

HOW ALL OF US CAN HELP ENCOURAGE VOCATIONS

That we as a Church face difficulties in vocation work today is not an excuse for wringing our hands and doing nothing. The Spirit is present among us, urging us to meet the challenge with new energy and creativity. Here are some ways that all Catholics can help:

1. **Invite! Invite! Invite!** The number one reason why people don't consider religious life and priesthood is that no one ever asked them to do so. Therefore, it is critical that people raise the question, "***Have you ever considered being a brother, priest or sister?***" Even if the person responds with a sense of shock or laughter, the seed has been planted. Time and again, I hear people say "I probably *would* have considered priesthood or religious life if someone had asked me to think about it."
2. **Reflect on your own life.** As you read this, don't assume it is intended only for someone else. Ask yourself whether *you* have the skills needed to serve as an effective sister, priest or brother. Don't be afraid to think about this possibility and to open yourself to God's deepest call within you. It's the call of God's love! Search out an understanding person with whom you can discuss vocational possibilities. It just might be a good idea—for you and for the people of God.
3. **Get to know some good priests and religious.** Because there are fewer priests and religious, it becomes necessary at times to seek them out. When people communicate with a priest, brother or sister and learn about their life, they get to know them as real people. They discover that such a life can be happy, committed and fulfilling.
4. **Be supportive.** Those considering religious life and priesthood need a word of encouragement. They also need the witness of adults who say with their words and their lives that commitment is possible. At times, candidates for the priesthood and religious life may even be in need of financial assistance or need help because of previously accrued education debts.
5. **Focus on the positive.** There is much negative press and critical publicity about religious life and priesthood today. These issues demand sensitive and effective attention. Yet we also need—in the news as well as day-to-day conversation—a focus on the positive aspects of priesthood and religious life. Priests and religious, like everyone else, appreciate a word of thanks and encouragement.
6. **Pray for vocations.** Prayer is a vital element in parishes and families—not just prayer for more vocations, but prayer which honestly seeks the response to which the Spirit is inviting us today.
7. **Give an hour of your time in Eucharistic Adoration.** Some of our parishes have certain times for Eucharistic Adoration. But our Diocese is also blessed to have six Perpetual Adoration Chapels which provide 24 hours 7 day a week Eucharistic Adoration available to everyone. They are St. John Church, Cromwell, Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Gales Ferry, St. Mary Church, Putnam, St. Mary Church, Coventry, St. Mark Church, Westbrook and the Marian Friary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Griswold. *Don't you have one hour a week to give back to our Lord for vocations.*

For more information on this or any questions you might have contact Father Mark O'Donnell, Vocation Office, Diocese of Norwich, 201 Broadway, Norwich, CT 06360 (860) 887-9294, or you can e-mail him at: vocations@norwichdiocese.org. Visit the web site at www.God-calls.org