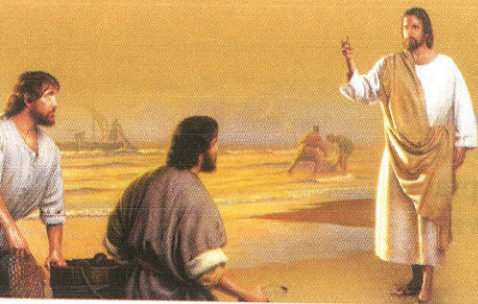


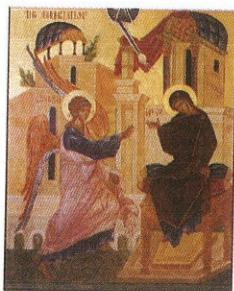


Chapter 6

God's Calling and My Response



- Who all usually calls you?
- For what all purpose do they call?
- Through what media do they call?
- How do you usually respond to those calls?



Each call comprises of the caller, the listener, the message conveyed, and the response given. In each situation, God calls us also. As Abraham, Moses, and the prophets were called. As the Blessed Mother was called through the angel Gabriel. As the disciples were called. They all heeded to God's calling. They fulfilled the mission God entrusted with them. It became a reason for happiness and everlasting grace.

What is Vocation?

Vocation is an inner inspiration, a call to holiness, and selection. That inspiration falls in the soul like a seed and matures over time. God the Father has a specific plan for each of us. A plan for our welfare and happiness (Jer 29:11). With the help of the Holy Spirit, this plan is revealed to us through Christ. It is God's calling, the foundation of any vocation. Christ is the one who initiates each of our vocations. Christ approaches a person with love and inspires the person to respond to that love by choosing a way of life.

The Vocations in the Holy Church

- Married Life
- Priestly Life
- Religious Life
- Consecrated Singles

Marriage Life

- The Sacrament at the Service of Communion.
- The Lord elevated the covenant of marriage between a baptized man and woman into a sacrament.
- Marriage is a covenant of complete self-giving of the spouses.



Vocation:

Our Christian life begins with the reception of baptism. As we receive the other sacraments, we attain spiritual maturity. The children of God who attain spiritual maturity, God the Father invites them to various states of life.

The way the word derived

"Vocation" is derived from the Latin word "vocare," meaning "to call."



"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (Jer 29:11).



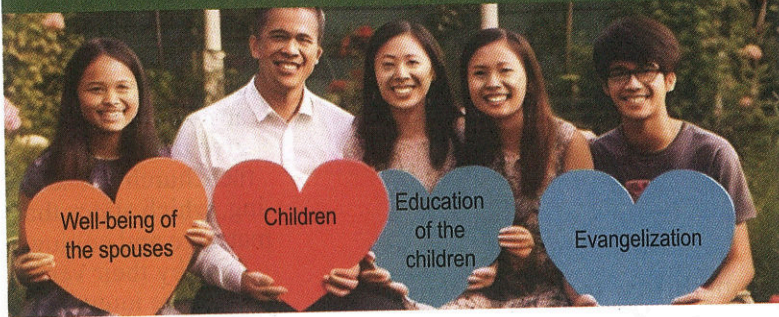
Which all vocations are recognized by the Holy Church?



Divide the class into different groups and introduce the people in the Bible whom God called.

- It becomes part of the covenant between God and human beings.

The Aim of Marriage



Well-being of the Spouses

- God, who is love, created humanity in His image and likeness. Gave them the ability to love and to be loved.
- God found that it was not good for man to be alone, even in the fullness of blessings in paradise; therefore, He gave a well-suited companion for him (Gen 2:18).
- Through marriage, spouses are sanctified, strengthened, and enriched with Christian values (CCC 1643).
- The relationship between husband and wife is a great mystery. As the bond between Christ and the Church, it is holy and steadfast in love (Eph 5:32).

The Children

- Through marriage, humans participate in God's creation.
- Husband and wife, united through love, bring forth new life for God according to His will.
- Marriage and conjugal love, by their very nature, are purposed toward the birth and nurturing of the children.
- Children are the greatest gift of marriage.
- The spouses giving themselves to each other in marriage are simultaneously dedicating themselves to their children. Spouses should consider procreation and nurturing children as their inevitable duty. For that sake, the spouses receive special grace through the sacrament of marriage.
- A married couple must have an openness to receive all the children God grants them (CCC 1652).

"All are called to holiness" (CCC 826).



In what all ways have individuals in different states of life within the Church contributed to your spiritual and material well-being? Share.

Sexuality; Like Fire and Water

Fire and water are good. They are destructive when they are ill-timed and in inappropriate places. If fire spreads on our body or a person drowns in water, they have the power to take our life.

Sexuality is similar to this. Sexual acts before and outside of marriage become sinful. However, within married life, it becomes an expression of sacred love. Fulfilling the purposes such as procreation and love between the spouses.

In light of the above analogy, organize a seminar on contemporary challenges to marital purity.



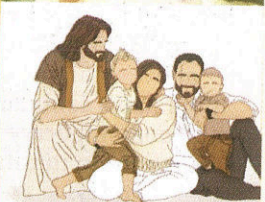
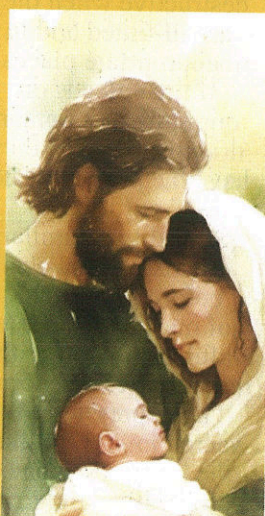
In light of the above analogy, organize a seminar on contemporary challenges to marital purity.

Education of the Children

- Parents have the duty to raise the God-given children according to God's will.
- The fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to their children through education.
- This education produce Moral, spiritual and the divine results in the life of their children.
- Parents are the first and primary educators of their children (CCC 1653).

Evangelization

- Parents receive the responsibility to evangelize their children through the sacrament of marriage.
- Parents must guide their children in practicing Church oriented life from early childhood.



How joyful is the Christian family life!

As Church Father Tertullian writes, who can express the beauty of this marriage! On his wedding night, Tobias prayed: "I now am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity" (Tob 8:7). Married life is an unending celebration of this pure love. "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth... may you be intoxicated always by her love" (Prov 5: 18-19). Like this, married life is always an experience of joyful love. The Church has elevated the married couple, St. Louis and St. Zélie Martin, as a holy family. Behind the lives of all holy children there is a holy family.

Even today, when deception, oppression, and exploitation occur in the name of love, God continues to call many into the vocation of marriage so that they may experience true love in married life. Listen in silence before God; perhaps He is calling you as well to this beautiful marriage altar.



Are there any among you who think, "We want marriage, but not children"? What answer would you give in the light of the Church's teaching, which states that marriage and conjugal love, by their very nature, are intended to bring forth and nurture children?



"Parents must regard their children as children of God and respect them as human persons" (CCC 2222). Organize a discussion on the importance of mutual respect in family relationships.

Many Christians, trusting in God, show courage to be a large family (Youcat 419).



Identify families with many children in your parish, inquire about their faith life (Faith journey), and prepare an interview.

'Vivaaham' is a Sanskrit word "Visheshena vahanam vivaaham" meaning, marriage is a noble undertaking, acceptance, and reception.

Priestly Life

The One Priesthood of Christ



Common Priesthood

The faithful exercise their common priesthood by participating in the mission of Christ, who is Priest, Prophet, and King. All those who receive Baptism thus become priests. The faithful participate in their common priestly duty through the abundance of baptismal grace; i.e. through the life of faith, hope, and charity.

All those received baptism



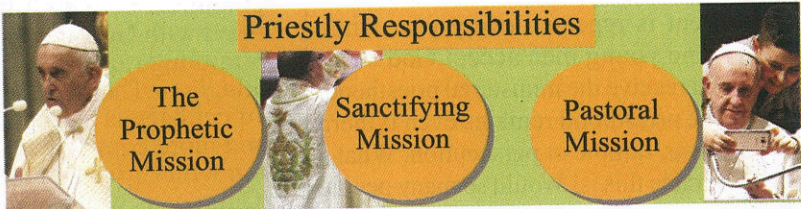
Ministerial Priesthood

The ministerial priesthood is a sacrament that consecrates certain individuals by calling and separating them from the church community by the Lord, for the service of the people of God (Heb 5:1).

The tribe of Levi was called, set apart and assigned a special priestly mission. The priests participate in the unique priesthood given through Messiah in the Church today.

The priests and bishops who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Priestly Responsibilities



The Prophetic Mission

Sanctifying Mission

Pastoral Mission

The Prophetic Mission

- In the Old Testament, prophets fulfilled their mission by correcting the mistakes of the people and teaching them the ways of righteousness in the name of God.
- Christ, the Son of God, fulfilled the prophetic mission in its fullness.
- He went around the temple, synagogues, villages and towns, conversed with the people and taught them.
- A priest participating in Christ's priesthood also participates in the prophetic mission of teaching.
- The yardstick for carrying out the prophetic mission is the Word of God and the teachings of the Church.



‘The three words that should resonate in a good family; SORRY, EXCUSE ME, THANK YOU’, Pope Francis.

What all changes will these three words make in our family relationships? Discuss.



"Every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit" (Mt 7,17).

Write a note on the importance of good families in the light of this verse.



What all are the blessings received through the priests in the church, in the community and in your personal life? Could you share?

“When people want to destroy religion they begin by attacking the priest; for when there is no priest, there is no sacrifice: and when there is no sacrifice, there is no religion.”

St. John Mary Vianney

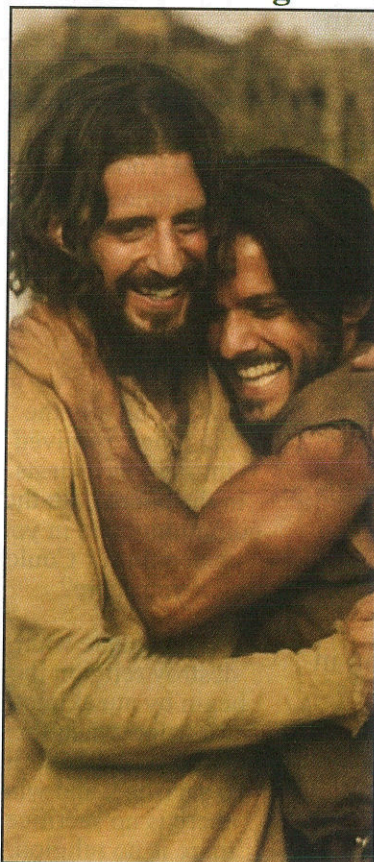
Sanctifying Mission

- Jesus, the Eternal Priest, offering the sacrifice once, made salvation possible once and for all for the entire humanity.
- The priest participating in Christ's priesthood, fulfills this sanctifying mission through the offering of the Holy Eucharist, administration of the sacraments, recitation of the Divine Office, sacramentals and intercessory prayers.
- The priest's life of faith, holiness, and prayer serves as an inspiration for the sanctification of God's people.

Pastoral Mission

- The pastoral mission of a Christian priest is to guide, protect, and nurture the people of God.
- Jesus, the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the protection and salvation of His flock serves as the model for the priest's pastoral duty (Jn 10:11).

Is Jesus calling me to the joy of priesthood?



Saint Charles Borromeo addressed the priests as the representatives of God's personality on earth. Saint Jn Chrysostom says: When we see a priest offering the Holy mass, the hands of Jesus are invisibly extended. From the day Jesus instituted the priesthood until today, a miraculous event is repeated every year when some young men accept God's call and receive the ministerial priesthood. The priesthood remains even if there is war, famine or persecution. What a miracle this is! Would so many people give up everything else to accept such a dull life? Never. Then, a marvelous joy the joy given by God is present in this priesthood. Jesus' voice, 'Follow me', which was resounded on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and the places where the tax was levied that day, is still heard today. Do you hear that voice? Perhaps He may be calling you, saying, "Friend," inviting you to the priesthood to be with Him and to be sent forth.



Is it demeaning to women that only men may receive the sacrament of priesthood? (Youcat 257).



How should one fulfill the common priesthood?



Organize a seminar on the threefold mission of the priesthood.

What is the relevance of priestly celibacy?

Celibate priestly solitude is not meaningless emptiness because it is filled with God and the brimming riches of His kingdom. The purpose of celibacy is a deeper and more complete union with Christ and the Church, as well as the well-being of the entire human race.

(Sacerdotalis Caelibatus)



(1 Pet 5:2-3)

Religious Life

- God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, bestows religious life as a gift to the Church.
- The religious life is a state of life that makes Jesus, who is pure, poor, and obedient, permanently visible in the world through the vow of the evangelical counsels: obedience, chastity, and poverty.
- Religious are those who dedicate themselves entirely to Christ with an undivided heart.
- The goal of the religious life is to become entirely belonging to Jesus.

Duties of Religious Life

Prayer

Mission
work

Pastoral
Ministry

Charitable
Works

The different forms of consecrated life

Consecrated life is like a giant tree with many branches. It has various forms. These include hermitic life, monastic life, the life of virgins, consecrated widows, religious life, secular institutes, societies of apostolic life, permanent deacons in the Church, and brotherhoods, etc (CCC 914-930).

Prayer

Prayer holds the prime position in the spiritual life of the consecrated (Religious Life 6). Like Jesus, all consecrated are to grow in union with God through prayer. Prayer enhances consecrated life. Through personal prayer and community prayers, they nurture their spiritual life, worship God, and intercede for the world and the Church.

Mission work

Religious who are consecrated to Christ are called to participate earnestly in the church's missionary work. Religious congregations have a specific role in the evangelization, propagation of the faith, formation of new church communities, and social service (CCC 927). Religious are obligated to be involved in missionary activities and to spread the Kingdom of God in all areas of ecclesiastical life and at various places.

Vows

Religious vows are a covenant of love undertaken by a person in order to become completely God's own and are accepted from that person by God through the Church. Obedience, poverty, and chastity are the vows of religious life.

Obedience

It is completely surrendering their will and offering themselves as a sacrifice to God for the sake of Christ, who submitted to the will of the Father even unto death on the cross and fulfilled His divine will (Religious Life 14).

Poverty

It is the voluntary renunciation of everything, following the example of Christ, who, though rich, became poor for our sake so that through His poverty, we might become rich.

Celibacy

It is a dedication made with an undivided heart to love God and to serve Him and His people.

Pastoral Ministry

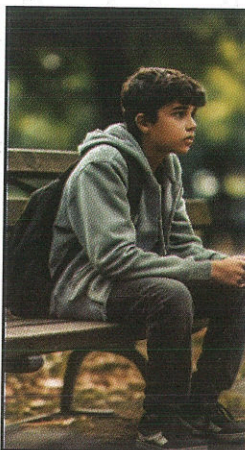
The religious can play a significant role in leading the parish community, which is a family, toward a sacramental life, especially to the Holy Eucharist. By sincerely cooperating with the parish priest in all pastoral fields, they guide many towards a life of spirituality and prayer. Providing faith formation, preparing children for the reception of the sacraments, keeping the youth connected to the Church, helping them develop a well-formed Christian conscience, and supporting families in sustaining their faith life are all pastoral activities carried out by the consecrated.

Charitable Works

"Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Drawn by this call of Jesus, religious serve themselves as missionaries of love and mercy. The goal of their charitable work is to strive to make the compassionate love of God the Father and the mercy of His Son experiential to humanity through healthcare services, education, social work, and the upliftment of the marginalized.

Consecrated Single Life

- Consecrated Singles are those lay missionaries who, without embracing the vocations of married life, priesthood, or consecrated life, dedicate themselves entirely to the service of the Church by closely following Christ.
- The Church recognizes this way of life as a vocation.
- The highest attraction of this vocation is Christ Himself. He is also the model of this way of life.
- Even if they do not officially proclaim the vows and dedication of religious life, they can play a crucial role in building up the Church by participating in its missionary activities and faith formation efforts.



Why should I discern and accept my vocation?

- Vocation is a beautiful plan that God has specially designed for me, for my good and happiness.
- This vocation leads me to the realization of my life.
- I choose a particular way of life by which I fulfill my duty to the Church and to society. Thus, God's divine plan is accomplished through me.



"Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; Go, sell all that you go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; Then come, follow me'" (Mark 10:21).



What is meant by the religious life?



Organize a discussion with the religious on the meaning and joy of consecrated religious life.



Prepare a note on the duties of the religious.



Identify the different forms of consecrated life and present their spiritual characteristics in class.

Discerning Vocation; Saints Model

1. St. Francis of Assisi: As the young Francis was praying in the San Damiano Church in Assisi, he heard the voice of Jesus within him saying, "Rebuild this church." Francis realized his vocation to rebuild the Church through the example of his holy life. Each of us has a calling to build up the Church.

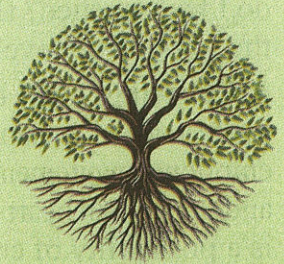
2. St. Little Thérèse: As she prayed before the crucified Lord, St. Thérèse of Lisieux felt as though she could hear the cry of Jesus resounding in her ears: "I thirst!" (The Story of a Soul, chapter 5). She realized that this thirst was for souls and, at the age of fifteen, accepted God's call to join the Carmelite Order. Jesus wants each of us to lead souls to eternal salvation.

3. St. Don Bosco: At the age of 20, Don Bosco informed Father Dassano, the vicar of his parish, about his desire to join the seminary and become a priest. Don Bosco sought the guidance of the vicar, his spiritual advisor Fr. Cafasso, his saintly mother Margaret, and his spiritual friends. Thus, he entered the seminary with firm conviction (Biography of Don Bosco). One must develop interest in the vocation to which one is attracted and should be able to choose wisely the most suitable.

4. Sts. Celine and Martin: the parents of St. Little Thérèse: Before getting married, Celina and Martin had a desire to enter consecrated life and the priesthood, respectively. It was not possible for many reasons. Later, both of them met accidentally and received an inner conviction that this was the partner God had prepared for them. Accepted the divine call of marriage. Gave birth to nine children. Five of the children joined the convent. The spouses who gave birth to the Holy Family became holy spouses. By living faithfully to the call we have received, we should be able to become a model.

The help of the Holy Spirit

Only in the light of faith can a person discern their vocation. In the depths of our soul, in the innermost chambers of our heart, the Spirit speaks to us. Theologically speaking, it is the voice of the Christian conscience. In general, our emotions, desires, life experiences, related thoughts, images, and plans all serve as indications leading us toward the vocation.



The consecrated are like the roots of a tree. Only the leaves, flowers, and fruits are visible on the outside. The roots are not seen externally. But it is the roots that hold the tree upright and provide it with water and nourishment. This is how the consecrated ones are. Their silent prayer, dedication, and suffering bring spiritual benefits and fruits to the Church and society.



"I Thirst" and "Rebuild my Church" - What is the message conveyed?

According to Pope Francis, the discernment of vocation has three stages.

Recognizing, Interpreting, Choosing

1. Recognizing: Pay attention to our life experiences, emotions, and thoughts.

2. Interpreting: Where do I find the absolute peace? When do I feel satisfied? Does this place or action lead me towards the joy of true love?

3. Choosing: In the light of these thoughts and interpretations, make a decision calmly, without social pressure or momentary emotional excitement. Decisions being acts of human freedom, and the human heart being weak and inclined toward sin, there is a possibility of error in discerning God's call. Therefore, decisions must be reviewed repeatedly. Self-examination must be conducted. The Word of God, the teachings of the Church, and moments of silent prayer with Jesus Christ will help us in this process. Youth pious associations and movements assist young people at this stage.

Ways to Discern Vocation

1. Inner Inspiration: This is the love, inclination, and attraction we feel within us toward a specific vocation. It is the voice of a right conscience.

2. Silent Meditation and Prayer: Pray in silence in the presence of God to interpret the inner inspirations with more clarity. Listen to God for God's voice to speak through the conscience.

3. Spiritual Guidance: We should openly share our inner inspirations with priests, consecrated persons, spiritual directors, and parents who are qualified to provide spiritual guidance and attentively listen to their counsel.

4. The reading of the Word of God and the exemplary lives of the saints. The reading of the Word of God with prayer and the exemplary lives of the saints further illuminate our inner inspiration and lead us to profound understanding.

Through married life, priestly life, religious life, and consecrated single life, Jesus calls us even today to belong to Him and to be sent for Him. Let us pray and strive for the grace to discern and accept our vocation.

Am I mature enough to accept a vocation and take on great responsibilities?

In the apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis pictures God as one who entrusts great things to young people and the youth. Gideon, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, the Holy Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist took upon themselves great responsibilities from a young age according to God's will. Likewise, we too must be able to take up responsibilities in due time.



What should be considered in order to discern vocation?



What are the four stages of discerning vocation?



My Convictions

- My Vocation is a plan that God has prepared for my goodness and happiness.
- By accepting and living according to my vocation, I glorify God.
- I must prayerfully prepare to discern that vocation.



Let us read the Word of God

The Acts of the Apostles
Chapters 1-4



Let us illuminate our hearts

Thomas, who was called the Twin,
said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go,
that we may die with him (Jn 11:16).



My Resolution

God, who entrusted great responsibilities to
youth even at a young age, is also calling me. I
will strive to discern that call. I will accept the
vocation that I discern.



How will
I discern my
vocation?