

VOCATION CHALICE

Praying for Openness to God's Calling



Please Return To:
St. Thomas the Apostle
2055 Woody Drive
Billings, MT 59102

THE VOCATION CHALICE

THANK YOU for agreeing to take the vocation chalice this week and pray for vocations. There are many in our community and world who are still searching for vocations who will benefit from your prayers. There are also many who have found their vocation, but are having trouble living it out. For these people as well your prayers will be fruitful.

Please do your best this week to pray every day for vocations, as a whole family together as it is possible. You may find it helpful to use the prayers that are included in this booklet or you may find it easier to offer prayer from the heart. In any case, please make the time and offer your prayers together as a family each day.

The need for vocations to the priesthood and religious life is becoming more and more obvious, both in our world and in our diocese. It would be good for us to think about the opportunities that are made available to us through the ministry of priests and religious. Whether it be the celebration of the Eucharist, or being visited during times of illness, or receiving comfort and guidance in times of trial, we are reminded of their unique role in our church and world. As you pray for more priests and religious, be thankful for those who are currently serving God's people.

Let this week also be an opportunity for you to speak to your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews about consider a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. God is calling, but many obstacles in our lives make it difficult to hear the invitation. The influence of close family members is critical for the development of a strong understanding of God's call for young people. Talk to your children or other young relatives about what God wants them to be when they grow up and listen to what they are telling you. Just because they are young does not mean that God is not calling them.

It is also good for us to remember that God continues to call all of us who are Baptized into the mission of Jesus Christ to serve, no matter our age. As you pray, listen for the voice of God. May God bless you for the time you spend praying for men and women to serve God and the Church.

“The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” – Matthew 9:37-38

God calls each one of us to be part of His plan for the salvation of all. Are we listening or willing to hear the invitation God has for us? God's plan will be our greatest fulfillment and bring about the greatest joy, but are we open to it?

PREPARATION OF THE HOME

Place the Vocation Chalice in a special place of respect in the heart of your home where the family can gather for prayer; often this place is the dinner table. Please remember that this chalice is consecrated: set it in a place of honor in your home. Do not drink from the chalice except for at Mass, for that is its special purpose. Please keep the area around the chalice clean and even adorn it with a special cloth, a candle, or other aid to make the chalice's presence a sacred reminder and welcome opportunity for prayer each day as a family. Before praying, you may wish to read some further information in this booklet to help your family become more familiar with vocations. We recommend you start with the Simple Daily Prayer format below.

SIMPLE DAILY PRAYER

Gather your family together around the Vocation Chalice for prayer each day. Observe a moment of silence together, aware that Jesus is present when two or more gather in His name.

Make the Sign of the Cross

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Read a short verse from Sacred Scripture, for example:

A reading from the Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Pray the Vocation Prayer (which can be found in the top of the chalice case)

LORD OF THE HARVEST, BLESS young people with the gift of courage to respond to your call. Open their hearts to great ideals, to great things.

INSPIRE all of your disciples to mutual love and giving—for vocations blossom in the good soil of faithful people.

INSTILL those in religious life, parish ministries, and families with the confidence and grace to invite others to embrace the bold and noble path of a life consecrated to you.

UNITE us to Jesus through prayer and sacrament, so that we may cooperate with you in building your reign of mercy and truth, of justice and peace.

AMEN.

Conclude with the Sign of the Cross

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DAILY PRAYER PRACTICE AND PRAYER JOURNAL

Please feel free to spend more time in prayer each day than in the Simple Daily Prayer format above, adding elements or prayers that speak to your family such as praying the Lord's Prayer, sharing intentions, reading more scripture, praying a decade of the rosary, etc.

Another very important element of praying for vocations is not just that each family is praying, but that as a parish family we are bearing witness to the movement of God's Holy Spirit among us. An important way you can do this is to write your prayers, experiences and intentions in the Prayer Journal which accompanies this guide. It will be read by those who take up the chalice and call to prayer after you as an inspiration and opportunity to support your needs through prayer. Don't forget to place the journal back with the other materials when you return them to the church.

FINDING OUT MORE ON VOCATIONS

There are many ways of asking about vocations. For younger people it is important to talk to your parents and ask for their advice. If you are a parent, then you may want to ask the parish priest on how to talk to your children about vocations. There are also many online resources that might help your children in the right direction. Here are some websites that you might find helpful:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' official website for vocations.

www.usccb.org/vocations/index.htm

A comprehensive resource with great information and links to other helpful sites.

www.vocationnetwork.org

Many articles and documents on vocation to the priesthood and religious life.

www.catholic-pages.com/dire/priesthood.asp

Diocese of Great Falls Billings vocation website.

www.diocesegfb.org/Vocations/Vocationsmain.html

TYPICAL REACTIONS

In today's society, answering a calling from God may seem unusual or even undesirable. It is important to remember the first truth of our faith – God loves us and desires that we might have life and have it to the fullest. It is in the light of this basic truth that we can respond to the most typical reactions and excuses that each of us may face. Please be aware that these are all reasonable doubts (do not be ashamed for having them!). These hesitations can serve as very helpful opportunities to discover the most fulfilling path for your life. Here are a few reactions and responses to these reactions that might help you begin to move forward in your discernment:

“I am not holy enough.” Who is? No one is worthy of God's attention and love, of Baptism, or a church vocation. They are pure gift from God. God loves you and chooses you no matter what your life has been.

“I am afraid I'll fail.” Explore these feelings of failure. Do you think Jesus ever feared taking the next step? If we are paralyzed by fear of failure, what will we ever do? Another consideration is that perhaps the worst thing is not failure. It could be part of God's plan. Jesus' life looked like a failure to some.

“I've made mistakes. I'm a Sinner.” Who hasn't? This is a blessed gift to realize that you are not perfect and that you depend on the love and mercy of God. We all do, and it is only with God that we can grow and move past our faults, sins.

“I am not talented enough.” Recall the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. When we give God what we have, it will be transformed and multiplied to feed those in need. God empowers us for ministry when we give what we have.

“I am from a dysfunctional family.” It is said that the majority of those in priesthood, religious life, and discernment come from a dysfunctional family. We are all human and you are in good company with the church. Apart from the personal work you need to do to overcome issues from your family background, you will also recognize that you have sensitivities and certain gifts from your experience that will enable you to minister well. In the service of God, our weakness is strength.

“I could never stand up and speak in front of people.” Many priests and religious thought the same thing. Look at them now! God will help you.

“I am afraid of making a permanent commitment.” Seminary and initial formation programs give you the time and space to really see if priesthood or religious

life fit before you make any kind of commitment. All we are asked to do is to be in conversation with God and to listen to where He may be asking us to go.

“I don’t want to miss out on life’s big pleasures.” A life spent mourning what we have missed out on is a life unlived! God is our creator, the source of all joy and love—there is no greater pleasure than walking with God in fellowship with other believers, especially in the manner in which we ourselves are personally called. Try to think about what fulfilling joys and pleasure you are missing out on by *not* pursuing your vocation.

- Adapted from Vocations Anonymous: A Handbook for Adult Discerning Priesthood and Religious Life by Sr. Kathleen Bryant, RSC

8 STEPS TO BETTER HEAR GOD’S CALL

Pray. Open yourself in a conscious way to God’s presence. God is bombarding us with blessings and His presence everywhere and at all times but we are often closed. Relax... Open up... Give God some quality time. If the recommendation for good health is a minimum of 20 minutes of exercise three times a week, then spend a similar amount of time listening to God for your spiritual health. You don’t have to pray some ‘great prayer,’ just pray from your heart.

Get a Notebook. Start with writing down the things you are experiencing. When did you first notice the call? What have other people said to you? What do you think God is asking of you? Are there any Scripture passages that have sparked your interest?

Remember. Recall your personal story of faith. Where did it all begin? When did you first experience God? How has your image of God changed over the years?

Talk to Someone You Can Trust. Talk to one person. In the early stages of vocation discernment, you may not want to tell your family and friends. They may start treating you differently and not give you the freedom to genuinely discern your call.

Start Looking Around. Gently start looking around at the priests and religious you have known. Pick up the Bulletin or the Harvest and look for vocations events, retreats and other activities. Some people begin writing seminarians or religious orders and keep a hidden stash of vocation literature under the bed or in the closet. It never hurts to do some investigating.

Get Involved. Get involved in some form of service or parish ministry (teaching a religious education class, serving as a Proclaimer or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, visiting the elderly or feeding the homeless).

Enlist the Support of Prayerful People. Ask people to pray for you. You don't have to specify an intention. You could suggest that you are trying to discover God's will for your life or that you are trying to make a decision. Consider asking prayer from your family, close friends, or a prayer group at the parish such as the Monday Night rosary group.

Pay Attention! Notice and pay attention to what is life-giving, energizing for you. What sparks fly out at you in your life? Where's the passion? The attraction?

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ABOUT VOCATIONS

What is a Vocation?

Put simply, a vocation is a calling from God. It is our own unique way of responding to God's invitation to happiness. God wants us to be happy and fulfilled and at peace. This is the invitation that God extends to us. To find peace in our lives is to focus our lives about God and to allow everything that we do to be centered around His will in our lives.

What are my options?

Within the life of the Church, there are four possible vocations into which all of us who are baptized fit:

1. **Married life:** A life shared between a man and a woman that is a witness to the world of God's love for all of humanity.
2. **Single life:** A life of one person lived for the service of others and the Church.
3. **Religious life:** A life dedicated to a particular community in which someone usually prays and works according to the mission of their particular order and mission of the Church.
4. **Ordained life:** This refers to the life of deacons, priest and bishops. It is a life dedicated to the service of the people of God and building them up in the way of holiness.

How do I know which one is for me?

It can be difficult to discern who God is calling us to be and in which direction the Lord wants us to go. The most important way of discerning God's will for us is to pray. Through prayer we establish a relationship with God and through this relationship we find out the best way for us to grow closer to God. This 'best way' is our vocation: it is the way that will lead us to happiness and peace. Another way of pursuing God's calling is to listen to the people around us. God calls us through other people and we have to listen to the voice of God even though it comes from the face of a family member or friend.

A third way of discovering which vocation we are called is to become active in the life of our parish community. By using our talents for the sake of others we can become aware of what we are good at and how we can use those gifts to help others come to know God.

A FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE

The Vocation Chalice is a practice with several names (Elijah cup, Vocations cup, etc.) that has demonstrated an incredible effectiveness throughout the country and world in promoting receptivity among Baptized Catholics to hearing and responding to God's calling. Reflections from one family include:

Because we had the [Vocation Chalice] we prayed for religious vocations. At first I prayed that others would have religious vocations, and then I realized that my brother, my sister, or I might have a religious vocation. I thought vocations were for other people but we *are* other people. Because of the [Vocation Chalice] I thought about priests and sisters and how they heard God's call. – Cameron (11 yrs. old)

The experience with the [Vocation Chalice] was a wonderful one for my family and I. We placed the chalice on our family table to remind us of vocations, which is what it symbolizes. I never really had thought about or pondered over exactly how much religious people really mean to us, the Catholic Church. Without Bishops, priests, deacons and sisters, there could be no Catholic Church. These people influence our lives in so many ways. They live their lives as true examples of the teachings of Jesus. From when I was 5 or 6 until now, I can remember these special people have influenced my life... The [Vocation Chalice] reminds us to pray for these people who often slip by unrecognized and without support of our prayers. I think you should bring the [Vocation Chalice] to your parishes. What the [Vocation Chalice] symbolizes is the future of the Catholic Church. –Telia (12 yrs. old)

The [Vocation Chalice] is an extremely powerful symbol of the priesthood and religious life. Because of the uniqueness of the cup in our home it was a constant teacher and reminder of the need for prayer for religious vocations and for those who now serve us in the Church. The [Vocation Chalice] inspired much prayer and discussion in our home. It was a wonderful experience. –Carol (Mother)

The [Vocation Chalice's] presence in our home has been a real, heart-felt blessing, certainly not a task. It has been our pleasure to participate, along with other families, who have brought the [Vocation Chalice] home. We hope that others may also share what we have discovered; that the [Vocation Chalice] has raised our awareness of the need for prayer for all religious and the importance of praying for more people to enter into religious life. Our family is richer due to the [Vocation Chalice]. We will continue to pray for this intention. –Bruce (Father)

PRAYERS FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD & RELIGIOUS LIFE

Prayers - Various

Teen Prayers

Children Prayers

Marriage

Single Life

Religious Life

Ordained Life

Scriptural Verses

Meditations

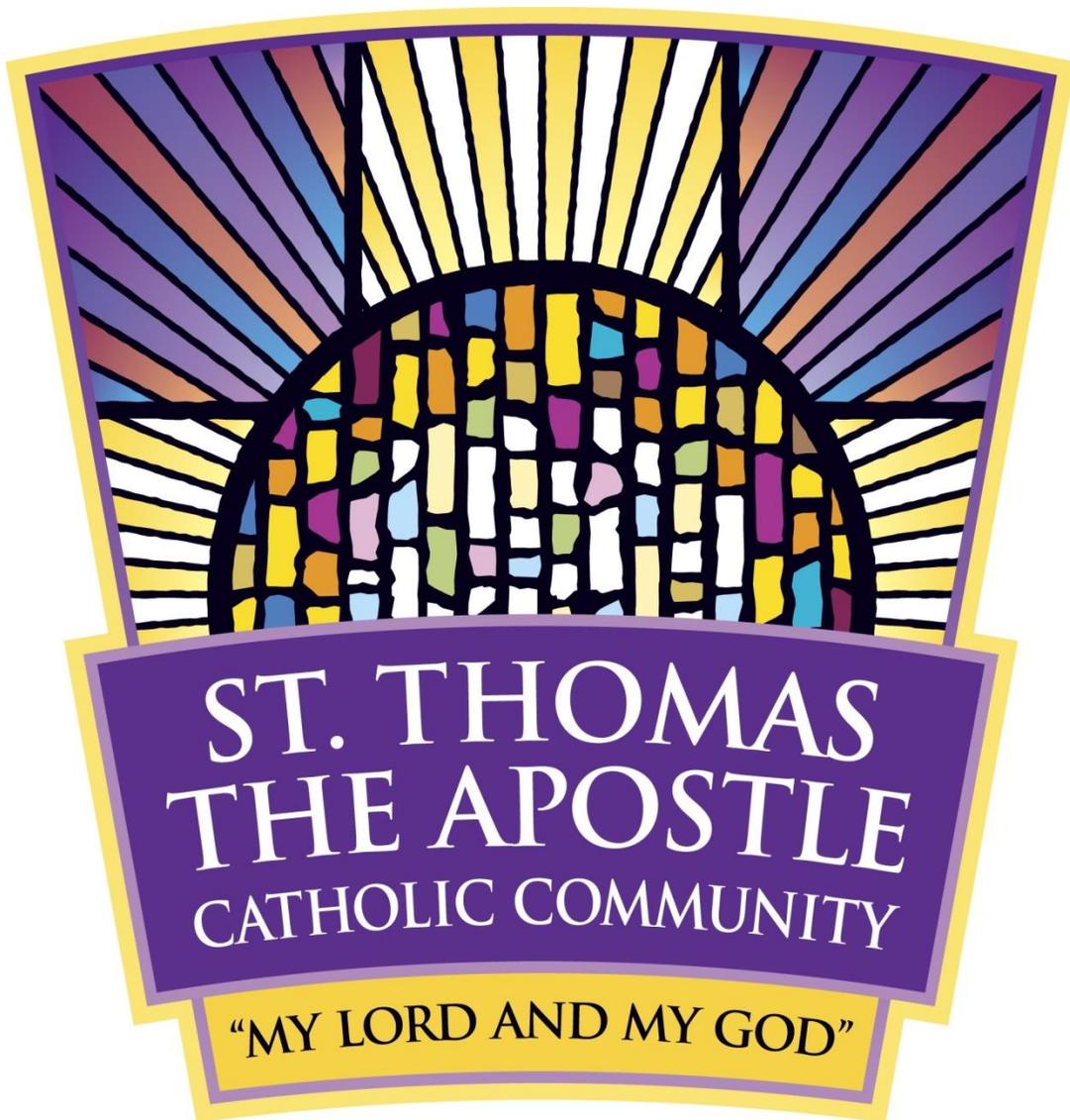
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

RETURN THE VOCATION CHALICE AT THE END OF YOUR WEEK OF PRAYER

Either:

- 1) **PARISH OFFICE** on **FRIDAY** *between 8am and 12pm* (office closed Friday p.m.)
- 2) **SACRISTY** on **SATURDAY** *between 3:30pm and 4:30pm* (well before Mass so it can be used and given again)

Contact the parish with any questions during normal business hours at 656-5800.



ST. THOMAS
THE APOSTLE
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

"MY LORD AND MY GOD"