent widows and storm the gates of heaven with our petitions, surely our merciful God will hear and answer us.

If you have any questions or wish to sign up for our committee, I will be available in the Gathering Space (vestibule) after Mass. Thank you and God bless.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE

Can. 233 §1. The duty of fostering vocations rests with the entire Christian community so that the needs of the sacred ministry in the universal Church are provided for sufficiently. This duty especially binds Christian families, educators, and, in a special way, priests, particularly pastors. Diocesan bishops, who most especially are to be concerned for promoting vocations, are to teach the people entrusted to them of the importance of the sacred ministry and of the need for ministers in the Church and are to encourage and support endeavors to foster vocations, especially by means of projects established for that purpose.

- ◆ The Parish Vocation Committee (PVC) is primarily responsible for fostering vocation awareness in the parish. This will be accomplished through education, mentoring, prayer and invitation.
- ◆ It is recommended that the Parish Vocation Committee serves as a sub-committee of the Parish Education Committee.
- ◆ Suggested size of the committee is between 8 - 10 members; consisting, when possible, of parishioners, priests, lay and religious, teachers/catechists, parents, seniors, and youth to ensure the plan touches all members of the parish family.
- ◆ Written goals and objectives, agreed-upon committee assignments among members and a written calendar of events will make the work of the committee more effective.
- ◆ The PVC should keep a permanent file on committee activities; including minutes, correspondence, copies of planned events as well as information and resources from the Office of Priestly Vocations, and religious communities.
- ◆ The Pastor should always be informed and included in the planning and vision set by the Parish Vocation Committee. Reports should be sent to the Education Committee and at least once a year the Parish Vocation Committee should request to meet with the Parish Pastoral Council to update them on planning.
- ◆ Members of the PVC should attend the annual Vocations Convocation hosted by the Office of Priestly Vocations and be aware and supportive of vocation activities in the vicariate, region and archdiocese.
- ◆ Members of the PVC should work to create a pro-vocations environment in the parish.
- ◆ Individual committee members should be willing to pray daily for vocations; offer support and encouragement to priests and religious within the parish; and accept and carry out assigned tasks and to report on the progress of assigned committee work.
- ◆ Members of the Parish Vocations Committee should always be looking for new members from the parish community and invite them to join.

V. 20 SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR A PARISH VOCATIONS COMMITTEE

1. Encourage a parish-wide campaign of prayer for vocations:
 - ◆ Pray for an increase in vocations at every Mass.
 - ◆ Suggest that parish prayer groups and individuals include prayers for vocations in their prayers; including seniors and those who may be shut-in and unable to come to the parish.
 - ◆ Organize a Holy Hour and/or Mass for Vocations at the parish, and/or assist organizing one at the vicariate or regional level.
 - ◆ Place a sign (with permission) in the Eucharistic Chapel requesting prayers for vocations.Encourage prayers for vocations in the family, in the parish schools and religious education programs.
2. Sponsor a vocation discernment evening for the parish youth; which may include hosting a dinner and inviting young people to have dinner with a priest or religious to discuss vocations.
3. Encourage the pastor and or deacon to preach on vocations.
4. Make sure the parish and vicariate bulletins and newsletters contain vocations information.
5. Coordinate activities in conjunction with *National Vocation Awareness Week*, *World Day of Prayer for Vocations* and *World Day for Consecrated Life*.
6. Promote vocation discernment events hosted by the Archdiocese of Detroit Office of Priestly Vocations: *High School Vocation Day*, *Discernment Overnight or Weekend*; *Day of Discernment with the Archbishop* and encourage and invite men in the parish who may be called to the priesthood to attend.
7. Encourage the pastor to invite a man interested in the priesthood to the *Be My Guest Dinner with the Archbishop*.
8. Be aware of and promote vocation discernment events hosted by religious orders in the archdiocese and encourage and invite women who may be called to the religious life to attend.
9. Work with the parish Youth and Young Adult Minister, DRE and School Principal to have special programs on vocations.
10. Collaborate with the SERRA Club or Knights of Columbus in their vocation outreach programs.
11. Start a Traveling Vocations Chalice or Cross program in the parish.
12. Work with the Bulletin Editor to ensure Vocation Bulletin Announcements are listed in parish bulletin or newsletter
13. Celebrate Priesthood Sunday in the parish as well as - ordination anniversaries, feast days and birthdays of priests, deacons, religious, seminarians, and individuals in religious formation from the parish.
14. Create a vocations corner/kiosk/bulletin board in the parish; keep it supplied with posters, prayers, brochures and information about priesthood, diaconate, religious communities, seminarians, etc.
15. Prepare a calendar that includes world, national, archdiocesan, regional, vicariate and parish vocation events and publish it in the parish; make sure vocation events from the Office of Priestly Vocations is included.
16. Collaborate with other parish committees, organizations, to promote vocations.

17. Give a short presentation at the end of all Masses on a particular Sunday, briefly explaining vision of PVC and inviting parishioners to support vocations efforts.
18. Network with Regional and/or Vicariate Vocations Committees.
19. Be familiar with and make available vocation resources to the parish, schools and religious education programs.
20. Encourage those who may have a calling to the priesthood or religious life to respond!

VI. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES IN VOCATION AWARENESS

- ◆ The word vocation comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which means a calling.
Vocation is the calling or destiny we have in this life and hereafter. God has created the human person to love and serve him; the fulfillment of this vocation is eternal happiness (CCC§§ 1, 358, 1700).
- ◆ Each of us is called by God to a particular vocation; this call is rooted in Baptism, and is a way of participating in the mission of Jesus.
- ◆ God has not stopped calling the faithful to hear and respond to His plan for them. Most will be called to live out their holiness in marriage, some will be called to the celibate single life or in community as religious brothers and sisters, and some will be called to the ordained life as priests or deacons.
- ◆ Sisters, brothers, deacons and priests are ordinary people who desire to serve the Church by dedicated their entire lives to the service of the Church.
- ◆ Personal invitation continues to be the main reason an individual considers the call to religious life or the priesthood.
- ◆ Terminology related to Church ministry and vocations needs to be properly taught in the family, parish, religious education programs and Catholic schools.
- ◆ It is the responsibility of every Christian to foster vocations; especially to the priesthood and religious life.
- ◆ *The ability to foster vocations is a hallmark of the vitality of a Church.*
–Pope Benedict XVI
- ◆ If we wish our young people to hear and respond to God’s call in their lives we must teach them to pray:

Prayer itself, born in Catholic families, nurtured by programs of Christian formation, strengthened by the grace of the sacraments, is the first means by which we come to know the Lord’s will for our lives. To the extent that we teach young people to pray, and to pray well, we will be cooperating with God’s call. Programs, plans and projects have their place; but the discernment of a vocation is above all the fruit of an intimate dialogue between the Lord and his disciples. Young people, if they know how to pray, can be trusted to know what to do with God’s call.

–Pope Benedict XVI

VII: RESOURCES

- ◆ AOD, Office of Priestly Vocations Materials:
 - *A Guide for Parents to Nurture Vocations*
 - *Be Not Afraid* – (Vocation activities for youth and young adult ministries) Available December 2011.
 - *Let the Children Come* (AOD Office of Priestly Vocations – lesson plans for vocations, grades K-8) Available December 2011
 - *New Vocation Committee Packet of Materials*
 - *Parish Vocation Committee Guide*
 - *Vocations Reference Guide*

- ◆ Website/Social Media
 - www.detroitpriest.com (AOD Office of Priestly Vocations)
 - www.foryourvocation.org (USCCB Vocations)
 - www.facebook.com (AOD go to *Office of Priestly Vocations – Archdiocese of Detroit*)
 - <http://cara.georgetown.edu> (Center for Applied Research Apostolate)
 - *Vocations Resource Guide* (AOD Office of Priestly Vocations)
 - www.vocation-network.org **Vision Guide:** Comprehensive website from the National Religious Vocation Conference with articles on prayer and discernment and references to hundreds of religious orders, also in Spanish.

- ◆ Vatican Documents/Papal Letters/Decrees/Addresses
 - *The Basic Sixteen Documents, Vatican Council II, Constitutions Decrees, Declarations, Decree on the Training of Priests, Optatam Totius*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P., Costello Publishing, 1996.

- ◆ USCCB materials on vocations found at: www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vc

- ◆ Books/Articles
 - *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, ed. John P. Beal, James, A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, Paulist Press, 2000.
 - *Lend your Own Voice to Christ: A Helpful Guide for Priests*, by Fr. Thomas Richter, NCDVD, 2010.
 - *To Save a Thousand Souls: Guide for Discerning a Vocation to Diocesan Priesthood*, by Fr. Brett Brannen. Vianney Vocations, 2010.
 - *The Meaning of Vocation: In the Words of John Paul II*, Scepter Publications, 1997.
 - *The National Strategy: “A Future Full of Hope”, A Natural Plan for Vocations*, USCCB Committee of Vocations, Washington D.C., 2003.

