



CORE RE VOCATION STAFF HANDBOOK

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Foreword



The National Office for Vocation offer this Core RE Vocations Module to the Sixth Form Students in our Catholic schools and colleges to assist them in fulfilling their Christian vocation. The 'Call to Holiness' is heard at different moments in a person's life and its response takes different forms.

For some it may be a lifelong commitment to religious life or priesthood but for others it may be in the married or single life, in teaching, the caring professions or in the world of law and business, or a combination of these. But the 'Call to Holiness' is universal and applies to everyone no matter what path in life they choose. Making decisions that will set the way ahead for students can seem very hard in the face of other more immediate priorities; it is with this in mind that I recommend the use of the Core Re Vocations Module.

+ Malcolm M^cMahon OP

Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP
Chair
National office for Vocation

National Office for Vocation



The National Office for Vocation (NOV) is an Office of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales. Its mission is to build a culture of vocation in the Church in England and Wales and to promote the calls to specific vocations.

NOV predominantly works with Vocation Directors, Religious Organisations and Communities, Youth Organisations, Universities, Schools and people who reach out to us in need of guidance in hearing God's call in their life.

Welcome

Welcome to the National Office for Vocation, Core RE Vocation Module for Sixth Formers. In this handbook you will find key information that you will need to help you with your lesson planning. The lessons within this module incorporate the culture of vocation, beginning with the Universal Call to Holiness, leading into our immediate mission in life and concluding with the main states of life men and women are called to within the Church. You may feel you wish to broaden these as a part of your discussion within the lesson.

There are set questions that the class can discuss together, or work in small groups. There are also several written tasks which can allow the student to write and express themselves in detail and each lesson concludes with an extended piece of writing.

This is an **optional module** designed to help students discern their own lives and where God might be calling them to. Prayer is always provided for you at the start of every lesson, and it is important to provide silence to allow students to reflect. If you want to take time out and perhaps use your school chapel to develop prayer as a part of this module, you are encouraged to build this in.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the National Office for Vocation.

With every prayer and blessing,

National Office for Vocation Team

Lesson Pack and Materials

The Vocation Module has a number of resources you can use for each lesson, as a part of that you should have:

Staff Handbook



**CORE RE
VOCATION**
STAFF HANDBOOK

Student Workbook



**CORE RE
VOCATIONS**

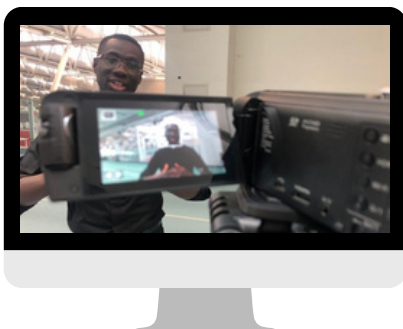
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Abbreviations	
AL	Amoris Lateitia
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CV	Christus Vivit
EG	Evangelii Gaudium
FC	Familiaris Consortio
GE	Gaudete et Exultate
LE	Laborem Exercens
PV	Pastores Dabo Vobis
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
ESV	English Standard Revised Version (Bible Translation)

PowerPoint Presentations



Access to the video resources for each lesson



Lesson 1 - Vocation and Discernment

Opening Prayer: (Read by staff or student)

God our Father,
Thank you for calling us all to take part in your plan for our world.
Send us your Holy Spirit to open our hearts to you,
and to our brothers and sisters whom you have created.
Enlighten our minds, that we may discern the path we should follow.
Give us courage to live a life that gives glory to you, and brings joy to our lives.
We ask this through Jesus your Son,
Amen.

Learning Objectives

- To understand that we are ALL called by God to contribute in a positive and life-giving way to his divine plan for the world.
- To understand what DISCERNMENT is and how to DISCERN our own lives.
- To understand the many ways God can call us to live our life, and that we can choose how to serve him and our world.
- To understand that through Baptism we are anointed Priest, Prophet and King.

The word "vocation" can be understood in a broad sense as a calling from God, including the call to life, the call to friendship with him, the call to holiness, and so forth.
CV 248

Vocation - Meaning, Called and Sent

Vocation comes from the Latin word 'Vocare' which means to 'call' and we are ALL called by God in different ways.

What is meant by this is that God wants to be in relationship with us, that is why he speaks or 'calls' us. But, when God calls, he also sends.

Putting this into context

When somebody speaks to us, we HEAR something (words, or sounds), or if we can't hear, then there are different ways people communicate to us, but essentially, we know somehow that somebody is trying to tell us or ask us something. When two or more people are in this kind of dynamic, it means that they have some kind of relationship, one is communicating, and another is receiving information. It is the beginning of a two-way conversation, and it is the same with God.

God Calls

When God communicates, it can be difficult to know what he is trying to say to us. This is because it is a different kind of communication – or language – than we are used to. But we can learn this language, and when we do, we feel special, because the one who created us and knows us better than we know ourselves, wants to be in friendship with us. Just as with anything, we need to put some time into learning this language. We learn this over time with practice, and this can also be called PRAYER.

Prayer

"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."

St John Damascene

CCC 2559

Prayer is not just about speaking or reading words. Prayer is a conversation with God; it is speaking and listening, listening with open hearts rather than with ears. The first thing God says to us is that he loves us. This is not just a fact that you must believe because it is written here, this is just telling you what to listen out for when you pray

God Sends

God calls or speaks to us; he also sends. He sends us to other people, to take our place in society, to make the world a good place for everybody to live in. If each of us contributes to making the world a better place, everyone will benefit. The other part of the plan is the special part, the part where God himself is working with us, giving us his life.

"Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us everywhere". CV 177

God wanted to be so close to us, that he became human while still being God, and this was Jesus. Jesus came to teach us how to live and be in relationship with the Father and with one another. When Jesus went back to the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit to be the invisible life-giving presence in our world to give guidance and help. God intends as many people as possible to know about this plan, and this plan is the Good News, or the Gospel. We are all called and sent to share this Good News with everybody.

Questions in the workbook for students:

- 1. What is the meaning of the word 'vocation'?**
- 2. Define what is meant by the words 'called' and 'sent'.**

Discernment: How do we know we are being called?

Discernment: Discernment means to work out what to do in the light of prayer and reflection. The root of the word means 'sifting' which means to sort out, and in this context, it is to sort out what God's plan is for you.

Discernment is necessary not only at extraordinary times, when we need to resolve grave problems and make crucial decisions. It is a means of spiritual combat for helping us to follow the Lord more faithfully. We need it at all times, to help us recognize God's timetable, lest we fail to heed the promptings of his grace and disregard his invitation to grow.
GE 169

When you spend time in discernment, through prayer, reading scripture and perhaps asking others' advice (so you have someone else's wisdom helping and supporting you), the time will come when you need to make a decision. It is important to reflect upon your own gifts and talents as well as your deep desires in life and what you enjoy doing. These all help contribute to your own discernment of God's plan for you. It is important that you realise there will rarely be certainty, but some decisions like these must be an expression of faith. At some point, you need to have faith and say, I believe this, and I'm going to commit my life to it. It is a bit like signing on the dotted line.

In life, we will make many decisions, but few of them will be final and unchangeable. When you are discerning what you are to do with your life, you have to make little acts of faith, one after another, to see where the Holy Spirit leads you. If things don't work out, there will be time to change direction. God does not lead us into dead-ends. God wants us to be free. We know this because of what we learn in the Bible. Take for example the story in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis, God desires to create us with free will, with the power to choose between good and bad, (See Genesis Chapter 2, verse 16 or see Deuteronomy, Chapter 30 verse 19).

Ways we can discern

Start a journal - write down notes about how you are feeling, particularly after thinking and praying about the decision you have to make. After some time, you will find mounting evidence of where your heart is leading you.

Read the Bible, write about the scriptures you have read and what you think you need to learn from them. What are your favourite passages of scripture? Why?

Start to pray to Jesus and ask him to send his Holy Spirit to help you understand what is your place in the world.

Write down in your workbook the feelings and thoughts that arise after you pray.

Questions in the workbook for students

1. Define the word 'discernment'.
2. Identify 3 ways we can discern.

Ways we can be called

There are as many different vocations as there are people who have been born. We are all created uniquely, with a mission that only we can do. In these lessons we will look at 3 senses of Vocation:

- The universal call to 'holiness' – Baptismal vocation, the Single life.
- The Call to Serve, which focuses on all immediate tasks, for example work, volunteering, and daily tasks. The three ways to discern and live out vocation.
- The call to a certain way of life.

These will be explored through each of the lessons as we move throughout the module:

Lesson 1: Universal call to holiness

Lesson 2: The Call to Serve

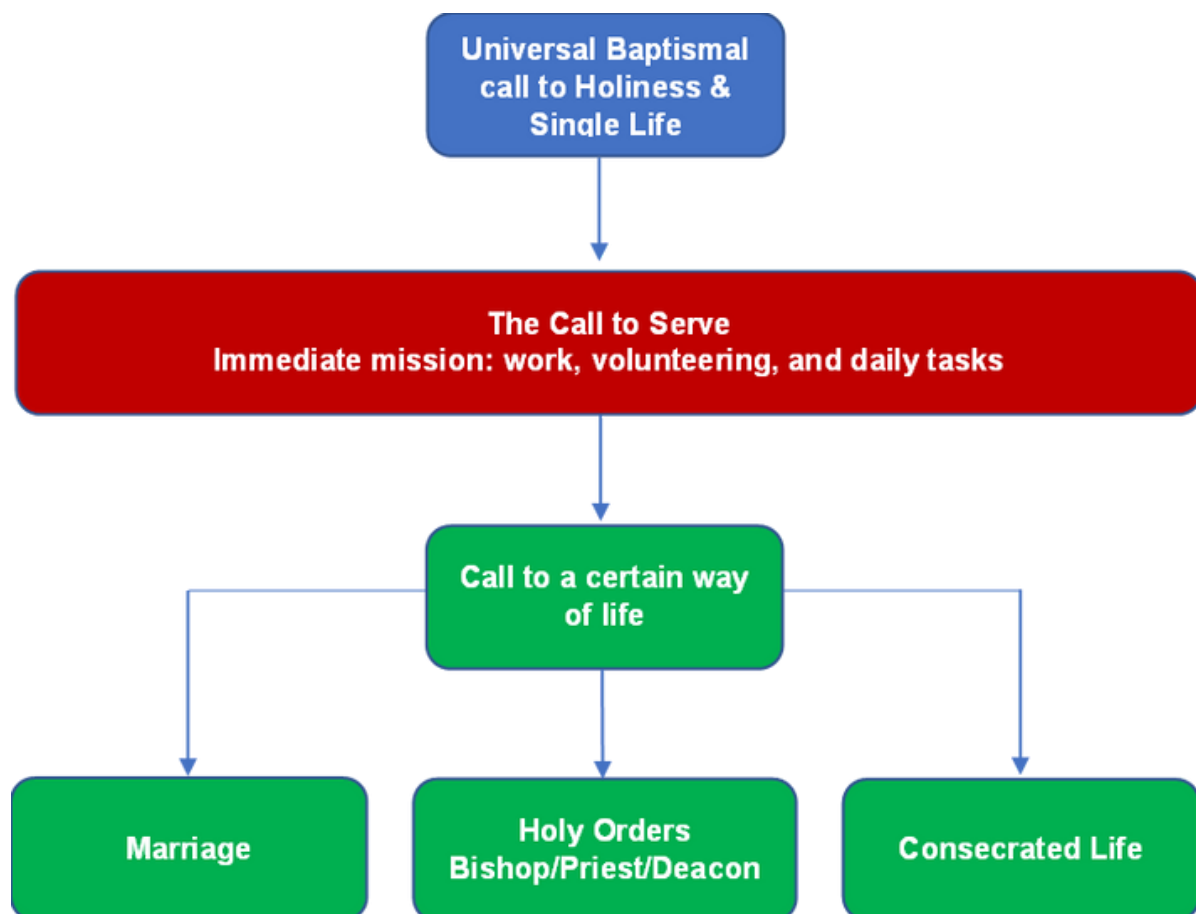
Lesson 3 Call to a certain way of life: Marriage

Lesson 4: Call to a certain way of life: Priesthood

Lesson 5: Call to a certain way of life: Religious Life

Lesson 6: Guest speaker/Assessment Prep

Lesson 7: Assessment



Universal Call to Holiness and the Joy of the Single Life

God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion.

“Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being”

FC 11

Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness.
GE 15

The nature of God is to love and to give life. He created the universe, the world, gave life to families and us. God has surrounded us in love and sheltered us in love, so that we in turn can love others.

Even for those who do not feel they have love from their families, or the people around them, God still surrounds them in his love, otherwise they would not be here. This love is like a binding agent, that passes on from God to us and to one another, this can be called communion. God is communion, he is a Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. So, our first call, or invitation, is to be in that loving communion with God.

When we are baptised, we are brought into this communion of God in a special way.

We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. GE 14

We are baptised into the life of Jesus his Son. This means that the powerful life that is in Jesus the Risen Lord runs through and animates us too.

Now with Jesus, God sees us like he sees his Son Jesus, and asks us to do some of the same work that Jesus did when he was walking on earth with us.

It is important to remember that our purpose is to love, we are created to love and to be loved and to pass this love on.

Baptised as Priest, Prophet and King

The vocation to holiness is already a part of everyone's life. It is important to remember this, especially when we feel undecided as to where God is leading us. Through Baptism we are anointed Priest, Prophet and King. We are all called to share in this threefold role of Jesus. Let us briefly take a look at all three and see why they play a part in everyone's vocation.

Priest: Priests serve as a bridge between human experience and the mystery of God. They are people who can recognise and celebrate the spiritual depth of people and events in a way that gives meaning and direction to individual lives. In Christian terms, they celebrate and support a community in its relationship to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They have a mystical awareness of how The Spirit is at work in events and people.

Prophet: Prophets are called to speak God's truth to the world. They are people who can think through what happens and spell out what might need to change. They are people of faith, logic and courage.

King: A king is one who protects and manages and cares for the community in the practicalities of living, defending values and strengthening relationships. In Christian terms the King encourages the living of the Gospel in practice and supports the common good.

Priest: At times we are called to silence and a deep relationship with God.

Prophet: At times we might be called to speak out.

King: At times we can be called to care, especially for our families or to help build community.

It is important to recognise that we are all called and use these areas to identify where we are heading or being guided within our own life and Christian journey.

Questions in the workbook for students:

1. Explain what Priest, Prophet and King mean.
2. Identify how you serve as Priest, Prophet and King.

'Those who are single, even if not by their own choice, can offer a particular witness to that vocation through their own path of personal growth'. CV 267

'He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will' Ephesians 5:1 ESV

'I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world'. EG 273

The Joy of Single Life

Jesus was a single person, and in him young people can find a source of inspiration for the many things they can achieve or do in their lives.

We all start from the same place - as children, single people, baptised into Jesus's life and sharers of his mission. God decided to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus, and through this we are called to be more like him.

This common stage of life unifies us and launches us into our mission so that we are like Jesus. There are so many things that a single person can do to bring about this mission. We are all born single into this way of life and God creates us to flourish as human beings in the world, it is through our single state in life that we begin to understand what our vocation is in life.

What is important is that we know that we are all called to be holy, which means, free from sin and in relationship with God. Young people can be very holy; here are some examples of young holy people:

St. Dominic Savio (died 14 years old)

St Maria Goretti (died age 11)

Blessed Carlo Acutis (died age 15, born in London, UK)

No human being is totally free from sin, but Jesus takes away our sin, so to stay very close to Jesus makes us holy: that is how we can all be saints. This links back to our ultimate call of holiness; we come to learn that at every stage of our life we are called to be saints of our time. The saints were not just heroic Christians; they were men and women who loved God with all their hearts and loved those that were around them at any cost.

“Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being”
(St Pope John Paul II).

One of the wonderful things about the single vocation is that you have the opportunity to explore the various ways God is calling you. It is from there that using the free will God has given you, you can choose who to be, to follow the path God invites you to follow, or step out in different directions. God will still love you.

Extended question in the workbook for students:

1. Does God call everyone?
 - Discuss this question with reference to the universal call to holiness.
 - Where might God be calling you to as we begin this module?

Lesson 2 – The Call to Serve

The greatest among you shall be your servant. (Matt 23:11)

Opening Prayer: (Read by staff or student)

Almighty God,
We come to you today with hearts wide open
so that we can listen to your call.
We pray that you will lead and guide us
in the plans you have for us.
Help us to respond to your call in our daily lives,
and better our communities through our actions,
which we pray leads us to holiness.
We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord.
Amen

Learning Objectives

- To understand where God is calling us to in the immediate future.
- To understand that this third stage of our vocation may change.
- To identify different places God can put us in so that we fulfil our daily mission.

The 'Call to Serve' is the next sense of vocation that will be focused on in Lesson 2, which will also look at our immediate mission, work, volunteering, and daily tasks. Our innate vocation is to love and serve God, once again this never changes. Our lives are made up of ever-changing tasks, and through those tasks we are called to serve God and those around us. Jesus said, 'the greatest among you shall be your servant' (Matt 23:11), and the service that Jesus speaks of here is humility, striving to live out God's call to love and help those who are around us. This service can be through the job we work in, our activities (such as volunteering or helping), and our own day to day tasks. This part of our vocation can change regularly or infrequently; however, it is important to explore how we live out God's call in these areas.

We all have to make choices such as: what do I want to become? What career path should I take? This is a discernment path we all follow, and God's hand gently guides us through this. When making these choices, it is good to ask ourselves: what am I good at? How will this benefit society? What is God calling me to do?

"Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all." EG 203

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it'. (Genesis 2:15)

We can ask how meaningful the work that we carry out or want to carry out is. God created us for work; we know from the very beginning in the book of Genesis that God works, he was a labourer, and he creates (Genesis 1). When God created Adam, he placed him in the garden to work.

Therefore, what we do in our daily work contributes towards God's plan for us. Every act of work brings about our dignity, whether this is paid employment or voluntary. St Pope John Paul II stated in *Laborem Exercens* that work is an inherently human act.

The Church finds in the very first pages of the Book of Genesis the source of her conviction that work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth. LE 4

In St John Henry Newman's prayer we read:

'God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission.'

You (students) are now at the stage in life when you are thinking (discerning) of what to do: university, college, jobs, and apprenticeships and this all links in with our immediate vocation. It is good to dream big, and we should never stop dreaming about what we think we want to do and what we think God wants us to do.

Activity in student workbook:

1. Write out a list of dreams starting from what you are thinking of doing when you leave school, to where you want to be in years to come.
2. Other than work, what else will God call us to?

The corporal and spiritual works of mercy continue in our own day to be proof of mercy's immense positive influence as a social value. Mercy impels us to roll up our sleeves and set about restoring dignity to millions of people; they are our brothers and sisters who, with us, are called to build a "city which is reliable"
Misericordia et Misera 18

In our lives we are called to live out our vocation through our daily actions. Most of the time we just undertake these actions without realising that they are a part of a bigger picture, helping us achieve our ultimate vocation of becoming saints. This part of the module will focus on the 'call to serve', by living out our human vocation, and what it means to be human? We have been given guidance and ideas about these tasks which are based on helping others, known as the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. The saints in their daily lives lived out these works of mercy and we ourselves should be practicing them daily, in accordance with our vocation and state of life.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are as follows:

Corporal Works of Mercy:

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To clothe the naked
- To visit the imprisoned
- To shelter the homeless
- To visit the sick
- To bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Admonish the sinner
- Instruct the ignorant
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Forgive all injuries
- Pray for the living and the dead

We are called to practice these works of mercy in our daily lives.

How are we called to live out these works of mercy in our daily lives?

Here are some examples of how we can practice them:

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the Hungry

- Volunteering at a soup kitchen
- Feeding the homeless
- Sharing food with a friend or sibling
- Help a local foodbank

To clothe the naked

- Donate any unwanted clothes to charity
- Help the family with the laundry

To shelter the homeless

- Donate food or blankets to a homeless shelter
- Pray for those who have no home or have had to flee their home
- Help someone with house repairs

To visit the sick

- Visit someone in hospital
- Look after a sick member of your family or friends
- Shop for those who are unwell

To give drink to the thirsty

- Give water to those in need
- Raise money for a charity who helps people access clean water (CAFOD)

To visit the imprisoned

- Visit a friend or family who is in prison
- Write a letter to someone who is in prison
- Visit a lonely person*

To bury the dead

- Visit a Cemetery
- Go to friends and families' funerals
- Learn about your ancestors

**just because a person may feel like they are in prison, does not mean people are in jail*

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Admonish the sinner

Set good examples
Bring someone to Confession
Have a chat with a person who is seeking help

Instruct the ignorant

Help people struggling with faith
Give someone a book about the faith
Help someone pray

Counsel the doubtful

Learn the teachings of the church and help others understand them
Listen to a friend and give them advice

Comfort the sorrowful

Visit a friend or family member who is having a hard time
Send someone a card or letter to cheer them up.

Bear wrongs patiently

Don't get mad when others upset you
Assume the best of people
Don't gossip about others

Forgive all injuries

Forgive people who hurt you
Make up with family or friends that are distant

Pray for the living and the dead

Pray a Rosary for the dead
Visit a cemetery and remember the dead, especially in November
Pray for those who are bereaved

It is good to remind ourselves of the acts that we are doing daily. These are certain ways we can live out our vocation in our daily lives. For some of us we may be called to work in a particular area that will support a particular work of mercy, for example:

A doctor: Caring for the sick

A funeral director: Burying the dead

A charity worker: Sheltering the homeless or feeding the hungry

Even if we are living a certain way of life, we can carry out these works of mercy, for example:

A priest: visiting the imprisoned or admonishing the sinner

A religious: instructing the ignorant and praying for the living and the dead

Married: visiting the sick and counselling the doubtful.

These are just a few examples of the many ways that we will all encounter the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy in our lifetime.

Activity in student workbook

Write a list of all the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy you have knowingly undertaken in your life. Rate which you feel is the most important.

Debate

This house believes that the laity (a person not ordained or a consecrated religious) are called to carry out the Corporal Works of Mercy more frequently than the Spiritual Works of Mercy.

Split the group into two and have one argue for the case and one argue against.

Lesson 3 - Marriage

Opening Prayer: (Read by staff or student)

God our Father,
we pray in thanksgiving for the vocation to marriage
and for each couple that you join together in order to make a family.
We ask that every marriage brings each couple closer to you and closer to holiness.
We pray for those who are struggling in their relationships at present,
that they can make it through this tough time and support each other.
We make this prayer through Christ, your Son, our Lord.
Amen.

Learning Objectives

- To understand that marriage is a vocation.
- To understand why people get married.
- To explore the call to love as the central part of marriage, which is at the heart of the vocation.

The Vocation to Marriage

The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a vocation. We are all called to live a life of love and holiness through the gift of ourselves to others. Marriage, therefore, is more than just a legally binding document that is signed on the day of the wedding. A Catholic marriage involves the 'call' of God, which is bound between two people, man and woman, and it is a total gift of self.

A Catholic marriage is established by God, and this is seen in the Creation Story of Genesis 2. When a couple get married, it is truly believed that God is present at the ceremony to witness the promises that have been made before him.

'God who created man out of love also calls him to love the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.'

CCC 1604

'Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.'

Gen 2:24

Married life is a process of growth, in which each spouse is God's means of helping the other to mature... Fostering growth means helping a person to shape his or her own identity. Love is thus a kind of craftsmanship... At every new stage, they can keep "forming" one another. Love makes each wait for the other with the patience of a craftsman, a patience which comes from God.

AL 221

'Marriage is a vocation, in as much as it is a response to a specific call to experience conjugal love as an imperfect sign of the love between Christ and the Church. Consequently, the decision to marry and to have a family ought to be the fruit of a process of vocational discernment. AL 72

A Catholic marriage should be lifelong, fruitful (open to life), permanent and exclusive (only that person), whilst also being entered into freely and consensual and not coerced (forced).

Married couples can help each other grow in holiness, which is God's ultimate call for his creation. This is done through faithful love, sustaining one another in grace throughout the entire length of their lives.

Marriage is one of the Seven Sacraments, which means that the vows made in the wedding ceremony are not only in the sight of God and the Church, but with God. It's a sign of love for Christ, as much as it is for the other person.

'Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptized persons is a true sacrament of the New Covenant'. CCC 1617

Through the Sacrament of Marriage, couples can help each other to become closer to God, which then in turn helps them grow closer together, bringing about a deeper sense of communion.

The purposes for Catholic marriage are ultimately:

- Sanctification of the spouses to grow in holiness.
- For the procreation and education of children.

Marriage is not only the building of a relationship between spouses, but it's also about building a home and family. A simple way to think of marriage is that couples help each other get to heaven; this is what is meant by sanctification and growth in holiness. It is like the story of the man building the house on the rock, the rock is the relationship with Jesus and the house is the couple building life together. When a couple marry, they need to learn how to grow that love together. This growth of love begins very inward between the two. However, the couple need to learn how to love beyond themselves; they must be open to being fruitful and the beauty of children.

When couples are married, they are open to life and to bringing children up, educating them in the faith. This is stated in the marriage vows, where couples promise to be prepared to bring up children lovingly received from God (The Order of Celebrating Matrimony #60).

Some couples are unable to have children, which can cause some suffering; however, marriage was also made for couples to grow in love, as has been established, in order to have a more stable union.

Amoris Laetitia states that; "marriage to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation" but also that mutual love "might be properly expressed, that it should grow and mature" (AL 125). Therefore, couples who are unable to have children still fulfil their marriage vows as long as their marriage is exclusive, faithful and remains open to life.

"Marriage to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation" but also that mutual love "might be properly expressed, that it should grow and mature"
AL 125

'Love and honour each other as long as you both shall live'

*The Order of Celebrating Matrimony
#60*

Marriage is at times a difficult vocation to live and it demands self-sacrifice, as each person gives themselves freely to each other, just like Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The other person comes first, 'love and honour each other as long as you both shall live' (The Order of Celebrating Matrimony #60).

Love, therefore, is at the centre of married life, as St Pope John Paul II stated:

'Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being'.

Extended writing task

A Catholic marriage should be life long, open to life and exclusive. Discuss each of these and explain which one you think is most important and why.

Lesson 4 - Holy Orders (Deacon, Priest & Bishop)

Opening Prayer: (Read by staff or student)

God our Father,
We pray in thanksgiving for our deacons, priests, and bishops.
We ask that you guide them in their work for the Church and
give them a deep faith that they may inspire us and those
who are discerning the vocation to Holy Orders.
We pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood,
that those called will answer and serve you.
We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the difference between deacons, priests, and bishops.
- To explore why men become priests.
- To understand the day-to-day role of a priest.

The Church as the people of God is made up of different roles and responsibilities in a hierarchical structure: *'for the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God, Christ the Lord instituted in His Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body. For those ministers, who are endowed with sacred power, serve their brethren, so that all who are of the People of God, and therefore enjoy a true Christian dignity, working toward a common goal freely and in an orderly way, may arrive at salvation'* (Lumen Gentium 18).

The love of Jesus our High Priest is made present in the pastoral work of bishops, priests and deacons, the three ordained ministries of the Catholic Church. The three ordained ministries will remain the living sign and instrument of Christ the Good Shepherd.

'Today the word "ordination" is reserved for the sacramental act which integrates a man into the order of bishops, presbyters, or deacons' CCC 1538

Deacon

The Deacon has a very unique role within the parish and is called to service. The word deacon comes from the Latin word 'diakonos', meaning 'to serve'. St Ignatius of Antioch explained that the Church needs deacons, priests and bishops, and that the task is nothing less than to continue 'the ministry of Jesus Christ'.

'Deacons receive the strength to serve the people of God in the diaconia of liturgy, word and charity, in communion with the bishop and his presbyterate.'
CCC 875

The deacon goes through a period of formation (training). For priests, the diaconate is the first step of ordination, and this is known as a Transitional Deacon. Some men will be called solely to the Permanent Diaconate. Permanent Deacons can be married, whereas Transitional Deacons cannot, as they will continue onto Priesthood.

There is no set daily role of a deacon, as their vocation is to assist with their parish. Permanent Deacons can also have paid employments such as teachers, working in business, doctors and nurses, engineering and for the Church; however, this is not the same for Transitional Deacons.

Tasks of a deacon include but are not limited to:

- Charitable service to others and adhering to the needs of the community around him.
- Assisting the priest at Mass.
- Proclaim the Gospel and preach at Mass.
- Celebrating Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals.

The deacon plays a role in helping people come to know Christ. Within the parish, the deacon can be involved in RCIA programmes where people are new to the faith, marriage preparation to help those couples who are discerning marriage together, and also other forms of evangelisation.

Priesthood

The priest's life is shaped around that of Christ, and the day-to-day activities vary. The priest being ordained or set aside for the service of God and the faithful, acts in the Sacraments, 'in persona Christi capitis,' or in the person of Christ, the Head of His Church. It is Christ himself who is present in the celebration of the Sacraments and therefore, the priest is acting in Christ's name. It is the usual norm in the Roman Catholic Church that priests are not married and cannot marry once ordained. The priest will generally live out his vocation through parish service, also known as a Diocesan Priest; however, priests can also be members of religious orders and serve as part of a community (for example a Dominican Priest).

'In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts in persona Christi Capitis' CCC 1548

The priest will offer the Sacrifice of the Mass and will draw people into communion with God, whilst also restoring communion with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He will also visit those within his parish who are unwell to anoint them with the oil of the sick.

When a man discerns priesthood, there are steps which need to be taken before becoming a priest:

- Meeting the Diocesan Vocation Director in the diocese where he lives or is thinking of applying to; they will help and support him for a period of time to help him discern, before submitting an application.
- An application is made to the Bishop of that Diocese to enter into formation for priesthood.
- The man will undergo some tests in order to make sure he is right to be put forward.
- The bishop will interview and make the decision whether to send him to seminary or not.
- If this has been accepted, he will enter formation at the seminary.

Seminary

"To live in the seminary, which is a school of the Gospel, means to follow Christ as the apostles did. You are led by Christ into the service of God the Father and of all people, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. PV 42

The priesthood is a relationship with Jesus Christ, that continues to grow; it is very different to a career. Men who are discerning their call to the priesthood would attend seminary in order to prepare correctly for their vocation to the priesthood. Seminary is a place where men go to for several years to receive formation.

This is done through study, prayer and engaging in works that will help them when going into a parish once they are ordained. Priests can also be asked to undertake further study to specialise in scripture or other areas of theology.

The main areas of formation for men entering into seminary would consist of:

- Spiritual Life
- Community Life
- Social Life
- Personal Life
- Apostolic Life
- Intellectual Life

The whole purpose of these areas of formation is to be more configured or conformed to Christ through the prayer life, the Word of God, the Celebration of the Liturgy, fraternal life, and serving others.

It is really important for a seminarian to live a very holistic life, meaning that each one will develop in all areas of life. Some seminaries have their own sports teams and community evenings in the pub.

Task

1. Write down ways in which seminary life prepares men for priesthood.
2. What do you think you would be enjoyable about seminary life?
3. What do you think you would find challenging?

Life as a Priest

'A priest proclaims the Gospel and helps people understand how the Word of God relates to their lives. A priest teaches in the name of Christ and has been given this responsibility by his bishop. He does this well when he meditates on the Word of God – believes what he reads - teaches what he believes and puts into practice what he teaches'. Adapted from 'The Rite of Ordination'.

Priests can work in all sorts of settings other than the Parish Church, for example, a hospital, school, within the army and within prisons. The priest will bring Christ to the people through pastoral care; some of the daily tasks priests will carry out are as follows:

- Offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
- Hearing Confession (Reconciliation)
- Visiting the sick
- Celebrating the Sacraments (Baptism, Communion, Confirmation, Marriages & Funerals)
- Daily life of prayer
- Leading the community and encouraging and developing the God given gifts and talents of the faithful
- Helping people and families who have been bereaved
- Study and preaching the word of God
- Overseeing the day-to-day work of the parish
- Working with charitable organisations, for example SVP for the homeless
- Pastoral guidance and spiritual direction

Diocesan priests are able to have days off, and with this they are able to visit family and friends, play sports, partake in their hobbies and also take holidays. Priests do not receive a salary but are usually given a stipend by the parish or community they serve. This is a modest amount of money to cover their daily necessities, because they have made a promise of charity and obedience, the priest is encouraged to live a life of simplicity regarding material goods. A priest does not have a mortgage as a parish provides him with a place to live.

Task

1. Write down a list of activities a priest would do on a daily basis.
2. What would you think is the most interesting task and why?
3. Which one do you think you would be challenged by?

Bishop

The vocation to be a bishop is unique. A man cannot discern to be a bishop; it is the choice of the Church, and it is the fullest obedience to accept. The bishop is called to be a leader and pastor to his people, especially those that are within his Diocese.

The bishop is called to follow in the footsteps of the apostles, in other words, being a successor of the Apostles, and guide the people and priests of the diocese; the earliest of bishops are recorded in the Bible, Timothy and Titus. The bishop would have gone through ordination to the diaconate and priesthood, before becoming a bishop; this could also lead onto God's call of being a Cardinal or even the Bishop of Rome (Pope).

*Just as "by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another.
CCC 880*

The roles of the bishop are once again varied, he has the role of a priest but in addition he also:

- Governs and administers the Diocese visiting parishes, schools, prisons and hospitals that fall under his diocese.
- Ordains men to the Priesthood and Diaconate
- Ordinarily confers the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Teaches - the bishop will catechise his people, and the priests and deacons of the Diocese will assist with this.

As we look at the Church throughout time, we have many examples of great deacons, priests, and bishops. These are our saints, who have lived these forms of Holy Orders and achieved holiness, the ultimate call and our primary vocation.

Extended writing task

Think about a particular saint that you know who lived their life as a bishop, priest or deacon and write down why they inspire you.

Think of a particular deacon, priest or bishop (perhaps one that visits the school) and write down why they might inspire you.

Lesson 5 - Consecrated Religious Life

Opening Prayer: (Read by staff or student)

Heavenly Father,
we thank you for your providence in calling many men and women
to consecrate their lives to you,
and to undivided service of their brothers and sisters.
Bless them for their self-offering.
Help them be steadfast in witnessing to your kingdom.
May the face of your Son, Jesus our Lord, shine through them,
and may your Holy Spirit animate them,
that your name may be glorified and the Good News
may be proclaimed, making disciples of all nations.
We ask this through Christ Our Lord,
Amen.

Learning Objectives

- Understand what it means to be a consecrated religious.
- Identify the different kinds of religious life and their congregations.
- Explore how to become a consecrated religious.

What is Consecrated Religious Life?

Consecrated Religious Life is a way of life that is officially recognised in the Catholic Church. Other Christian Churches can have religious life too, for example, the Anglican Church has consecrated religious life, and the Orthodox Christian Churches have consecrated religious life.

Consecrated Religious are people who are sometimes known as monks, nuns, priests, brothers, or sisters. They are called to be a sign of how life will be in the next life, the Kingdom coming among us.

That is one of the reasons they do not get married, because we do not marry in the next life, *'for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven'*. Matthew 22:30 (ESV).

They do not have significant personal belongings, just like the first Christians:

'Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.'

And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need'. Acts 4:32-35 (ESV)

'The state of consecrated life is thus one way of experiencing a "more intimate" consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God'.

CCC 916

To be "consecrated" means to be "set apart." Lots of things can be "set apart" for God. For example, a Church is consecrated, a chalice is consecrated, a place can be consecrated too; they are "set apart" or "set aside" for God. There are different kinds of consecrations too, some consecrations are more informal or personal; and others are official and public.

The church has a special prayer and blessing to officially consecrate something or someone. In the case of a religious consecration, a person is offered up to God and blessed in a special way.

Most monks, nuns, priests, brothers, and sisters have been through a special preparation and training before the church officially and publicly consecrates them. Consecrated Religious persons must live by rules; these rules are found in Canon Law (Law of the Church) and in the rules of their community (Rule or Constitutions). Consecrated Religious belong to Religious Communities, or Religious Orders, which have a rule book that their founders or members made up when they were beginning, or when the church was renewing itself during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). These rules were approved by the Church, either by the Pope and the offices at the Vatican in Rome, which is called "Pontifical Right," or their rules were approved by a local Bishop, so are called "Diocesan Right" because the bishop has jurisdiction over his Diocese.

A significant thing to know about being a consecrated religious is that they all have to live Vows. The most common form is to vow to be Poor, Chaste and Obedient. These vows can be lived in slightly different ways depending on which kind of religious they are, but essentially:

'The life consecrated to God is characterized by the public profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, in a stable state of life recognized by the Church'.

CCC 944

Poverty: To live a simple lifestyle without having significant resources of your own.

Chastity: In the context of Consecrated Religious Life, chastity means to remain single, unmarried, and not to have sex, it could also be described as "chaste celibacy," or "celibate chastity."

Obedience: To live in an attitude of listening and collaboration to those who have religious authority over them.

These Vows can also be called Evangelical Counsels.

They are called counsels because they are advisory and not obligatory, they are for those who want to do that little bit more, as Jesus suggests in the gospels:

Chastity: Matthew 19:10-12 (ESV)

Poverty: Matthew 19:16-22 (ESV)

Obedience: Philippians 2:6-11 (ESV)

These counsels are for everybody; all Christians are invited to these counsels, even married people (chastity would mean to be faithful to your spouse and have no other sexual relations), but for consecrated religious, these vows are the pillars on which they build their spiritual growth.

These vows can be Simple or Solemn vows (depending on the tradition of the community, usually solemn vows are older monastic orders but not always), and they are public vows (any person can make private vows). Generally religious congregations of pontifical right will make public vows, therefore they will be accountable before the people of God for the promises they made.

Different kinds of consecrated religious

The different types of consecrated religious life can be separated into broad categories: Contemplative or Monastic, and Apostolic or Missionary.

Contemplative or Monastic religious life has its roots in the early church, not long after the persecution of Christians stopped when the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. There were holy men and women that we now call, “Desert Fathers and Mothers,” who were early Christian mystics and ascetics who lived solitary lives in the desert as they sought to purify themselves of worldly attachments and come close to God. Later these solitary people would begin to form communities and from which, Monastic Religious Life was born. Monastic comes from the Latin word, “monos” which means singular, meaning that the men would basically be alone before God, or some interpretations mean “singular” in that they were single-hearted or dedicated to seeking God.

Today’s contemplative and monastic congregations trace their traditions back to these early traditions. The Benedictine tradition is one example of this, which was founded by St Benedict in the 6th Century.

The word Contemplative comes from the word, contemplate – which means to think about and ponder in a prayerful way.

Today's contemplative or monastic communities will have a focus on prayer at regular intervals.

Some will be apostolic and go out to do work, for example the English Benedictines often run schools or parishes, and others will be more enclosed, especially the women, which means they do not go out but stay in their monastery or convent all the time.

Apostolic religious Life

Apostolic religious life can sometimes be described as the active religious life. Apostolic comes from the word Apostle, after the apostles in the Bible. Apostles are people who are "sent." So, these religious are sent in the name of Jesus and the Church to carry out their mission in accordance with their Charism. Charism is related to the word charismatic or relating to the Holy Spirit. A Charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. The Holy Spirit inspires men and women who have a share in this Charism, or Gift of the Holy Spirit, to come together in communities to do something good for the people of God. Some congregations or communities, have the Charism to work in evangelisation or education, or care of the elderly, or the poor, or whatever the Holy Spirit calls them to do in the name of Jesus and the Church.

Missionary religious life

Missionary religious life is where the members feel a specific call to leave not only their home for the sake of the Gospel, but their country too. Missionary religious dedicate their lives to the service of evangelisation and ministry to the needy in countries all over the world. They often must learn new languages and adapt to very different cultures, they frequently face opposition and persecution for the faith they profess.

Read 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23 (ESV)

Extended writing Task:

1. Think about the vows:

- Poverty
- Chastity
- Obedience

Explain what each of these mean in the context of Religious Life and write down in your opinion which you think you would find the most difficult to live out?

2. Split the class in three giving them the different types of Religious Life:

- Contemplative/Monastic
- Apostolic
- Missionary

Each group will present back with an advert as to why join their way of life looking at the core mission of that way of life and the challenges which help develop each person.

Lesson 6 - Guest Speaker and Assessment Preparation

In this lesson you are encouraged to invite in a guest speaker, positively living out God's call, showing fidelity to the Churches teaching. We have suggested some options below.

- Someone who works in the Church – could be a lay person, young person, which will inspire the students.
- Someone who has a testimony of being called to 'serve' in their job or communities brining about the Gospel message.
- Single Person
- Married Person/Couple
- Priest
- Religious for example a nun or a monk
- Other form of Consecrated Person

For top tips on finding guest speakers please refer to the National Office for Vocation website: www.ukvocation.org

Lesson 7 - Assessment

All states of life are equally important within the Church and build a life of discipleship for each individual. Evaluate.

In your answer you should:

- Define key terms.
- Discuss the different states of life and why they are important.
- Argue which state of life you think is most important and discuss why someone might not agree with this.

Glossary

Baptism: First Sacrament of Initiation, giving a share in the divine life of God and cleanses us from Original Sin.

Catholic: meaning “universal”.

Church: all the people who, through Baptism have become part of the Body of Christ.

Discernment: to work out what to do in the light of prayer and reflection. The root of the word means ‘sifting’ which means to sort out, and in this context, it is to sort out what God’s plan is for you.

Discipleship: imitating the example of Christ and living a life pleasing to God.

Eucharist: representing Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Truly the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ.

Grace: supernatural help from god that leads to conversion and assists in the avoidance of sin and the pursuit to holiness.

Holiness: state of Christian perfection and one which all are called to, relying on God’s grace and mercy.

Holy Spirit: the proper name of the one whom we adore and glorify with the Father and the Son. The Church has received this name from the Lord and professes it in the Baptism of her new children (CCC 691).

In persona Christi Capitis: Latin for “in the person of Christ the head”, a role which is given by way of virtue at Ordination of bishops and priests, to celebrate the Sacraments.

Jesus Christ: the second person of the Holy Trinity, God’s only begotten Son.

Original Sin: the first sin committed by Adam and Eve, which passed down, overcome by the graces of Baptism.

Sacrament: the sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify (CCC 1084).

Trinity: central mystery of Christian faith and life. The belief that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, one God sharing a single divine nature.

Vocation: from the Latin word ‘Vocare’ which means to ‘call’ and we are ALL called by God in different ways.

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