

Ad Altare Dei Day of Recollection

Sunday

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This Day of Recollection incorporates certain requirements for the Ad Altare Dei religious emblem.

Itinerary

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| 10:45 | Mass at church – arrive 15 minutes early, Scouts are greeters and gift-bearers | |
| 12:00 | Welcome and Opening Prayer | 2 |
| 12:15 | lunch – catered by parents | |
| 12:45 | How to Pray – meditate upon what the bible says of prayer | 3 |
| 1:30 | break | |
| 1:45 | Stewardship and Vocations – with deacon or priest | 8 |
| 2:15 | Spiritual Gifts and Talents – a prayer service | 15 |
| 3:00 | break | |
| 3:15 | Bible Outburst – a board game | |
| 4:15 | break | |
| 4:30 | Reconciliation – a prayer service | 16 |
| 5:00 | Closing Prayer | 19 |

What is a Day of Recollection?

A *Day of Recollection* is sort of a mini-*retreat*, often a half-day or a day in length. A *retreat* is a time of prayer and reflection. One withdraws from the distraction of day-to-day activities to commune with God. We follow the example of Jesus, who spent forty days in the desert in prayer and fasting before entering his public ministry. A retreat may be any length of time, but it usually includes an overnight. Today, we will spend time in prayer, reflection, and discussion, and we will also have a little fun.

Opening prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As I enter this special time with you, O Lord, quiet my mind, quiet my ears, and quiet my heart, that I may fully enjoy this communion with you. Speak to my heart, that your words may become your works in the flesh and keep me ever mindful of the opportunities you place before me. Through Him who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

How to Pray – meditate upon what the bible says of prayer

Adapted from *Prayer – Communication with God* by the Daughters of St. Paul

< http://www.daughtersofstpaul.com/growinginfaith/basicqas/prayer/prayercomm_231.html >

What is prayer?

Prayer is talking to God with mind and heart, and often with the voice. It is a response to God's invitation to seek him.

Come to me, all you grown weary and burdened, and I will refresh you. (Mt 11:28)

Why do we pray in the name of Christ?

Through Baptism we are one with Christ and his Church; therefore, all our prayers are offered with his to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

In Christ we have free and confident access to God through our faith in him. (Eph 3:12)

Must everyone pray?

God calls every person to prayer. He wants to engage us in a personal relationship, a conversation. Even if some do not hear the call or pay attention to it, God continues his invitation to each human heart.

By groping about after him they might search for and find God, for he is not far from any of us. (Acts 17:27)

How can we learn to pray?

We learn to pray best by praying, by talking to God from our own heart. Many examples of prayer can be found throughout the pages of Scripture, especially in the Psalms.

Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my groaning. Harken to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you, and watch. (Ps 5:1-3)

How should we pray?

We should pray with the same sentiments which the Gospels demonstrate:

- conversion of heart - *Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. (Mt 5:23-24)*
- faith - *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Mt 7:7-11)*
- filial boldness - *And Jesus said to him, "If You can?" All things are possible to him who believes." (Mk 9:23)*

- desire to do God's will - *Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest. (Mt 9:38)*
- watchfulness - *...and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mk 1:15)*
- perseverance - *Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs." (Lk 11:5-8)*
- patience - *Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:1-8)*
- humility - *And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Lk 18:9-14)*

What are the types of prayer?

These are the types of prayer:

- blessing - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. (Eph 1:3)*
- adoration - *Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. (Ps 95:6)*
- petition - *Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. (Col 4:12)*
- asking forgiveness - *But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' (Lk 18:13)*
- intercession - *First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men. (1 Tm 2:1)*
- thanksgiving - *in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thes 5:18)*

- praise - *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. (Eph 3:20)*

What are the best sources of prayer?

The best sources of prayer are God's Word (Scripture), the Church's liturgy (prayers and sacraments), and the virtues of faith, hope and love (dispositions to prayer).

When should we pray?

We should pray every day, and we can pray at any time, in any circumstance, for any reason.

Pray at all times in the Spirit with every manner of prayer and supplication. (Eph 6:18)

Where can we learn to pray?

The main school of prayer is the family, where Christian beliefs and practices are explained and shared. The Church's liturgy, along with her ministers and teachers, also offer us opportunities to learn how to pray. Religious congregations share their spirituality with others, and we can also learn prayer from the lives and writings of the saints.

Anyone who lives on milk is still a child and is inexperienced in the word of righteousness, whereas solid food is for the mature. (Heb 5:13-14)

For whom should we pray?

We should pray for ourselves, our family, relatives, friends and neighbors, the Pope, bishops, priests and religious, government leaders, lawmakers, judges and public officials, the sick and the dying, sinners, unbelievers, the suffering souls in purgatory, and even for our enemies.

First of all, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men-for kings and for all those in positions of authority... (1 Tm 2:1-2)

What are the common forms of prayer?

Three common forms of prayer are vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer.

What is vocal prayer?

Vocal prayer is prayer of mind, heart, and lips. It is prayer spoken audibly.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth your praise. (Ps 51:15)

What is meditation?

Meditation is a mental (unspoken) prayer in which a person, after quiet reflection, arrives at or strengthens a resolution to live a better Christian life. Meditation can lead us to know Jesus better and follow him more closely.

Reflect on the statutes of the Lord, and meditate at all times on his commandments. It is he who will give insight to your mind, and your desire for wisdom will be granted. (Sir 6:37)

What is contemplative prayer?

Contemplative (mental) prayer is unspoken prayer in which a person is united to God and ponders his truths.

Then there are those sown on the good earth, who are the ones who hear the word and welcome it and bear fruit, one thirty fold, one sixty fold, and one a hundredfold. (Mk 4:20)

Why are we often distracted during prayer?

Worries, anxieties or physical discomfort can distract us, while other distractions may come from the devil. The efforts we make to overcome these distractions make our prayer better and more pleasing to God.

What other difficulties can affect our prayer?

False expectations, lack of feeling, disinterest, laziness or weak faith can also make our prayer difficult.

If the grain of wheat that falls to the ground does not die, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (Jn 12:24)

Why do we not always obtain what we pray for?

God knows what is best for us, and can see that a particular request may not be for our ultimate good. In these cases he gives us some other spiritual gift according to his loving plan for our lives. Every sincere prayer is answered in some way.

This is the confidence we have in [God], that if we ask for something which is in accordance with his will he hears us. (1 Jn 5:14)

How can we pray better?

We can pray better by allowing the Holy Spirit to pray in us, remembering that prayer is the duty and privilege of a Christian.

Pray at all times in the Spirit with every manner of prayer and supplication. (Eph 6:18)

Why is it important to pray at times with others?

It is important to pray at times with others because Jesus wants us to come to prayer as a community.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (Mt 18:20)

What is the greatest community prayer?

The greatest community prayer is the Mass.

What is the sign of the cross?

The sign of the cross is a prayer which reminds us of two important mysteries of our faith: the Blessed Trinity and the redemption. As the prayer is said the cross is traced from our forehead to our chest and from one shoulder to the other. We are literally "signing" ourselves with the cross.

How are the mysteries of the Trinity and redemption expressed in the sign of the cross?

When we say "In the name," we express the truth that there is one God. When we say, "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," we manifest our belief that there are three distinct Persons in God. When we make the form of the cross on ourselves, we express our belief that the Son of God-made-man redeemed us by his death on the cross.

When do we usually make the sign of the cross?

We usually make the sign of the cross when we begin and end our prayers and when we enter and leave a church.

What are some prayers that every Catholic should know by heart?

Some prayers that every Catholic should know by heart are the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the Glory, the Hail Holy Queen, the Angel of God, the Eternal Rest for the souls in purgatory, the acts of faith, hope, love and contrition, the morning offering, and grace before and after meals.

Stewardship and Vocations

Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:9-11)

What is Stewardship?

Stewardship isn't just helping your church or helping others. It is a lifestyle accountable to God, recognizing God as Creator, Provider, and Savior. It is responsible management of our time, talent, and treasure to the glory of God and for the benefit of others. It improves our relationships with God and with each other. It is living one's life Christ-centered rather than self-centered. It changes one's heart. It is not simply a fundraiser or about money and donations. It is a lifetime commitment.

What Are the Four Catholic Vocations?

http://www.ehow.com/about_5096026_four-catholic-vocations.html

By James Withers, eHow Contributing Writer

Usually referred to in the context of priestly ordination, "vocation" is actually a concept that is pertinent to all members of the Catholic Church. The vocation of a person represents the type of life that this person will choose to lead in relationship to the Church. Catholics are able to select from one of four types of vocations: priesthood, religious life, marriage, and single life.

God's Call

Upon receiving the gift of baptism into the Christian faith, a person also receives a "calling" from God, according to Catholic doctrine. This doctrine is based on a Biblical precedent:

"God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn." (Romans 11:29)

By seeking to understand God's calling for his life, a believer will attempt to understand what type of role he should fulfill in the Catholic Church. He is able to select from one of four vocations. However, no single vocation is more important than the others. Rather, God calls different people to fill of the different vocations, and each of these vocations serves to help the Church remain healthy and vibrant.

Priesthood

A clear example of the patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church exists in the fact that Catholic priests occupy a distinct vocation while Catholic nuns do not. A nun is not approved to fulfill the same functions of a priest, which include administering sacraments and listening to private confessions. However, both nuns and priests share in common the fact that they must practice lives of celibacy. Priests are also expected to visit those who are suffering from illnesses, or to counsel those who are suffering problems such as marriage difficulties, incarceration or chemical dependency.

Religious Life

In addition to priests, the Catholic Church benefits from the commitment and spiritual support of many people who function behind the scenes, brothers and sisters. These people devote themselves exclusively to the Church, taking vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This means that they will live where they are assigned, refrain from involvement in romantic or sexual relationships and follow the guidance of their

superiors. Monks and nuns function in this vocation, and much of their austere lives are spent both in communal prayer and in general service to the Catholic community.

Marriage

Marriage is the only vocation in which sex is permitted. However, intimacy trumps sex in a Catholic marriage, and sex is not to be considered an on-demand commodity. Rather, a man and a woman who are united in marriage are urged to cherish their wedding vows: "Till death do us part. In sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, for better or worse." They are also encouraged to view their bodies as sacred vessels of life, capable of producing families. Both parents and children are invited to participate as volunteers in the Catholic Church. In fact, married men can fulfill the function of Deacons in the Church, who are responsible for preaching, teaching, administering the Holy Communion and tending to the needs of marginalized members of a congregation.

Single Life

Some people may not voluntarily choose to be single. However, if not yet married, members of the Catholic Church must recognize themselves as single. This means that they must live a life of celibacy, prizing chastity above promiscuity. Single members of the Church are able to help their churches in ways that married persons cannot. They are invited to invest their time, money and talent to allow the Church to reach out to the community. Furthermore, unlike married couples, these individuals are often able to relocate if necessary in order to assist as missionaries or even as envoys.

Holy Orders And The Laity

<http://www.squidoo.com/catholicvocation>

In a certain sense, the Church is juridically divided between those in Holy Orders and those who share in the common priesthood of Christ but who do not have the character of Orders. Or, in plain English, there are in the hierarchy those who are deacons, priests, and bishops and the others who are the laity.

Both those in Orders and the laity share in the common priesthood of Christ. By baptism, all the faithful are called to preach, teach, and sanctify according to their state in life. The goal is the making up of the Mystical Body of Christ. Each person is called to live in the fullness of God's grace and to be a functioning member of the Body by striving for holiness.

Those in Holy Orders are called in a special way to live out their vocation to holiness by mirroring Christ in a special way and serving His holy Church. They are called upon to be His representatives and to minister to the people.

Permanent and transitional deacons are clerics who have received ordination at the hands of a bishop. Deacons, as we are told in Scripture, were called upon to serve, St. Stephen being a glorious example of the diaconate.

The priests are collaborators of the local bishop. They assist the bishop in the very necessary ministry of providing the sacraments to the faithful. Souls are entrusted to their care and they should strive for holiness and service.

Bishops have the fullness of Orders and are successors of the Apostles. The Bishop of Rome, the Pope, is the successor of St. Peter the first pope. Besides having the care of all the souls in a general sense because of their membership in the College of Bishops, the bishop has his own diocese in which certain people are in his direct care and service.

The Process of Discernment

The Diocese of St. Cloud

<http://www.stcdio.org/vocations/discernment.htm>

God is calling each of us to some special life work! This will help you personally evaluate your own vocational calling . . .

1. Pray

As a Catholic, in any discernment process, one must ask two questions about the ways that I pray:

- ✓ Am I doing private prayer? Prayer which calls me individually into a deeper relationship with my Lord and Savior. Prayer that calls me to set time aside regularly so as to grow deeper in love with God.
- ✓ Am I doing community prayer? Healthy, balanced prayer discernment as a Catholic cannot happen outside of my relationship with my community. Prayer calls me to set aside time each week to grow deeper with God in relation to my sisters and brothers in Christ. The normative experience would be at the Sunday Eucharist with my community.

If you want to know what God wants, you have to talk to Him. You have to pray. God's will, His plan for us, does not happen without our freely chosen cooperation. To build a friendship with God works the same way that it does between two people who want to become friends. Talking, listening, spending time together, learning about each other, sticking it out in good times and bad: all of these are normal parts of a human friendship, why should it be any less with God?

Prayer is, most simply put, talking with God. It is the form of communication that hooks us into the spiritual realm. Everyone knows about it at some level, whether they choose to admit to it or not, and usually, like every other skill in life, it takes practice to figure out how it works. So practice makes perfect fits well with this subject.

If God designed it so that every person He creates has a unique personal vocation for this life, then certainly He must have the information on how we are to figure it out. A manufacturer always has a manual for his created machine. Prayer, then, is the way we communicate with God in order to learn what that special purpose is in our life. His plan will always be the perfect and most satisfying one for us. Many people are quick to believe that they can figure it out for themselves without the manual, but in the end they will never have mastered its use as much as if they had just patiently worked it out with God.

If someone said they were going to buy a car but had never talked to the owner before buying it, we would say that person had made a poor decision. The same goes for learning about one's vocation. If we want the best and most fulfilled life, we need to talk to the perfect creator and designer.

2. Study the Faith

Each person should be able to say that they studied their faith, in at least, two different areas this week. Have I taken the time to nourish my faith or put myself in the places that will help me say yes to this question?

Before buying a car, one should know something about cars. One does not need to know everything about the technical aspects of a car before making the purchase, but there are important pieces of information that are especially helpful for the future life that will be lived after that decision. Time should be spent studying so that one can feel comfortable that they are not getting into something way over their head or making a decision too quickly.

The same applies to faith and vocation. Before making a decision to get married, become a sister or a priest, one should know more about their faith. Learning is a lifelong process and so is faith-building. We need not know everything there is to know, but there are lots of things that are helpful for living a Christian life. The more that one can study, the better off he or she will be when it comes time to make a choice.

Not sure where to start?

- ✓ St. Jerome, who translated the scriptures into Latin, once said, "If you are ignorant of the scriptures, you are ignorant of Christ." Correct! Pick up the Bible and start exploring it for prayer and knowledge.
- ✓ Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church. For less than \$25 you too can own and read about the traditions and the teachings of the Church.
- ✓ Read about the lives of the Saints.
- ✓ Go to mass, listen to the homily by the Priest and incorporate this into your life.
- ✓ Go on Retreat. There are so many to choose from: TEC, Stuebenville, Lifeteen, Cursio, NET, NCYC, WYD, Castaways, Diocesan, confirmation or parish retreats.
- ✓ Join Youth groups in the Parish.
- ✓ Join a Catholic Bible study within your Parish.
- ✓ Study the Sacraments especially the teachings on the Mass.

3. Know your options

In order for you to focus on an option, one needs to know what they are. As a woman in the Church, you have three Vocational options:

1. Married life
2. Single life
3. Sisterhood (Nun)

As a man in the Church, you have five Vocational options:

1. Married life
2. Single life
3. Priesthood
4. Brotherhood (monk)
5. Deacon

If you want to be fulfilled in life, my advice is to choose one earlier than later.

It would be foolish to look at only one advertisement in the paper if we were going to pick out a car. Instead, the smart thing to do would be to look at several ads, to visit and see several of them for yourself, and to then make an educated decision.

4. Affirm or eliminate options educationally

After knowing about one's options, the next step is to begin to affirm or eliminate the options which support or are unsupportive of the result we want at the end. We are not able to choose and follow every single option, so at some point the options need to be slimmed down to a smaller and more selective group. This should be done after learning well each of the options, and then educationally eliminating those options which are not the best for what you think God is asking of you.

God does want you to choose. Our Creator wants us to be happy. It would be easier if the Vocation Director chose it for you, but that is not how God intended it. God wants everyone to use his or her conscience and intellect to find out the best reasons to say yes or no. One of the signs is if we check an option out and we have a yearning for more. We feel inner peacefulness. We are interested in finding out for. Then this is an affirmation. On the other hand, if we are frightened or feel uncomfortable or cannot see

ourselves in that lifestyle, then it is a possible elimination. We need to find what matches the needs of our heart and mind.

5. What brings me peace?

What hobbies or talents do I enjoy the most? What gifts has God blessed me with that give me peace. God does not give you gifts or talents or hobbies for your own glorification. He gives them to you so as to use them for the furthering of His Kingdom.

God called the first disciples, who were fisherman, to learn to love, serve and know him and then they were sent to preach the Good news to fisher-people amongst others. God doesn't give you talents for you to hide or not use. So you must know that what you have is for a reason, use them.

Secondly, I must ask. Can I do those hobbies or talents to the extend of my giftedness in the particular option that I am exploring?

6. What are others saying?

Another important question steps outside of my own wants and desires and asks, "What are other people saying?" Do other people think I would make a good priest, a good nun, or good spouse? We live in community for a reason. Ask my classmates, my friends, my peers, my parents what they think? This may be the Lord's guiding hand in the discernment process. Often those closest to us have a good picture of who we are from an angle we are not used to seeing. A decision should not be made merely because a whole group of people think the same way, but it should not be left out of the process as a good indication of God's will. If anything it may be an encouragement by the Holy Spirit. An authentic call is not only from within but also a call from the community that I live with. Look into the Old Testament or the lives of many famous Saints who have been called to become the leaders out of a community.

7. Frequent reception of the sacraments

The Church works as one giant spiritual machine built of the many people who live in her and those who are already in heaven. The Holy Spirit is the energy that drives her, and the sacraments are the oil that makes the parts work more smoothly, more effectively. The more often one receives the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation, the more smoothly the machine runs. That is why many saints have written over and over again of the importance of going to Mass and Confession frequently. Eucharist is the source and summit of who we are as Catholics. Pope John Paul II often suggested the need for reconciliation and the Eucharist to go hand in hand with each other as a means of acquiring the grace we need to continue on the path to holiness.

The sacraments help to sanctify our lives, to make us holier and to build up good habits of holiness. The more we frequent the sacraments the more we learn about Christ and ourselves. The more we know about Christ, the more we are able to understand what a vocation is. The more we know about ourselves, the more we are able to understand how we fit into that vocation.

8. Ask the right questions to the right people

Lots of people will give their "two cents" about car buying, but there are only a few people whose opinion has lasting value in my book. Likewise, when it comes to discernment, not everyone should be considered as the same valued resource. Talk to someone who lives as a faithful Catholic. Talk to someone who is married if you are considering marriage. Talk to a priest if you are considering priesthood. Talk to a Nun or sister if you are considering that vocation. You see the pros are living all around us. Listen and meditate on what is said. Don't be afraid to ask questions, but also try to have thoughts organized beforehand so that the person is not engaging in just idle chatter.

9. Listen to your conscience

God gave us a conscience for a reason. It is meant to guide in decision making of big and little issues. It is what helps to discern good from bad and right from wrong. It is a gift from God that both aids us and binds us to His law of doing the right thing. One must always follow his or her informed conscience in the end.

That being said, vocation discernment is not a simple *yes or no* answer for most people. Usually, it is clouded with a lot of other circumstances that seem to get in the way from finding a clear and obvious choice. Still, decisions must be made that are in line with one's conscience. In the end, God will judge by our faithfulness to His gift. An informed conscience knows the Catholic faith, is not based on just feelings, has done the research, and invoked the Holy Spirit for guidance.

10. Be Generous

Generosity is a great virtue to build for someone who is looking to give his or her life over to God. In a world and culture that promotes self-satisfaction, the Christian stands out as one who is self-giving. Be open to giving talents and gifts to the needs of the Church.

No matter what God's calling is for each of us, that unique call is first and foremost a gift of God to His Church, then it is a gift to us for our greatest fulfillment. Every man or woman called to be a priest, monk or nun is called to be a gift to the whole Church. Every man or woman called to be a spouse is called to be a gift to his family and community. God asks everyone to accept His call, and then to generously return it back to Him in service. You do not own your talents, gifts, material goods, body, and mind. They are merely on loan to you and God asks you to be a good steward of them.

11. Live healthy relationships

A seed planted on dry ground will not take root, but a seed that falls on good soil will bear much fruit. A vocation cannot expect to take root in a lifestyle that is not Christ-like. Christians are called to live a different way of life than what is promoted by the world. Choices must be made to not participate in bad actions. It takes a great deal of strength to live a good Christian lifestyle without being tempted to falter in the small things. That is why it is also important to have friends and family members who will support the Christian way. Without them the journey is much more difficult. Good Vocations empower other vocations. Be sure to be living good healthy Christ like relationships with both men and women.

12. Get off the fence

Some people like to try and keep every option open and available at all cost. That way they will not be pressured to quickly into making a decision they may one day regret. At some point, however, it is important to stop balancing on the fence and to make a decision. Otherwise an option may be put on hold for much longer than is necessary. A vocation entails certain doors closing and other windows opening. Those who choose to get married are also choosing to not marry everyone else. The door of single-hood closing does not mean that it was an evil way to live. Rather, it means that new opportunities for intimacy, a family, and happiness will be found that could not be found in the single life. For example, you can't get married if you don't get off the fence and date. You can't be a priest unless you first become a seminarian. You can't be a sister unless you check out a convent. You certainly can talk a lot about a vocation. You certainly can pray a lot about a vocation. But you really need to do some action step which means that you get off the fence and explore.

13. Leap of Faith/use the Holy Spirit

When it is time to make a decision there will likely be the necessity of a Leap of Faith. God often wants to check to see how much we are willing to trust Him, especially in choosing a vocation. The Holy Spirit was

left behind by Jesus to guide the Apostles for a reason. The same applies to us. The Holy Spirit is at our disposal in making decisions to follow God's will. This Gift is FREE! His will is not always clear, but by making a leap of faith it often becomes evident afterward. None of us know 100% of how life is going to turn out.

14. Know the Holiness of all Vocations

Each of the five vocations is unique, special, and necessary for the Church: Married, Single, Monks, Nuns, and Priests. They each come with specific graces to help the vocation to excel in holiness for the greater honor and glory of God. It cannot be said that one vocation is greater than any other if compared by their potentials for holiness. We are all aiming for the same state of Holiness but we definitely are called to different degrees of service. We are equal but not the same.

A mother of five children who helps each one of them to become little saints is just as capable of holiness as a nun who spends all day in a convent praying. Likewise, a nun is just as capable of sin as is a mother.

It is important to remember that each person's vocation is pre-planned by God for the best happy ending. He knows what vocation each person will chose before it is chosen, and He is always looking out for the needs of His Church.

Explore each possibility thoroughly to see if that particular lifestyle matches well to the person you want to become. Do not choose a vocation by what it will “get you”. Choose it by the plan God has for you.

Spiritual Gifts and Talents – a prayer service

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Holy Father, we ask Your blessing upon us as we reflect upon our spiritual gifts and talents. Help us to recognize these gifts in ourselves and in others as we are filled with your Holy Spirit in the name of Your Son. Amen.

1st Corinthians 12:4-11 states:

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

We often fail to recognize many of the gifts and talents of the Holy Spirit present within ourselves.

[distribute sheets to Scouts]

On this sheet of paper, please list some of the gifts and talents of the Holy Spirit that you see in the Scout named at the top. After doing so, please pass it to your left so that another may add his thoughts. Please do this prayerfully and in all seriousness. Continue to pass the sheets until the owner receives his own sheet.

[allow sheets to be passed and added to]

If anyone needs to explain to another why he wrote what he did, you may do so now. If you question a gift or talent that was listed for you, you may ask about it.

[allow for discussion]

Let us close in prayer. Holy Father, help us to nurture these gifts and to use them wisely in service to You and to our brothers and sisters. Let us be effective witnesses to Your saving grace. We thank You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit as we follow the example of service of Your Son, Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reconciliation – a prayer service

Opening prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Father in Heaven, please send your Holy Spirit to instill in me the ability to clearly examine my sins and bring them before you.

Examination of conscience

First Commandment: I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me.

Do I truly love God above all, or do I sometimes give greater importance to things of this world: money, image, looks, clothes, popularity or selfish desires?

Do I claim to have good values but often bend or abandon them in order to fit in and be "part of the group?"

Do I turn to God in thankful prayer, or do I pray mostly when I want something?

Do I really want to be transformed by the will of God, or do I just use my religion in order to "look" like good Christian people?

The Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.

Do I show disrespect for God's name by misusing it out of frustration or anger or to look "tough" to others?

Do I hesitate to mention God's name in appropriate situations, in conversations with friends and family members?

Do I continue to learn about God by paying attention in Church; Religion Class; and through reading Catholic periodicals, articles on religion in the secular press, and television programs?

The Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.

Do I come to Church to celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days, or do I attend Mass only when it is convenient?

Do I participate in the Eucharist by praying and singing, or do I simply sit as a spectator and wait to be entertained?

Do I pay close attention to the Word of God and open myself to God's call to allow His word to take effect in my life?

Do I acknowledge the "true presence" of Christ in the Eucharist and receive Holy Communion with respect and reverence?

The Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother.

Do I help bring peace and happiness to my family, or am I disrespectful of others and a source of hurt and division for those who are closest to me?

Am I loving, respectful, and obedient to my parents? Do I appreciate the many sacrifices they make for me? Do I say "Thank you" and "I love you" often enough?

Do I do my chores without being asked, or do I wait for my parents to become upset before I move away from what I am doing?

Do I listen to my parents' reasoning when they say "no" to me?

The Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill.

Have I injured another person through carelessness or fighting? Have I been violent or abusive either in action or in speech?

Have I placed myself or others in danger because of reckless use of alcohol or other drugs? Have I caused difficulties for myself or others because of their use? Have I risked my life by driving or riding with someone under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?

Do I strive to forgive those who have hurt me, or do I hold on to resentment and desire for revenge?

Do I use my powers of influence well to fight war, oppression, abortion, and injustice; or do I allow those evils to continue by my apathy and my silence?

Do I share what I have with those in need? Do I support the life and mission of the Church by responsible stewardship - sharing my time, talent, and treasure?

Do I bring my Christianity to every day situations, or do I stand on the sidelines and complain about every flaw that I can detect in others?

The Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

Do I respect the dignity of the human body and the holiness of Christian marriage? Do I show that respect in my speech, or are crude language and jokes often part of my conversations?

Do I understand and appreciate the gift of my sexuality as a means of expressing my love [and God's love] in the Sacrament of Marriage?

Have I dishonored my body by impurity or unworthy conversation or thought leading to impure actions?

Have I encouraged others to sin by my failure to maintain good moral standards?

The Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.

Do I respect the property of other people? Have I stolen, damaged, or vandalized the property of others?

Have I cheated at work or in school? Have I pressured others into helping me cheat?

Am I honest and hardworking in school and at work?

Am I faithful to my promises? Can I be trusted?

The Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I lied to stay out of trouble or to avoid a difficult situation?

Do I gossip about others? Have I damaged the reputation of another person by exaggeration or making up stories about them? Do I stand up for those unjustly accused, or am I merely a channel through which rumors pass, whether or not they are true?

Can I be trusted with a secret?

The Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Have I weakened or damaged my relationships through my obsession with another person?

Do I respect the commitments of others and help them remain faithful to their promises?

The Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Am I satisfied with what God has given me, or am I jealous of those who seem to have more?

Do I try to prove that I am better than others by bragging or buying more things?

Do I appreciate my own good qualities, or do I constantly compare myself with others and become resentful or bitter?

Do I cope well with the problems that confront me and maintain my Christian hope in spite of hard times and difficulties?

Do I truly "seek first the Kingdom of God" in my life and place my trust in Him?

Do I reflect the peace, hope, and joy of a people redeemed and made holy by the Blood of Christ?

Prayer of Confession

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell, but most of all because they offend You, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

Symbolic gesture of forgiveness

Oh, Holy Father, I forgive my brothers and sisters for their actions against me as I ask them to forgive me. I ask for your forgiveness for all my sins. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thank You, Lord, for this communion with You. Help me to go forward with renewed faith and commitment to Your will. Send the Holy Spirit to guide me in the path of your Son, Jesus Christ. Let His example through me be a beacon to all others.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.