



What Is My Vocation?



Student Edition



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What Is My Vocation?



Student Edition

Discipleship in Jesus Christ

*As baptized Catholics, we are all called to be followers of Christ,
and from this calling we discover the individual path God invites
us to follow in our lives.*

Nihil Obstat: Reverend William H. Woestman, O.M.I., J.C.D.
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Vocation Prayer

*Lord Jesus,
Make me your disciple,
With your joy fill me,
By your love form me,
In your hope lead me,
Show me the vocation that you desire for me,
The path to love and follow you.
Amen.*

Called to be Disciples of Jesus Christ



WHAT IS CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP?

Everyone wants to do something great with their life. We want our lives to be meaningful, to make a difference, perhaps to be heroic. Maybe you want to be great in sports, science, music, or acting. The truth is, God also wants you to be great. He created you to be great and gave you all the gifts and talents you need to become

great. He not only created you to be great, He also created you to become a saint and be with Him in Heaven.

God invites each of us when we are baptized to become followers of Jesus Christ. Someone who follows Jesus Christ is a Christian **disciple**. Being a Christian disciple means forming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by getting to know Him, becoming more like Him, and sharing our faith with others.

Christian **discipleship** is the most important part of being Catholic. When you are baptized as a Catholic Christian, it is the beginning of a life that you will live in friendship with Jesus Christ, learning more about Him and becoming more like Him. We can pretend to be Christians just by saying we are, but to be a true Catholic means to be a real Christian disciple of Jesus Christ.

HOW CAN I FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST?

The disciples in the Gospel were able to follow Jesus from town to town and listen to His teachings. Today, Jesus is not walking around in our towns but He is still here with us. The only way we can follow Him is if we know how to find Him. We can find Jesus in four main ways: by speaking to Him in daily prayer, by participating in the worship of God at Mass, by receiving the sacraments often, especially the **Eucharist** (Holy Communion) and **Reconciliation** (Confession), and by seeing Him in other people.

Following Jesus is something you can do right now. You can imitate Him in your thoughts, words, and actions. You can imitate Him when you play sports, listen to music, or make friends, as long as you do it the way Jesus would have done it. By doing this, you are already doing great things with your life and growing in holiness.

The first heroes of the Christian faith did not need to say that they were Christians. Everyone knew they were Christians because they lived their lives in a special way. Ask yourself: do people know that I am a Christian disciple by the way I live?

Christian Disciple:

Someone who follows Jesus Christ by trying to be like Him in everything they do.

Christian Discipleship: living as a Christian disciple.



GO AND CHANGE THE WORLD

A Christian disciple realizes that a living faith is the key to a truly happy life. Living our faith leads to our happiness because it leads us closer to God. If it leads us to God, it can lead others to God as well. This is why our Catholic faith is a treasure to be shared with other people, so that they can be happy too. The twelve **Apostles** were the first to spread Jesus' message throughout the world. Jesus said to them, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19).

Looking out at the world, we can see, as the Apostles did, that there are many people who are unhappy or suffering because they do not know Jesus Christ. In addition to knowing Jesus through prayer and the sacraments and imitating Him in our words and actions, we must also be willing to share our Catholic faith with other people, as the Apostles did. God knows that young people can do good things but we will only be ready for greatness if we practice it now by living as Christian disciples in our own homes, in school, and at play. Jesus is calling you to a special relationship right now and only you can choose to accept it.



*In the name
of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the
Holy Spirit*

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. There are over 60 million Catholics and many other Christians living in the United States. What would our country be like if every Christian was serious about being a disciple of Jesus Christ? What would your community be like?
2. What are some ways we can live as true Christian disciples in our everyday lives, trying to live as Jesus taught us, to love God and love neighbor?
3. What are some ways that we can share our Catholic faith with other people? If we meet someone who does not know Jesus Christ, what could we tell them about our experience of being a Christian disciple?

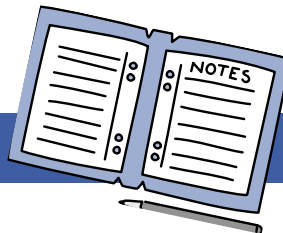
VOCABULARY

Disciple
Discipleship
Eucharist
Reconciliation
Apostle

Write about it!

Journal options:

- Write about one good thing you can do at home, at school, and at play to live more like a disciple of Christ. How would doing this show others that you want to be like Jesus?
- What do you think is the greatest challenge in trying to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How can you meet this challenge as a Christian disciple?



Discipleship Prayer

by St. John Gabriel Perboyre, C.M.¹

O my Divine Savior

Transform me into yourself.

May my hands be your hands.

May my tongue be your tongue.

*Grant that every faculty of my body may serve
only to glorify you.*

*Above all, transform my soul and all of its powers, that
my memory, my will and my affections, may be the
memory, the will and affections of you.*

I pray you to destroy in me all that is not of you.

*Grant that I may live but in you, and by you, and for
you, and that I may truly say with St. Paul,*

“I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me.”

Amen.



God Calls Us to a Specific Vocation in Life

A VOCATION IS A CALL FROM GOD

God created each one of us for a specific purpose, and gave each one of us a mission to fulfill in our lives, just like He gave His Son. He has a plan for us to be happy, known as a **vocation**, and if we follow this plan, it will lead us to be saints with Him in Heaven.

Our vocation is an invitation from God to follow the best path for our lives, the one that will lead us to true happiness on Earth and to become saints in Heaven. But how does God know what is best for us, what will make us happy, especially if we are not even sure of that ourselves?

God is the one who created us. Long before you were born, when He created the world, He knew you. One of the psalms in the Bible says:

You wove me together in my mother's womb; I praise you, for I have been sketched wonderfully – awesome are your works! Even my soul you deeply know, and my frame was not hidden from you, I who was made in secret, who was skillfully made...my days were lined out before one of them ever was. How precious are your plans for me, O God, how great their beginnings! Psalm 139:13-15, 16-17

When God created you, He knew your name, what color your eyes would be, and whether you would be short, quick, smart, funny, or shy. He knew what would make you happy, what would make you holy, and what part you would play in the history of the world. After all, He designed you to be just the way you are, and He did it for a reason.

God does not think of our vocation randomly. The vocation we are called to best fits how God made us. He considers not only what will make us happy, but also how we can improve the world around us. God sets apart a special mission just for you, and only you can fulfill your vocation. No one else is capable of completing the plan God designed especially for you.

It is important to remember that God will not force you to do anything. A vocation is not a set of orders; it is an invitation, a suggestion God makes and hopes that you will respond to it. This invitation from God will include a specific way of life that will make you the most happy: either a single life, a married life, a religious life, or a priestly life. We cannot invite ourselves to a specific way of life. It is God who invites, and it is up to us to respond.

Because our vocation is the way to our greatest joy and deepest fulfillment in life, God wants us to know what this plan is. If you ask Him, He will help you discover it when He knows you are ready.

*Vocation:
A plan that God invites us to live that will lead to our happiness on Earth and eternal life with Him in Heaven.*



God makes each person for a specific vocation

GOD CALLS EACH PERSON DIFFERENTLY

God is always with us. He is always there to guide us in our lives, even when we do not realize it. He calls to us throughout our lives. We must listen intensely, with our hearts, and pay attention to what He could be trying to tell us. God's call is like a constant whisper, trying to get our attention and guide us to the kind of life He is calling us. He might speak to us in prayer, or through our experiences and desires, or He may choose to speak to us through other people like our parents, a priest, a teacher, or a friend.

God calls each of us in a different way and at a different time in our lives. Some people know what God is calling them to do when they are still very young. There are priests who knew they were meant to be priests from the time they were in the first or second grade. For other people, the understanding of their calling may be slower and take a long time. It may come as a growing awareness of the plan God has for them. Other times a calling may become clear in a sudden moment, as if you had your hands over your ears and then removed them to discover a call that was there all along. Each one of us will hear our call to a vocation in life in a unique way. It's a matter of listening, of paying attention to what God is asking you to do with your life.

Married people often have similar experiences. Many people describe realizing their vocation to marriage at a very young age. Many young people first hear God calling them to be parents while caring for their younger sisters and brothers or babysitting other children. Throughout our life experiences, the voice of the Lord whispers in our ear to give us a growing awareness of the vocation He created for us.

Your parents, teachers, priests, or other people who know how to hear God's voice are good people to talk to about your vocation, especially if they are already living their own vocation.

God's Call:



*Different times
Different ways
for
Different people*

**Religious
Vocation**

**Married
Vocation**

**Single
Vocation**

**Priestly
Vocation**

HEARING THE CALL

To hear God speak to us, we need to learn to be silent and listen. The prophet Elijah was told by the Lord to wait on a mountain, for the Lord would come and speak to him.

*A great and strong wind rent the mountains,
and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but
the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an
earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and
after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire;
and after the fire a still small voice. (1 Kings 19:11)*

The voice of the Lord was in the tiny whisper. That is why we must give God the opportunity to speak to us in the silence of our souls.



HOW WILL YOU RECOGNIZE GOD'S CALL?

When the time comes, you will know that your vocation is the right one because it will fit who you are; it will complete your life, fill you with joy, and match your gifts and abilities. That does not mean that it will be the easiest path, or that it will be the one that you always thought you would take. God often surprises us, and His plans are not necessarily the ones we had in mind, but the day He taps you on the shoulder and points the way, you will know it, and you will have to make a choice.

Once you understand where God is calling you, you must ACT. You cannot hesitate because you are waiting for a better time, or because you are afraid. Have faith, believe that God will guide you down the right path, open your heart to Him and do not be afraid to say "Yes" to God's invitation.

"Each Christian vocation comes from God and is God's gift... whose purpose is to build up the Church and to increase the kingdom of God in the world."

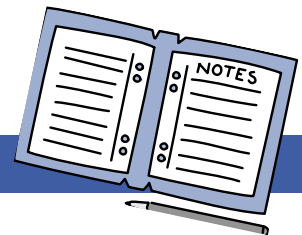
—Pope John Paul II²

VOCABULARY

Vocation

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Consider this passage from the Gospel: Mark (10:17-27). Why did the young man come to Jesus? Was Jesus inviting him to something? How did the young man respond? Why did he respond this way and how did he feel afterwards?
2. What are some different kinds of callings that a person could have in life? Think of someone you know who is doing something good with their life.
3. Why would you want to know your vocation in life? Why would you want to fulfill it? Are there any reasons that you would not want to know or fulfill it? If you do not follow God's plan for you, whose plan will you follow?



Write about it!

Journal options:

- How does the following scripture passage from Isaiah (43:1) make you feel about your own relationship with God and your own vocation in life? "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine."
- What are some distractions in your daily life that make it harder to listen to God? What can we do to set aside these distractions and spend time focused on God?

Vocation:

A plan that God invites us to live that will lead to our happiness on Earth and eternal life with Him in Heaven.

Sr. Margarita Ramirez is a sister of the religious order called the Oblates of Jesus the Priest. When she was young, she used to walk past the church everyday on her way home from school. One day, she felt she wanted to visit Jesus, who she knew was in the tabernacle in the form of the Blessed Sacrament (Holy Communion). Even though she only stopped a moment, she knew that Jesus was waiting there for her, and she spoke to Him in prayer for a while. She decided to stop and visit Him more often. She spoke to Him in prayer like she would speak with any other friend: talking to the Lord, then taking time to listen. One day when she was 15 years old, she realized Jesus was asking her, Margarita, to spend the rest of her life with Him. She was surprised, but at the same time it seemed to make sense. She felt a great joy and realized at that moment that God was calling her to be a religious sister. At first, her family would not let her do it, and even tried to keep her from becoming a religious sister. After a while, they noticed that all she really wanted was to follow Jesus as a religious sister. Eventually she was able to follow her vocation, and Sr. Margarita has been full of joy living as a religious sister ever since. Have you ever visited Jesus in the tabernacle? Do you ever speak to Him in prayer?

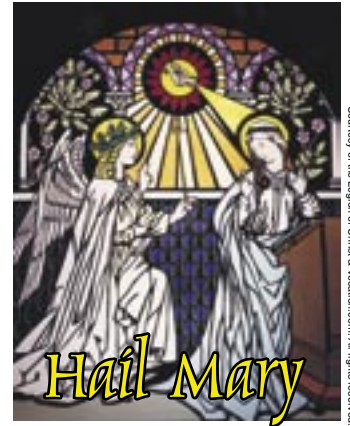


*Sister Margarita
of the Oblates of
Jesus the Priest*

Discovering a Vocation

JESUS HELPS US DISCOVER OUR VOCATION

It is Jesus Christ who “brings to light (our) exalted vocation”. What allows a Christian disciple to hear and understand their God-given vocation is a lived relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with you, to be your friend by listening and talking to you. The three main ways Christ speaks to us are through daily personal prayer, through the Church, and through the people and experiences in our daily lives. These things strengthen our relationship with Jesus and make it easier to hear His voice and discover our vocation.



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WHY DOESN'T GOD JUST TELL US DIRECTLY?

Mary had a special vocation to be the Mother of God, and so God sent an angel to call her to this vocation. However, God does not usually send angels to call us. Instead, he uses other ways to speak to us. He speaks to us when we pray, especially when we pray in silence or in Church. He speaks when we receive the Sacraments, especially during Mass and Confession. We hear him when we serve others, whether it is our family, friends, grandparents or those who are sick or poor.

Luke 1:26-38

God calls us to live our vocation but He does not force us to follow it. He wants us to choose our vocation freely. For example, if your mom comes to your room and says, “Do you want to come and help me with the dishes?” you would feel like you had to say yes whether you like it or not. You are not really free to choose, because you feel like you have to obey, even if you hate doing the dishes. However, if you walked past the sink full of dirty dishes, you might freely choose to help your mom wash them. Even if you do not like doing dishes, you would feel good because you chose to do something good on your own. Your mom would be grateful because she would know that you did it because you love her, not because you had to. In the same way, God wants us to freely choose to follow a vocation because we love him, not because we have to do it.



Prayer is a conversation with Christ

PRAYER: GOD SPEAKS TO US AND WE SPEAK TO HIM

Prayer is a two-way communication with God. It should be a real friendship where we talk to God throughout the day, especially in the morning when we rise, before meals, and when we go to bed. Sometimes we forget to pray except when there is a crisis or when something wonderful happens and we want to thank God. Other times people fall into the trap of telling God what they think He wants to hear.

Monologue



Dialogue



When you pray, it is not so important to say big words like “Omnipotent God.” Just like any friendly conversation, say what is in your heart. God knows us better than we know ourselves, so we must be honest and sincere when we pray. Tell him your troubles and desires, thank and praise Him for who He is and what He has given you, and tell Him about the different things that happened in your day. Pray about what is truly important to you. This way of praying invites God to be part of the important concerns of your life.

Like a conversation with a friend, we need to have a dialogue with God, not a one-way conversation when we pray. It is important to listen for God’s response if we want Him to guide us along the right path.

However, it is not as easy as talking on the telephone to hear the voice of God. In time, as we sit with God for moments of silence, we can begin to notice God’s presence, to sense God’s guidance at some times more specifically than others. It can be a clear thought that pops into your head and makes you realize what you are supposed to do. Sometimes it is more like a hint of what would be good for you to do. Many times it seems like your own thoughts, but it may be God talking to you through your conscience. However, even if we do not get immediate answers to our prayers, the important thing is to spend time with God and have a close friendship with Him because He is the source of our vocation. Jesus taught us that “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).



**You have
12 new e-mails...**

OTHER WAYS OF COMMUNICATION

Since God wants to show us our vocation in a way that will bring us closer to Him, He uses many different ways to get the message across. We have to be aware of these ways so that we can hear God’s messages. Otherwise, it will be much more difficult to know what He is trying to tell us.

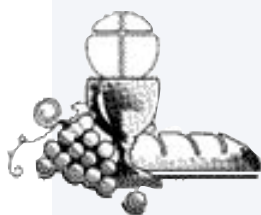
In the Gospel, Jesus tells us how to pray: “Go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:6). He is not telling us to hide, but He knows that when we are quiet and not worrying about what everyone else thinks, we can hear what God is trying to say to us.

How does God communicate?

The Pope, Bishops, Priests, and Religious – The Church, especially through the Pope, continues to guide God’s people on earth. When the Pope speaks about our faith and morality, it is Jesus speaking through him. Jesus promised this to Peter, our first Pope, when he said “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” (Luke 10:16). God also guides us in our local diocese under the guidance of the bishop and in our parish communities, looked after by our parish priests and religious sisters and brothers, and lay ministers. They are there to teach us and give us advice on how to grow in our relationship with Jesus.



The Sacraments – The sacraments are visible signs that God is present among us. They give us the graces we need to live our discipleship. They change us in visible and invisible ways. One example of a radical change brought about through the sacraments is the life of Charles de Foucauld, who was from a rich family and lived a wild life. He fell into serious sin and did not go to church for ten years. One day he went up to a priest who was in the confessional and said, “Come out, I want to talk to you about a problem.” The priest responded “No, come in; I want to talk to you about your sins.”³ Charles went to Confession and immediately after his confession he was shocked to feel God in him in a powerful new way. He felt the joy of finding Christ, changed his life, gave away his wealth, became a priest and moved to Africa to teach the people in the desert about Jesus. In this example, we see clearly how honest and frequent reception of the Sacraments deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ.



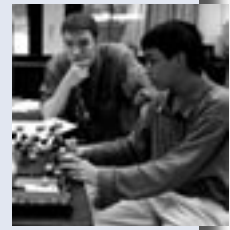
The Bible – “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.” (1 Thes 2:13). The words of the Bible were inspired by God and given to us through its authors. Since the words come from God, no matter how many years pass, they will continue to speak to all people and give them inspiration, guidance and consolation. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are especially important, because they will help you learn more about Jesus and what He taught so that you can grow even closer to Him.



People in our lives – God places people in our lives to help us. Our parents, teachers, priests, friends and neighbors can inspire us to live better lives, and if they have a good relationship with God, they can help us become closer to Him. Often trustworthy family members and friends have the ability to see God working in ways that you may not have noticed before. It helps to speak to them about how God might be calling you.

The Old Testament tells us that when the prophet Samuel was a young man, he heard a voice call his name while he was asleep, but he did not know who it was. Samuel ran to Eli the priest, who was in the next room, and said, “Here I am.” Eli said, “I did not call you, go back to sleep.” Three times this happened. Finally, Eli said, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” (1 Sam 3:10). When Samuel did this, he discovered that it was God calling out to him with a special message.

Helping others – When we help others, we share in the love that God has for all people. This is also a very powerful way that God speaks to us. Someone who helps the sick may discover that God is asking them to be a doctor or nurse, and someone who teaches others about Jesus may discover that they can serve God as a missionary. If you enjoy helping in the parish, maybe God is calling you to work in parish ministry. Serving others out of love for God prevents us from becoming selfish and opens our hearts to God’s plan for our lives.



Joy and Suffering – God is always with us, even in the most ordinary days of the week. When something great happens, we are more likely to remember that God has given us a gift, and we thank him. However, God also works in us during times of difficulty and suffering, to help us grow and become better. The times when we are hurt or ill, when we are disappointed, or even when we lose someone we love can be opportunities to grow closer to God and to open our hearts to His will. There are many things that are out of our control, and only by trusting in God can we survive the most difficult times.

LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!

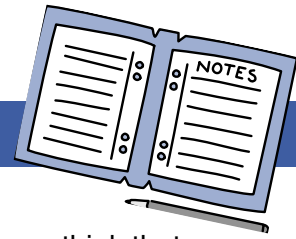
1. What are some moments or places that we can pray?
How does prayer help us to hear God speak to us?
2. Who are some people we can talk to about our vocations?
When can we speak to them?
3. Are there things that have happened to you that have helped you to see how God is working in your life?



Courtesy of The Institute of Jesuit Sources

St. Ignatius of Loyola was once a young soldier, who was full of pride and had no time for God. During a battle, a cannon ball shattered his leg and he had to spend a long time in bed recovering. To pass the time, he read the only books that were available: *The Life of Christ* and *The Lives of the Saints*. In his suffering, Ignatius became less concerned with the things of the world that had previously filled his mind. He became more open to God, and heard the voice of the Lord calling him in a way he had not recognized before. With the courageous examples of the saints to inspire him, Ignatius turned his life over to God, became a priest, and founded a group of religious priests and brothers called the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits.

Write about it!



Journal options:

- When do you pray? How do you pray? How much time do you think that you should listen, and how much time should you talk so that your prayer is a dialogue with God? Write 3-5 things that you can do to pray better and hear God better.
- Write your own personal vocation prayer (3-6 lines) asking God to help you discover your vocation.



Prayer for Guidance

by St. Teresa of Avila⁴

Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by you, always follow your plans, and perfectly accomplish your holy will.

Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of my life, I may do whatever you require of me.

Help me respond to the slightest prompting of your grace so that I may be your trustworthy instrument for your honor.

May your will be done in time and in eternity by me, in me and through me.

Amen.

The Bible says, “The Lord searches all hearts and understands all the mind’s thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let Himself be found by you” (1 Chr 28:9). God wants you to find Him. Be honest with Him. Have patience. If you look for Him with trust and sincerity you will find Him.

The Vocation to Single Life



CALLED TO DO GREAT THINGS

Now that you know what a vocation is, as well as what you can do to discover yours, we can begin to discuss the different kinds of vocations. Every person has a unique path; however, we can group vocations into four major categories: **single life**, married life, priestly life, and religious life.

There is one vocation that we all live at some point in our lives, even if it is only for a short time while we prepare for another vocation. This is the single life. This way of life, whether temporary or lasting one's whole life, is much more than just waiting for something to happen. Single people are called by God to do great things and to become saints.

You too
can be
a saint!

THE SINGLE VOCATION: PREPARED FOR GOD'S CALL

A vocation is something that you choose because you have found your greatest joy living in that certain way. In marriage, the priesthood, or the religious life, a person promises before God to live a certain way for the rest of their lives.

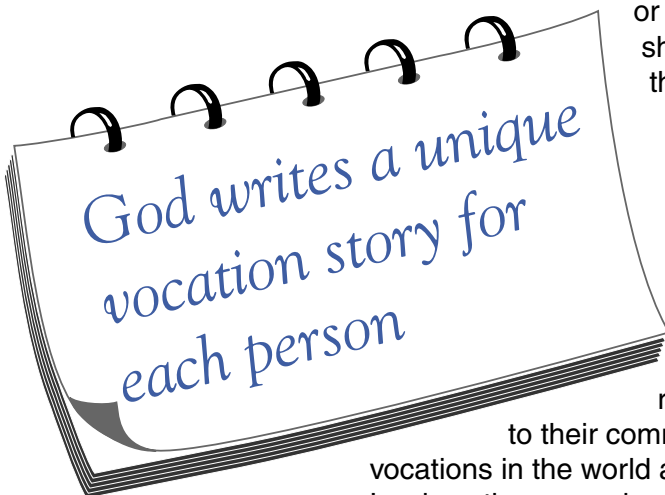
Single life is different because it can be either a stage of life that a person will live until God calls them to another vocation, or a permanent vocation for those who will remain single their whole lives. Some people choose to remain single because of the desire to serve others in the world.

Since everyone is single for at least some part of their lives, our time as a single person should be spent preparing ourselves for what God might ask of us in the future.

Men and women who are called to be married should focus their single lives on forming themselves to become a good spouse for someone. Those who are called to the priesthood or the religious life can prepare themselves by shaping their lifestyle to prepare themselves for their vocation.

Those people who are called to be single for their entire lives must also be prepared to do God's will. Single people have a special freedom to serve God and others while they are single. Other vocations do not have the same special freedom. Married people are committed to taking care of a family, priests are responsible for serving the Church, and religious brothers and sisters have obligations

to their communities. Single men and women live out their vocations in the world and have a unique opportunity to serve the Lord anytime, anywhere and with their whole hearts. They are like a special task force that can be sent wherever God needs them.



Question:
How did Jesus show his unselfish love?

Answer:
Jesus showed unselfishness by giving everything He had to other people: He gave time when He listened and talked with people, He gave cures to sick people, He gave teachings to people who did not know about God, and even when He was tired Jesus did not stop serving others.

SELFISH VS. UNSELFISH

While a person remains single, they have the opportunity to offer more of their talents and time in generous service to others just like Jesus did. If a single person does not make the effort to serve others, they can be tempted to serve only themselves and use their talents selfishly.

By being unselfish we grow in our ability to love and be loved. Being selfish, on the other hand, limits our ability to love and our ability to be loved. Selfishness makes us shallow of heart, and can make us feel isolated. Single people should find ways that they can serve others so they do not become selfish. Some of the ways a person's talents and time may be shared are:

Professionally in the workplace or at school, by acting honestly, fairly, and generously

Personally by offering sincere friendship to others or being a good role model for nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters

Spiritually by going to Church every Sunday and praying daily for others

Apostolically by giving time working for the Church as the Apostles did, visiting the sick and teaching about the Faith

Materially by helping the poor and needy and not becoming too concerned about material things

A SPECIAL MISSION IN THE CHURCH

Being part of a family teaches us how to love others. A single person may appear to be alone, "but no one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family to everyone."⁵ In the Church, a person can find many ways to serve this community. Priests, religious, married people, and single people can all help in the parish, in various professional and voluntary positions including:

- Religious Education Teachers who teach children about the Catholic faith
- Pastoral Associates who help organize the liturgy, church music, caring for the sick, supporting the poor, instructing new adult Catholics (RCIA), etc.
- Catholic School Teachers who teach faith and knowledge to the next generation of young Catholics
- Volunteers who work in soup kitchens, homeless shelters, young adult groups, choirs, and evangelization missions

