

8th Grade: Priesthood

OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVE:

To appreciate the ways that priests makes a difference in our lives.

MAIN CONCEPTS:

- God is sovereign and is the one who is truly active in the ministry of a priest or anyone doing good work.
- A priest makes a deep difference in the lives of many people, often unknowingly.

PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

Choose the components you wish to use given the time you have and the needs of your students.

INTRODUCTION

2 min

Summarize today's theme.

Through these lessons we hope to become familiar with the vocations to which God calls people so that you will be able to follow his call always. Right now, you are in the single state of life, but someday God may call you to a particular vocation—married life, priesthood, or religious life. Today's focus is on the priesthood.

OPENING PRAYER

2 min

Let us draw near to God during today's lesson. The Bible says:

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, So will my word be which goes forth from my mouth; It will not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." - ISAIAH 55:10-11

PRIESTHOOD

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ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By Fr. Gerard Francik

I want to share with you two stories that show why I am a priest and how God continues to confirm his calling to me. Just a few months ago, I received a phone call from a young woman who now lives on the West Coast. She was going to be in town for a few days and wanted to stop by and visit with me. I had no idea why. I didn't even recognize her name, but there I was, a few days later, greeting her and her mother at the door.

She came into my office, and with tears in her eyes recounted the story of the death of her stepfather. Neither she nor her mother had been Catholic, but they remembered my taking care of her father when he was hospitalized and later as he was dying. She said that I had included them so much in the funeral, even though they did not understand all of the rituals. She wanted me to know how grateful she was. I thought that was the end of the conversation.

But then she described how, days later, she and her boyfriend were driving in a car together and had a terrible accident. He was killed. Others blamed her for his death, and in fact, she found herself feeling terribly guilty (even though she was not) and blaming herself. One desperate day, driving through some country roads at very high speeds, she decided to try to find me. I had been transferred to our youth retreat house. Luckily, after she checked with the front office, I appeared and was able to sit and talk with her. She said it took no more than five minutes, but that conversation changed her life. She left there feeling God's presence and peace.

That young woman came back to thank me. She said she thought that priests too frequently are not told how they have helped another in need. I honestly don't remember the conversation that she said changed her life.



Five years ago a couple I married called with great news. I knew that they had wanted children and that, for years, they were unable to conceive. This time the news was different: They were going to have a baby. They had heard from an adoption agency, and they were flying to China to meet their new little girl. They would be there two weeks but wanted to arrange for her baptism when they returned. "Would you be willing to baptize our baby?" the husband asked. "Of course," I replied. "I would be honored." I then asked how his parents must feel, since he was an only child and this would be their first grandchild. He said, "Oh, we haven't told them yet. We wanted to tell you first!" I was speechless. One of the most poignant and important moments of life, and they wanted me to be part of it first.

That is why I am still a priest. I am able to walk into the most profound moments in people's lives and make a difference. God confirms his call to me every day by using me to bring his blessings and grace to others in so many ways. Most of the time, I'm not even aware that he is using me, because it is God giving the blessings and grace, not me. And people like these, who cross my path every day, are such a blessing to me personally. Is life as a priest lonely? Not with wonderful people like these!

VOCATION LESSONS | 8th Grade: Priesthood



Pray a simple prayer from the heart or:

Lord, help us to trust that you are at work even when we cannot see it. We pray for all priests who minister to us, and pray that you renew our faith in the power of the sacraments. AMEN.

OPENING ACTIVITY

10 min

HEROES WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Have students brainstorm names of people who make a difference in the world. The people can be living or dead, famous or family members. Students can volunteer information about what kind of a difference their heroes have made.

Now ask the students about priests they know. Ask what difference these priests have made in their lives, at the school, or in the parish.



A PRIEST'S LIFE

1. Read through the reading page individually, in small groups or as a class. Or watch the video clips.
2. Use the questions to spark class discussion, or assign students to write answers to the questions.
3. Quiz the students a bit to see if they grasp the concepts. If it is helpful, refer to the Vocation Glossary found at www.vocation-lessons.com/glossary.

PRIESTHOOD

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EXPLORATION

15 min

TO BE A PRIEST

1. Play the clip “To Be a Priest.”
The video is 20 minutes long, but watching even the first 5-10 minutes is beneficial.
2. Discuss the questions together as a class or in small groups.
Alternatively, you may assign the students to answer in writing.



PRIESTHOOD

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS *continued*

Discussion Questions

- How did Fr. Francik make a difference?
- Why does Fr. Francik think that he is able to be part of profound things happening in other people’s lives even though he is unaware of it?
- How and why is the vocation of a priest oriented toward being able to “be there” and “make a difference” in many people’s lives?

EXPLORATION



VIDEO: “TO BE A PRIEST”

- What are some of the ways that these people discerned (figured out) that God was calling them to the priesthood?
- How is being a priest fulfilling to them?
- In what way is prayer important to a priest?
- How does the scandal of priests affect these priests?
- What role does sacrifice play in the life of a priest?

REFLECTIVE PRAYER

5 min

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Introduce the meditation.

Let us offer our prayer time now for priests. We can think of the needs that they have, the struggles and hopes. Let us pray for priests near and far.

VOCAL PRAYER

3 min

MAGNIFICAT

1. If you have not already introduced the Magnificat, explain it to them.

Priests and consecrated religious pray the Liturgy of the Hours throughout the day. Besides many psalms, the Liturgy of the Hours also has prayers and other scripture readings. Canticles are prayers within Scripture. The prayer we have here, called the Cantic of Mary, is prayed every evening. When Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth and both women were pregnant, it became very obvious that God was powerfully at work; Mary quoted a poem of Hannah's from the Old Testament, giving thanks to God for her son. This Cantic reminds those who pray the Divine Office of Our Lady and is a beloved transition from the work of the day into night. It is always followed by the Glory Be.

2. Students pray the vocation prayer: *Magnificat*.



PRIESTHOOD

REFLECTIVE PRAYER



PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

*Jesus, meek and humble of heart,
give all priests Your spirit of humility;
Jesus, poor and worn out for souls,
give all priests Your spirit of zeal;
Jesus, full of patience and mercy for sinners,
give all priests Your spirit of compassion;
Jesus, victim for the sins of the world,
give all priests Your spirit of sacrifice;
Jesus, lover of the little and the poor,
give all priests Your spirit of charity.
Mary, Queen of the Clergy, pray for us;
and obtain for us numerous and holy
priests and religious.*


AMEN.

VOCAL PRAYER

The Magnificat

My soul proclaims
the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor
on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations
will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty
from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help
of his servant Israel
for he remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever.
AMEN.

VOCATION LESSONS | 8th Grade: Priesthood  3