



PRIESTHOOD

“And another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go and say farewell to my family at home.’ Jesus said, ‘No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.’” - LUKE 9:61-62 ^[1]

CLASS DISCUSSION:

PREPARING TO TALK WITH OTHERS ABOUT A VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Guys: Imagine that you feel called to the priesthood. Now imagine that you need to tell your parents about it. How would you prepare?

Girls: Imagine a close male friend feels calls to the priesthood. Help him prepare to tell his parents about it.

STEP 1: INITIAL CONVERSATIONS (BEFORE “BREAKING THE NEWS”)

- Before announcing your intention to pursue a vocation to the priesthood, seek conversations with your parents about the priesthood in general.
- If you do not know how they feel about the Catholic Church, ask them about it. If you do not know how they feel about the general idea of the priesthood, find out.
- See how they react, rather than simply assuming there will be a problem. You might be pleasantly surprised by their reactions, especially if they have a high regard for the Church and the priesthood.
- If they seem put off by the idea of the priesthood, stay calm and affectionate—it’s your family!—and ask them why they feel that way. It will be more beneficial to your relationship in the long run if you are calm and loving rather than reacting with indignation. Even if their responses are very negative, they are more likely to come around if you don’t allow yourself to be disturbed by their reactions.
- Ask the vocation director (or another trusted and knowledgeable adult) for advice on how to talk to your family.



Talking to your close friends and family about your plans is important, even if it’s not always easy.

Image from www.shutterstock.com

STEP 2: BREAK THE NEWS GENTLY

Hopefully, you have been able to follow Step 1, talking with your family and friends multiple times about the general idea of the priesthood. If it has been too hard to talk about your personal interest, don’t worry. You have to tell them sometime, and here is how to break the news in the best way possible.

- As you begin the conversation, especially if you have never mentioned the possibility of this vocation, do some damage control. Apologize for the fact that you never brought it up before, and tell them that you love them. You don’t need to give reasons why you never mentioned the topic.
- During the conversation, tell them very simply that you want to become a priest. Tell what attracted you to the priesthood, and demonstrate that you understand its challenges as well as its joys. If this is the first conversation, and you expect resistance, you do not need to mention how firmly you have made up your mind.

[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>



PRIESTHOOD

CLASS DISCUSSION: PREPARING TO TALK WITH OTHERS ABOUT A VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

- Offer practical ways for everyone to get more information about your desire. You have to plan ahead for this:
 - *A Priest in the Family* by Fr. Brett Brannen is a great resource for parents.
 - Ask if them if they would like to meet the vocation director, even have him over for dinner.
 - Visit a seminary and see if family can talk to the rector.
 - Attend the diocesan annual Chrism Mass or an ordination Mass. The vocation director can give you these dates.
- If any “downsides” to the vocation are brought up, acknowledge that you are aware of the challenges. If pressed for more information, address any particular concerns the others might bring up. If it seems like the discussion is turning into an argument, it might be good to back down a bit and suggest pursuing one of the practical steps above. Try to end conversations by expressing your love and concern for family and friends.
- Again, remember that it will be more beneficial to your relationship in the long run if you are calm and loving rather than reacting with indignation. Even if their responses are very negative, they are more likely to come around if you don’t allow yourself to be disturbed by their reactions and show them that you are open to hearing them, even if you remain firm in your intention to discern your vocation.

ROLE-PLAY: TALKING TO OTHERS ABOUT THE PRIESTHOOD

In this exercise, you will participate in will role-play a conversation between parents and their son who is interested in becoming a priest.

To prepare, you may refer to the “Tough Topics” pages:

- Clerical Celibacy
- Male Priesthood
- The Sexual Abuse Crisis

GROUPS OF 4

One girl to play mom, one guy to play dad, one guy to play possible priests, and 4th guy/girl to play coach for the “potential priest.” The “parents” play Devil’s Advocate and ask questions or express concerns to the “potential priest.” The “potential priest” practices answering and addressing these concerns. The 4th student coach helps the “potential priest” if he is having trouble explaining or answering questions. If the group finishes early, they can switch roles.

GROUPS OF 2

One parent/friend, one guy to play the “potential priest.” The parent/friend plays Devil’s Advocate and asks questions or expresses concerns to the “potential priest.” The “potential priest” practices answering and addressing these concerns. If the two are both guys, and time allows, they can switch roles.

OPTIONAL: PRACTICE ENCOURAGEMENT

One girl to play friend, sister; one guy to play “potential priest.” The “potential priest” tells his decision and the girl/guy practices offering more than generic encouragement. This is a good moment for both to think about what they would and should say to such news. You can offer congratulations or encouragement, or ask questions.



PRIESTHOOD

ROLE-PLAY: THE ORDINATION RITE

RITE OF ORDINATION

Narrator: *The ordination of priests begins after the Gospel. The bishop wearing his miter sits at his chair; the candidates are called by the deacon.*

Calling of the Candidates

Deacon: Let those to be ordained priests, please stand.

Narrator: *The Deacon reads each name. Those to be ordained stand and answer as they are called, bowing to the bishop as a sign of reverence.*

Candidates: Present.

Presentation of the Candidates

Vocation Director (standing at lectern): Most Reverend Father, holy Mother Church asks you to ordain these, our brothers, to the responsibility of the priesthood.

Bishop: Do you know them to be worthy?

Vocation Director: After inquiry among the Christian people and upon the recommendation of those responsible, I testify that they have been found worthy.

Election by the Bishop and Consent of the People

Bishop: Relying on the help of the Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ, we choose these, our brothers, for the Order of the priesthood.

Narrator: *All present give their assent to the choice by applause.*

Homily

Narrator: *All sit, and the bishop gives the homily. He begins with the text of the readings from Scripture and then speaks to the people and the candidates about the office of priestly office.*



The candidates stand before the bishop as he questions them.

Examination of the Candidates

Narrator: *The candidates then stand before the bishop, who questions all of them together:*

Bishop: Dear sons, before you enter the Order of priesthood, you must declare before the people your intention to undertake this office. Do you resolve, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge without fail the office of priesthood in the presbyteral rank, as worthy fellow workers with the Order of Bishops in caring for the Lord's flock?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: Do you resolve to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and teaching the Catholic faith?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: Do you resolve to celebrate faithfully and reverently, in accord with the Church's tradition, the mysteries of Christ, especially the sacrifice of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation, for the glory of God and the sanctification of the Christian people?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: Do you resolve to implore with us God's mercy upon the people entrusted to your care by observing the command to pray without ceasing?

Candidates: I do.

[3] Alice von Hildebrand, *By Love Refined: Letters to a Young Bride*, (Manchester, NH: Sophia Press, 1989, 12).



ROLE-PLAY: THE ORDINATION RITE

Bishop: Do you resolve to be united more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a pure sacrifice, and with him to consecrate yourselves to God for the salvation of all?

Candidates: I do, with the help of God.

Promise of Obedience

Narrator: *Then each candidate goes to the bishop in turn and, kneeling before him, places his joined hands between those of the bishop.*

Bishop: Do you promise respect and obedience to me and my successors?

Candidates: I do.

Bishop: May God who has begun the good work in you bring it to fulfillment.

Invitation to Prayer

Narrator: *Then all stand, and the bishop, without his miter, invites the people to pray:*

Bishop: My dear people, let us pray that God the all-powerful Father will pour out abundantly the gifts of heaven on these, his servants, whom he has chosen for the office of priest.



The candidates lie on the ground asking for God's mercy, that they may become holy and upright priests for His people.

Narrator: *The Candidates lie face down on the ground while the rest pray a Litany of the Saints, like the following:*

All: Lord, have mercy on us...

Christ, have mercy on us...

Lord, have mercy on us...

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us...

St. Michael, pray for us...

St. Gabriel, pray for us...

St. John the Baptist, pray for us...

St. Peter, pray for us...

St. Paul, pray for us...

St. Joseph, pray for us...

St. Dominic, pray for us...

St. Ann, pray for us...

St. Mary Magdalen, pray for us...

St. Cecilia, pray for us...

All holy men and women of God, pray for us...

Lord, be merciful, Lord save your people...

From all evil, Lord save your people...

Christ, hear us, Christ, graciously hear us...

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.

Narrator: *Then the bishop alone stands and, with his hands joined, says:*

Bishop: Hear us, we beseech you, Lord our God, and pour out on these servants of yours the blessing of the Holy Spirit and the power of priestly grace, that those whom in the sight of your mercy we offer to be consecrated, may be surrounded by your rich and unfailing gifts. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Laying On of Hands

Narrator: *All stand. The candidates kneel in a row before the bishop. The bishop lays his hands on each of their heads, in silence. Next all the priests present, wearing stoles, lay their hands upon the candidates, in silence. After the laying on of hands, the priests remain on either side of the bishop until the prayer of consecration is completed.*



PRIESTHOOD

ROLE-PLAY: THE ORDINATION RITE

Prayer of Consecration

Narrator: *The candidates kneel. With his hands extended over them, the bishop says the prayer of consecration:*

Bishop: Draw near, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, author of human dignity: it is you who apportion all graces. Through you everything progresses; through you all things are made to stand firm. To form a priestly people you appoint ministers of Christ your Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, arranging them in different orders. Already in the earlier covenant offices arose, established through mystical rites: when you set Moses and Aaron over your people to govern and sanctify them, you chose men next in rank and dignity to accompany them and assist them in their task. So too in the desert you implanted the spirit of Moses in the hearts of seventy wise men; and with their help he ruled your people with greater ease. So also upon the sons of Aaron you poured an abundant share of their father's plenty, that the number of the priests prescribed by the Law might be sufficient for the sacrifices of the tabernacle, which were a shadow of the good things to come. But in these last days, holy Father, you sent your Son into the world, Jesus, who is Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Through the Holy Spirit he offered himself to you as a spotless victim; and he made his Apostles, consecrated in the truth, sharers in his mission. You provided them also with companions to proclaim and carry out the work of salvation throughout the whole world. And now we beseech you, Lord, in our weakness, to grant us these helpers that we need to exercise the priesthood that comes from the Apostles.



The Bishop says the prayer of consecration with his hands on the ordinand's head.

Grant, we pray, Almighty Father, to these your servants the dignity of the priesthood; renew deep within them the Spirit of holiness; may they henceforth possess this office which comes from you, O God, and is next in rank to the office of Bishop; and by the example of their manner of life, may they instill right conduct. May they be worthy coworkers with our Order, so that by their preaching and through the grace of the Holy Spirit the words of the Gospel may bear fruit in human hearts and reach even to the ends of the earth. Together with us, may they be faithful stewards of your mysteries, so that your people may be renewed in the waters of rebirth and nourished from your altar; so that sinners may be reconciled and the sick raised up. May they be joined with us, Lord, in imploring your mercy for the people entrusted to their care and for all the world. And so may the full number of the nations, gathered together in Christ, be transformed into your one people and made perfect in your Kingdom. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Investiture With Stole and Chasuble

Narrator: *After the prayer of consecration, the bishop, wearing his miter, sits, and the newly ordained stand. The assisting priests return to their places, but some of them arrange the stoles of the newly ordained as they are worn by priests and vest them in chasubles.*

Anointing of Hands

Narrator: *Next the bishop receives a linen gremial and anoints with chrism the palms of the new priests as they kneel before him.*

Bishop: The Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, guard and preserve you that you may sanctify the Christian people and offer sacrifice to God.

Narrator: *Then the bishop and the new priests wash their hands. Mass continues as usual, with the exception that the changeable prayers are replaced with prayers specific to ordination, and that the new priests concelebrate with the bishop.*



PRIESTHOOD

HOMEWORK

Write a letter to the Diocesan Vocation Director, asking every question you have about the priesthood. It may include personal questions or questions you have heard from other people. Feel free to ask anything. Girls' letters can ask for advice on how to counsel a friend who is discerning the priesthood.

While this letter will not be mailed (unless you decide to mail it), write as if you were really writing to the Vocation Director.