

Diocese of St. Petersburg
Parish Vocation Enrichment Team
Guidelines

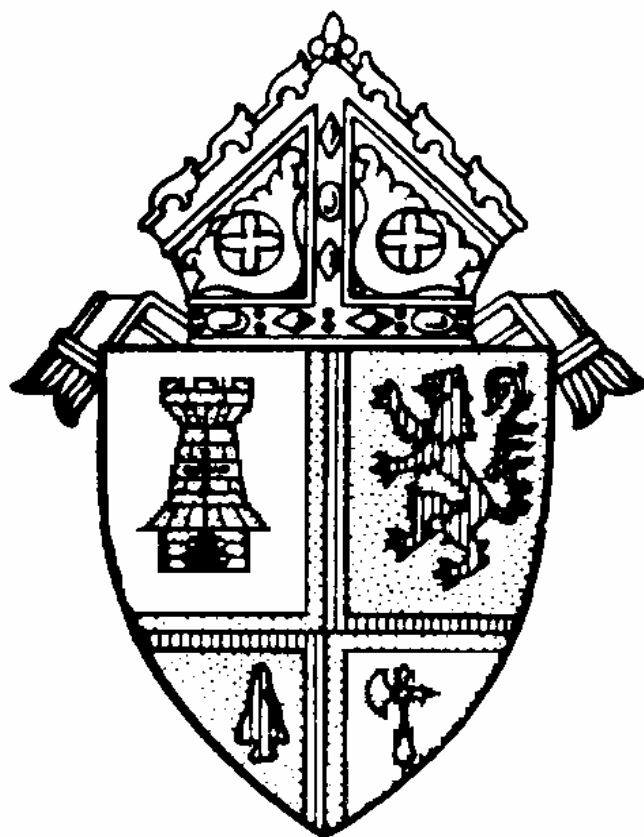


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Prayer for Vocations

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, bless all our parishes with numerous priests, deacons, men and women in religious life, consecrated laity and missionaries, according to the needs of the entire world, which you love and wish to save.

Assist our pastors and all who live a consecrated life. Guide the steps of those who have responded generously to your call and are preparing to receive Holy Orders or to profess vows.

Look with love on young people and call them to follow you.
Help them to understand that in you alone can they attain complete fulfillment.

To this end we call on the powerful intercession of Mary, mother and model of all vocations.
We beseech you to sustain our faith that the Father will grant what you command us to ask. Amen.

-Pope John Paul II

FOREWORD

The parish is the heart of Catholic community life today. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life will emerge from vibrant parishes only if parishioners are kept aware of vocations. Probably one of the most effective ways for parishes to foster vocations is through a parish vocation committee.

THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Christians receive a vocation in, and through, the sacrament of Baptism. Their first and lifelong call is to follow God in the world. In using the word "Avocation", Catholics refer not only to their baptismal calling, but also to specific states in life such as Christian marriage, priesthood, single life and religious life. The entire parish community has a responsibility to support one another in their individual vocations.

MISSION STATEMENT

A Parish Vocation Enrichment Team is dedicated to fostering and sustaining vocation consciousness among all members of the parish community by proclaiming the message of Christ. There is a particular emphasis on supporting and nurturing those who desire, seek and commit to ordained ministry and religious life. The work of the Parish Vocation Enrichment Team is to be accomplished through prayer, worship, education, service and fellowship with the entire parish community.

"I wish to draw the attention of the People of God especially to the specific role of the parishes, together with the contribution of the family, towards the promotion of vocations. The fostering of vocations cannot be considered a marginal activity, but must be incorporated fully into the life and activity of the community."

*Pope John Paul II
1986 World Day of Prayer for Vocations*

THE WORK OF PARISH VOCATION TEAMS (AREAS OF MISSION)

Jesus uses rural farming images when speaking about vocations. In looking at the Areas of Mission for promoting vocations, we use similar images. The structure, goals, objectives and activities of the Parish Vocation Enrichment Team fall into one of three general categories:

I. Prayer & Worship (Plowing)

The Lord tells us to ask for vocations (Luke 10:2). Prayer helps to make the heart of the individual open to God's calling, even for those who have not yet responded to the Lord's invitation.

- Prepares a person's heart to receive God's call.
- Opens a person's heart to respond to the call God has already given.
- Fortifies a person's heart in responding to God's call.

II. Education & Resources (Sowing)

While all vocations come from God, programs and other resources can invite and encourage individuals to be open to God's call and respond "yes" if God is calling them to a Church Vocation.

- Encourages someone to be open to a Church Vocation.
- Informs someone on what is involved in a Church Vocation.
- Invites someone to consider whether or not God is, in fact, calling him or her to a Church Vocation.

III. Service & Fellowship (Reaping)

Responding to God's call is the first of many steps towards a Church Vocation.

- Involves those thinking about a Church Vocation with the parish and others who are also in discernment.
- Sustains the person who has begun formal preparation and encourages continued growth.
- Affirms those who are seeking or are already living out a Church Vocation.

STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP

The pastor, after submission of a request for participation to the parishioners (suggestion - publish the desired Amembership list" below in the parish bulletin), and consultation with the pastoral council, appoints the members for the Parish Vocation Enrichment Team based on availability of suitable parishioners to serve in this capacity. The Team shall be made up of no more than 10 members who will collaborate with and support each other and the other parish and diocesan ministries to achieve the goals and accomplish the mission of the Team.

The membership list and structure of the Team shall be as follows:

- I. Team Leader - Responsible for setting the dates of meetings and making sure that activities are planned and carried out to meet the goals and accomplish the mission of the Team.
- II. Chairpersons representing each of the different areas of mission - Responsible for planning activities or carrying out tasks in their respective areas:
 - Prayer & Worship (Plowing)
 - Education & Resources (Sowing)
 - Service & Fellowship (Reaping)
- III. Members - a cross-section of the parish which may include, but are not limited to, the following (when feasible): pastor or priest, sisters, retired religious, pastoral council representative, youth minister, Serra Club representative, Knights of Columbus representative, campus ministry representative, family members of religious, high school students/young adults, parent(s) of young children.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Parish Vocation Enrichment Team may develop short and long-term objectives related to the goals below based on the needs of the individual parish. The goals and objectives are to be evaluated annually by the Team and may be presented to the pastoral council annually for approval.

I. In the area of Prayer & Worship (Plowing), the Parish Vocation Team . . .

- fosters personal, liturgical, and family prayer for vocations in the parish.
- makes a special effort to commit individual and communal prayer time dedicated to vocations to the priesthood and religious life from their parish.
- strongly encourages and advocates Wednesdays as the Diocesan Day of Prayer for Vocations.

II. In the area of Education & Resources (Sowing), the Parish Vocation Team . . .

- engages in ongoing study and reflection on the vocation ministry of the church, especially in light of the changing nature of church ministries.
- makes available to the parish, vocation materials and information about opportunities for discernment that are offered by the diocesan Office of Vocations.
- organizes and facilitates Vocation Awareness Week and World Day of Prayer for Vocations.
- supports parish and diocesan needs for financial support of vocation awareness activities.

III. In the area of Service & Fellowship (Reaping), the Parish Vocation Team . . .

- promotes and encourages the community response to vocation activities.
- is available to young people to offer them support as they develop their spiritual life and make vocational choices.
- develops ways to reach out to teens and young adults, encouraging them to consider a Church vocation.
- maintains a special relationship with individuals who show a desire for, seek information about, and/or commit to priesthood or religious life, as a way of offering them the parish's nurturing support and recognition.
- encourages and promotes increased personal contact with priests and religious.
- supports and affirms priests, religious, and seminarians from and/or assigned to the parish.

TRAINING

Members of the Parish Vocations Enrichment Team commit to attend a one-day workshop to be held by the Diocesan Vocation Enrichment Team of the Diocese of St. Petersburg and additional training provided at the parish level as required.

FOCUS AND BOUNDARIES

The Parish Vocation Enrichment Team works within the parish policies and procedures established by the pastor and the pastoral council. They may not screen" individuals for religious vocations. Their primary purpose is to promote vocations and vocation awareness in the parish and support those in the process of discernment or formation from their parish.

If serious interest is shown by any parishioner, they should be referred to the Vocations Office of the Diocese by the Parish Vocation Enrichment Team Leader, where they can be directed in the next stage of the discernment process, be it as a diocesan priest, religious priest or brother, religious sister or lay missionary.

The focus of the Parish Vocation Enrichment Team is in promoting and encouraging women and men to discern God's call for their lives. We are not in the business of recruiting or trying to sell someone on the idea of a Church Vocation. We firmly believe that God gives a call, and we must listen and respond.

TIPS TO FORM A SUCCESSFUL PARISH VOCATION COMMITTEE

Starting Off

First, make an appointment to meet with the pastor to discuss formation of a vocations committee. It is important that in your meeting with him you come to a shared vision of the committee's role in the parish and the type of programs the committee should develop. Then compile a list of parishioners whom the two of you believe would be interested and would work well on the committee. Do not forget teachers in the parish school, the youth minister, seminarians or novices, or anyone who may have a special interest in vocations. If at all possible, the committee should be comprised of lay persons, priests, and religious. You may wish to make an announcement about the formation of a Parish Vocations Team. Then, invite these "prospects" to attend an organizational meeting. At the first meeting, set goals and a definite calendar of activities. Keep in mind that besides sponsoring activities on vocations, the committee members also should keep abreast of developments in the theology of call and vocation recruitment.

Planning and Activities

The type of activities the committee plans will depend on the number of members and the character of the parish. Set realistic long-term and short-term goals. Do not try to do everything at once. Evaluate what is being done for future use. There is a large (but by no means exhaustive) list of sample activities on pp. 4-6. Utilize the resources available through the Vocations Office and from other sources (see page 6).

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

The activities listed here are just a starting point to help committees generate their own ideas in each of the different areas. Parish Vocation Teams are encouraged to develop their own ideas related to the needs of their parish communities.

Prayer & Worship (Plowing)

1. Encourage and help plan a monthly Mass for vocations.
2. Plan prayer services for meetings of the Team.
3. Promote Wednesday as a special Day of Prayer for Vocations.
4. Sponsor a forum or contest for petitions or prayers for vocations to be published in the parish bulletin.
5. Submit intentions for Prayers of the Faithful to parish office.
6. Distribute prayer cards/prayer sheets for vocations to parishioners and shut-ins.
7. Encourage individual family prayer for vocations.
8. Help make parish arrangements for World Day of Prayer for Vocations (Fourth Sunday of Easter).
9. Organize a monthly prayer hour for senior citizens of the parish.
10. Develop and coordinate the distribution and tracking of a vocation chalice, vocation cross" or vocation statue program in the parish which would distribute religious articles to families in the parish who are asked to use them as a centerpiece on the family table. These would be accompanied by appropriate prayers for parish vocations or vocations from their own family to be said during that week.
11. Plan a prayer service to commission new members of the Team.
12. Coordinate parish celebration of Vocation Awareness Week (Second Week of January).
13. Once a year, plan a pilgrimage for parish to participate in the diocesan Holy Hour for Vocations on the fourth Wednesday of every month from 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., at the Cathedral of St. Jude, the Apostle.
14. Begin a 31 Club; get people to go to Mass and pray for vocations on an assigned date each month.
15. Distribute vocation prayer cards to nursing homes and to the homebound.
16. Affix the vocation prayer inside of every songbook or hymnal.
17. Pray the rosary for Vocations (especially on Wednesdays).
18. Begin or conclude Religious Education classes or school day with a Vocation prayer.
19. Fast or offer up some type of sacrifice for vocations (especially on Wednesdays).
20. Do an act of kindness or a work of charity for vocations (especially on Wednesdays).
21. Encourage individuals to offer their sufferings up for religious vocations.
22. Sponsor an annual 40 hours - Eucharistic Devotion for Vocations.

Education & Resources (Sowing)

1. Offer and plan parent awareness meetings for vocations.
2. Display posters for religious vocations.
3. Encourage and assist with Vocation Awareness activities for elementary, junior high, high school and college students - lesson preparation, panel discussions, etc.
4. Arrange for religious and seminarians to speak to the youth of the parish.
5. Request and distribute vocation materials from the diocesan Office of Vocations for distribution in the parish and keep materials up-to-date.
6. Invite vocation speakers to speak at various parish meetings.
7. Collaborate with parish youth to present a parish vocation exhibit showing the different religious vocations.
8. Prepare and distribute vocation awareness calendars to the parishioners.
9. See that literature on vocations is available in the Church vestibule and parish library.
10. Prepare brief articles for the parish bulletin, introducing, highlighting and acknowledging all ministries in the parish with a particular emphasis on priesthood and religious life.
11. Research different religious congregations - their histories, mission statements, etc. and publish them in the parish bulletins.
12. Encourage parish priests, deacons and religious to share their own stories, joys and struggles in realizing their call from God.
13. Plan and host a vocation banquet to raise funds for vocation awareness.
14. Promote Vocation Awareness Weekends at St. John Vianney College.
15. Encourage celebration of Vocation Awareness Week and World Day of Prayer for Vocations.
16. Have an essay and/or poster contest about the work of priests and religious.
17. Honor the Altar Servers of the parish with a special breakfast attended by the priests and religious of the parish.
18. Help priests to host rectory dinners in which they share the story of their vocations.
19. Have priests write letters of encouragement to all High School seniors.
20. Set up a pen pal program with children and retired religious.
21. Promote greater study of the saints and share stories about the saint of the day.
22. Help to foster comprehensive vocation awareness in the parish school.
23. Have 8th graders interview the priests of the parish.
24. Bring 7th or 8th grade class to the Chrism Mass (Tuesday morning of Holy Week).
25. Appoint a member to be a liaison with each parish committee, to keep vocation concerns on the mind of every committee. This is important for "Committees" on liturgy, religious education and youth ministry.
26. Provide the parish bulletin editor with very brief articles and reflections on vocations to use regularly.

Service & Fellowship (Reaping)

1. Invite priests, sisters, brothers & seminarians from the parish to parish functions when they are in town for vacations.
2. Plan monthly fun vocation activities for the youth of the parish.
3. Organize and plan vocation retreats.
4. Invite priests, sisters, seminarians and religious to speak to youth groups.
5. List Priests and Sisters from the parish in the parish bulletin, or include short resumes or stories of the same.
6. Sponsor a parish Town Hall Meeting to discuss vocations.
7. Plan vocations coffee hours or dessert nights to discuss and present vocation materials.
8. Gather items for and send care packages to seminarians and those in formation from the parish.
9. Send holiday and birthday cards to seminarians and those in formation from the parish.
10. Organize and plan opportunities for parish youth to shadow people already in ministries in the church.
11. Send cards and celebrate birthdays, special religious anniversaries and feast days of the ordained and religious of the parish. (Saint's Days, Anniversaries of Ordination, Special Days related to Religious Orders, etc.)
12. Organize the preparation of special meals or treats for the ordained and religious of the parish.
13. Plan and organize dinners or activities for priests, sisters, altar servers and their families
14. Actively recruit teens and young adults to become involved in liturgical ministries, serving, reading and being Eucharistic Ministers and any other liturgical ministry.

Service & Fellowship (Reaping) - continued

15. Promote participation in diocesan support groups for vocations.
16. Develop a system for parishioners to show support for any seminarians or novices in the parish. Some parishes send "care packages" to seminarians studying out of state, birthday cards, etc. Besides being a nice boost for the seminarians, this type of project develops a unique sense of community support for vocations in the parish.
17. Promote participation in diocesan vocation retreats held during the year.
18. Use parish activities, i.e., pancake breakfasts, to have a portable board with information about vocations in general.
19. Have a parish bulletin board with pictures and information about members of the parish who are currently in the seminary or in formation. If there is not anyone from the parish, adopt some.
20. Send letters of gratitude to priests and religious for their vocation.
21. Honor priests of parish on Father's Day.
22. Honor religious sisters and brothers on or near the Day of Consecrated Life (Feb. 2).
23. Set-up a Hall of Fame in the parish indicating the church vocations from the parish.

RESOURCES

I. Diocesan Vocations Office

Telephone (727) 345-3452 Email: spvocation@aol.com

Website : www.spvocation.org

The Vocations Office is available to assist and guide parishes in developing strong Vocation Enrichment Teams. We have many resources that can help you get started. Give us a call or visit our Website. In addition there are regular resources sponsored or produced by the Office of Vocations.

- Called to Serve Journal Monthly Vocation Newsletter
- Annual Vocation Workshops and Conference
- Vocation Connection (monthly materials for bulletins and intercessions)

II. National Coalition for Church Vocations (NCCV)

Acts as a clearing house for Vocation promotional materials.

Telephone 1 (800) 671-NCCV (6228)

Recommended Materials:

- Vocation Resource Catalog (includes pamphlets, posters, videos, etc.)
- Vocations and Prayer Magazine
- I Can Find My Way: total resource for Primary, Intermediate, and Junior High schools, Religious Education classes and/or Catholic Schools.
- Call on Me: total resource for High Schools and Youth Ministry.

III. Serra

This international Catholic Association is made up of women and men who seek to promote, encourage and support Church Vocations. They are more than willing to help. Local President: Norm Dusseault , telephone: (727) 520-7795. Catalogues and materials are available through Serra International (888) 437-6732.

IV. Diocesan Council of Catholic Women

Most parishes in our Diocese have a Catholic Women's Association that has a Church Activities Committee. Contact your local Chapter to see how they can assist you.

V. Knights of Columbus

Each local Council has a Vocations Committee. They are usually very enthusiastic about helping people promote vocations. They have some excellent resources. Give the Council closest to you a call.

TIPS ON HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

Before You Call A Meeting

It is very important to realize and remember that you are asking people to donate their time, energy and talent. The following steps will help you offer them a meeting that is fruitful, and worthy of their three-fold donation. Be very clear, when you invite them to a meeting, about the reason *you* are asking them to be part of the committee's work, i.e. what it is you feel they can offer to the work that the committee seeks to accomplish. Always try to find new people; instead of using the same people who are already 'stretched too thin'.

EIGHT POINTS FOR PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

1. Goals

- **Why are we meeting?** State clearly the specific task(s) being addressed.
- **What do we want to accomplish?** Focus all work on the task at hand. "What outcomes do we want to ultimately achieve?"
- **What outcomes can we expect to achieve from this meeting?** Time is valuable to busy people; use it well. Strike a happy balance between "overkill" at one meeting and "dragging people out" to a second meeting because of time wasted.

2. Methods

- **Open Forum.** Everyone is invited to talk, offer opinions, speak of experiences etc.
- **Focus Groups.** Small-group brainstorming; make sure each group chooses a reporter to take notes and someone to present them to the larger group.
- **Task.** Get something done, whether envelopes stuffed or a decision reached.
- **Timing.** Set time limits and keep them...not only for beginning/ending meetings, but also for discussion of any topic. This forces people to be clear and concise in their remarks.

3. Focus Groups

- **Break into small groups** to address various aspects, e.g. divide topics, work, or exploration of various aspects to be considered. Assign/choose the group's topic/members.
- **Assign tasks.** Be clear. Lay down guidelines if necessary
- **Appoint reporters.** Always keep written reports, which help later when reviewing decisions, networking with other parishes, regions, or the diocesan office.
- **Set time limits.** Working on a task for a limited number of minutes sharpens people's thoughts, keeps them on track, and saves time overall.
- **Have small groups report to the large group.** Oral reports are fine, as long as written notes are supplied for the records of the meeting.

4. Logistics

- **Who will be coming?** Be aware of who the people are you will be working with
- **What do you need?** AV equipment should be ready and working (tested); paper and pencils need to be available.
- **Where?** State clearly where the meeting is to take place: which building entrance to be used, the room number, and so forth.
- **When?** Establish a reputation for beginning and ending meetings on time.
- **Room arrangement.** This includes doors being opened, chairs being set. Use any means you can to let members know they are important to the work, that you were expecting them, and that you have prepared for the task of the meeting.
- **Hospitality.** This is especially important if you are having a guest; if necessary, assign someone in advance to attend the guest, introduce him/her to membership and facility as appropriate. This is especially important for new members. Be sure the guest is introduced to the group before the meeting,
- **Clean up.** Establish a reputation for leaving the room at least as good as you found it.
- **Follow-up.** Thank and report anything the manager of the facility should be aware of.

5. Agenda

- **The Plan for the Meeting.** This reassures members the meeting is worth attending, is important, and allows them to focus on the topics as prioritized.
- **Stick to it.**
- **Move through it.**
- **Save non-agenda items for last.**
- **Busy people don't like to waste time.**

6. Schedule

- **Date and Time.** Avoid conflicts of commitment to other parish activities by checking with the parish calendar beforehand, and in order to agree on future dates at the meeting
- **Be sensitive to attendee's schedule.** One night out a week is all some people can manage.
- **Coordinate with the people involved:** members, pastor, parish secretary, guests, etc.
- **Reserve the location and any equipment** for a future meeting or project well in advance.

7. Notify

- **Mail notices to attendees, and enclose** minutes of the previous meeting.
- **Telephone reminders** are a good idea for the day before the meeting
- **Accept good excuses and move on.**

8. Reflect

- **Ponder the discussion and decisions** of your meeting, for future improvement.

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CHAIRPERSONS

Organize the Meeting

- **Get there early.**
- **Open the doors.**
- **Have supplies in order.**
- **Appoint a secretary to keep minutes.**
- **Have the agenda priorities and time frames clearly in your head.**
- **Know where the clock is** (if you don't have a watch).
- **Understand the difference** between a "meeting" and a "workshop"; they differ in time frames, focus groups, and ways of participation, function and purpose.

Chair the Meeting

- **Start on time.** This shows the meeting work is important and that you respect the schedule of the attendees.
- **Call people to order.** Be kind, but firm. People appreciate the "good order" that results.
- **Stick to the agenda.** Don't allow digressions. "That's a great idea, and we'll come back to it before the end of the meeting."
- **Refocus attention.** Don't let several people talk at once.
- **End the meeting on time,** even if discussion of the last items of the agenda has to be carried over to the next meeting.
- **If you need a break** during a meeting, the meeting is probably too long.

Manage the Meeting

- **Keep people on their toes by keeping the agenda on track.**
- **Stay organized.** Keep your heart and soul into the task at hand, and "bring it all together".
- **Keep cool.**
- **Have fun**
- **Socializing should take place after the meeting.** This makes it optional, especially for people who are pressed for time.