

Introduction message:

Each and every one of us has a vocation, a calling from God, to which we are asked to respond. For the upcoming National Vocations Awareness Week in November, the St. Francis Vocations Committee invites you to pray for God's gift of vocations through a special novena -- nine consecutive days of prayer.

Each day, the novena begins with the Archdiocese Prayer for Vocations, followed by a short reflection, meditation or video clip highlighting a different aspect of vocations. These topics will include what a vocation is, how to discern your vocation, and the various kinds of vocations to which we can be called. This novena is meant to help foster a culture of vocations here at St. Francis where each person prayerfully discerns and intentionally lives out their vocation.

This novena was originally sent out to our St. Francis Parish Family via email and the parish app in November 2020, but remains a good way to pray for God's gift of vocations.

For more information, contact Carrie Bartsch, the Vocations Committee Chair, at vocations@sfacc.org.



Day 1: What is a vocation?

Prayer for Vocations

Almighty Father,
You have created us for some definite purpose.
Grant us the grace to know the path
You have planned for us in this life
and to respond with a generous “Yes.”
Make our archdiocese, parishes, homes and hearts
fruitful ground for Your gift of vocations.
May our young people respond to Your call
with courage and zeal.
Stir among our men a desire and the strength
to be good and holy priests.
Bless us with consecrated religious and those called to a
chaste single life, permanent deacons,
and faithful husbands and wives,
who are a sign of Christ’s love for His Church.
We commend our prayer for vocations to You, Father,
through the intercession of Mary our Mother,
in the Holy Spirit,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

– Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr

The word vocation is derived from the Latin word meaning “to call,” and a vocation in the Catholic Church is a calling from God. We are often encouraged to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, but it is important to realize that vocations include marriage, single life, secular religious, as well as priesthood and religious life. Every person needs to discern and respond to God’s specific call for them – their own individual vocation. A vocation requires action on the part of the one being called. God calls us to our vocations by offering us an invitation, just as He invited Mary to be the mother of His son, Jesus. Reflect on Mary’s response to God’s call. In the same way that Mary responded with a generous “yes” to God’s call, we should similarly respond positively to God’s call in our lives.

O Mary, Mother and Model of Vocations, pray that each of us may truly discern and faithfully live out our vocations. Amen.

For more information about what vocations are, check out these links:

<https://thetablet.org/embracing-our-vocations-brings-true-happiness/>

<https://www.coraevans.com/blog/article/what-is-vocation-in-the-catholic-church>

Day 2: Discernment

Prayer for Vocations

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“The Church traditionally uses the word “discernment” to denote the process of making decisions in light of the Gospel: Entering into a time of discernment is about discovering how best to live out that common vocation to love. It is a task in which we are all called to engage ourselves—not just those discerning a vocation to religious life.

The time of discernment is a time to reflect upon our gifts, talents, desires, and passions. It is a time to ask God’s help in determining how best to use these wonderful parts of our lives and personhood in order to deepen and extend our love of God, one another, and ourselves.”

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For more information on discernment, check out these links:

<https://sbfranciscans.org/be-a-friar/discernment/>

<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discernment-tools>

Day 3: Vocations to Singlehood and Celibacy

Prayer for Vocations

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"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work.'"
John 4.34

The vocations of being single and celibate are not synonymous. All begin life single, and many remain single. Though no vows are taken, the Church recognizes singlehood as an authentic call on equal footing with all other vocations. Some people are called to a special type of singlehood in a life of celibacy. The Catholic Church teaches that celibacy flows from an intimate relationship with and a loving communion with Christ. In some cases, many women are called to consecrate themselves to Christ in a rite known as the Consecration of Virgins. This ritual is one more way that Catholic women can make a gift of their life to Christ. People can be just as impelled to these two vocations as they can be toward marriage or religious life. God's work is accomplished in both these vocations when we answer the call.

O Mary, Mother and Model of Vocations, pray that each of us may truly discern and faithfully live out our vocations. Amen.

For more information about the vocation of single-life, check out:

<https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/vocations/single-life-vocation>

For more information about consecrated virginity check out:

<https://consecratedvirgins.org/whatis>

Day 4: Vocation to the Religious Life for Women

Prayer for Vocations

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A consecrated religious life means that a person takes vows under a particular religious order's way of living and serving God. Women who are called to be religious sisters or nuns are answering a call to "die to the world" in a specific way. Sisters are women who take vows with an order but work in the world. Nuns are called to live a life of prayer in a convent, such as the Carmelites. This does not mean that, as a nun, they flee from the world. On the contrary, nuns and sisters impact the world greatly with their gifts, prayers, and hard work. Women Religious come from all walks of life and accomplish great things. Consider the examples of [Sr. Deirdre Byrne](#); [St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta](#), who greatly inspired Sr. Deirdre; and [St. Katharine Drexel](#).

O Mary, Mother and Model of Vocations, pray that each of us may truly discern and faithfully live out our vocations. Amen.

For more information about answering the call to Religious life for women:
<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discerning-women>

A brief video about women religious in Africa: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vggHev - cUE&ab_channel=USCCenterforReligionandCivicCulture

Day 5: Vocations to the Religious Life for Men

Prayer for Vocations

Almighty Father,
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– Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr

When Catholics mention vocations, often they are thinking about a vocation to the priesthood. Of course, this is not the only religious vocation for men, but it is a very important one. Bishop Robert Barron discusses discernment to the priesthood in [this short video](#).

Not all men with a vocation to the religious life are called to be diocesan priests. Some may be called to be a priest or brother in one of the many Catholic religious orders, each of which has its own distinctive spirituality. Perhaps one of them will have a deeper call to your heart or the heart of someone you love. Finally, even married men can be called to serve their diocese as [permanent deacons](#).

O Mary, Mother and Model of Vocations, pray that each of us may truly discern and faithfully live out our vocations. Amen.

For more information on some of the many religious orders, check out these links:

Lasallian: <https://www.brothersvocation.org/about-us/our-spirituality/>
Franciscan: <https://sbfranciscans.org/who-are-we/franciscan-spirituality-2/>
Augustinian: <https://opeast.org/about/our-order/rule-st-augustine/>
Benedictine: <https://www.osb.org/our-roots/the-rule/>

Day 6: Married Life

Prayer for Vocations

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Whether newly married or going strong after decades together, every married couple has their own story. For most, it is a story of love that grows and changes over time as they respond to the joys and challenges of everyday life. But how many of us think about how God is calling us to write that story? The Church views marriage as far more than just the choice of two people to spend their lives together. Indeed, matrimony is one of the "Sacraments at the Service of Communion," just like Holy Orders. This means that the vocation of marriage is really a call to work for the salvation of others – not only for one's spouse and children, but all those to whom the family can reflect the love of God!

O Mary, Mother and Model of Vocations, pray that each of us may truly discern and faithfully live out our vocations.

For more information about the vocation of marriage, check out these links:

<https://faithandmarriage.org/marriage-is-a-vocation/>
<https://www.foryourmarriage.org/the-vocation-of-marriage/>
<https://www.foryourmarriage.org/marital-spirituality/>

Day 7: Third Order Religious and the Order of Franciscan Seculars

Prayer for Vocations

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In general, [Third Order religious](#) are composed of men and women who are part of a fraternity. Third Order religious can be divided into two groups, the regulars and the seculars. Third Order regulars take vows of obedience and charity, usually live in communities and wear habits. Third Order seculars do not take vows but do make a solemn promise to live a Gospel way of life. They typically do not wear a habit and live outside of a monastery or friary. There are several Third Order fraternities, including the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Carmelites, to name just a few.

The [Order of Franciscan Seculars](#) (OFS) has been in existence since 1221 and was started by St. Francis because so many men and women, married and unmarried, were attracted to his way of life. It is broken up into local fraternities, regions, national and worldwide with the main headquarters in Rome. We follow the rule of St. Francis, take a promise to follow the Gospel way of life and to live simply.

Dayton's local OFS fraternity is St. Elizabeth of Hungary and is composed of people from 8 different parishes around the Dayton area. Our spiritual advisor is from the Franciscan Friary in Cincinnati, and the fraternity meets once a month at St. Helen Parish. We have ongoing faith formation centered around St. Francis and his teaching, support a charity, engage in a lot of prayer, and observe Franciscan saints and feast days. Becoming a Secular Franciscan is not something you just simply join, but instead it takes a serious commitment. The initial formation period is two and a half to three years before you can become a professed member.

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Day 8: Spirituality

Prayer for Vocations

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*"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."
Romans 5.5*

Pope [Benedict XVI said](#) that God's love transforms all of life -- it calls us as a love rooted in an absolutely free gift of God. All baptized Catholics are called by this love. In discerning or following a vocation it is vital to remember that God has initiated this call. Our journey in life, whatever our vocation, should be open to this love for Christ calls us everyday. All vocations are born in this love, and they are nourished in the Sacraments. But there are many ways God has designed for us to be nurtured and strengthened for our journeys. Reading Scripture daily can become meditative with Traditional practices like the *lectio divina* or divine reading. The spiritual works of mercy and the corporal works of mercy are also part of our ancient Tradition of living out our baptismal call in caring for others.

O Mary, Mother and Model of Vocations, pray that each of us may truly discern and faithfully live out our vocations. Amen.

For more information on *lectio divina*:
shorturl.at/afloM

For more information on the corporal works of mercy, watch this video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfWEUw0iwAQ&ab_channel=CatholicCentral

For more information on the spiritual works of mercy, watch this video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNqxp4j4L7c&ab_channel=CatholicCentral

Day 9: Living out your vocation

Prayer for Vocations

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How beautiful will be the day when all the baptized understand that their work, their job, is a priestly work, that just as I celebrate Mass at this altar, so each carpenter celebrates Mass at his workbench, and each metalworker, each professional, each doctor with the scalpel, the market woman at her stand, is performing a priestly office! How many cabdrivers, I know, listen to this message there in their cabs; you are a priest at the wheel, my friend, if you work with honesty, consecrating that taxi of yours to God, bearing a message of peace and love to the passengers who ride in your cab.

- St. Oscar Romero, Nov. 20, 1977

Our vocation is a way of life, not a decision to be made once and rarely thought about again. Instead, living our vocation requires mindfulness, frequent prayer, and continued discernment to God's call for us through the sacraments.

O Mary, Mother and Model of Vocations, pray that each of us may truly discern and faithfully live out our vocations. Amen.