

## **The ABCs of Fostering, Supporting and Nurturing Vocations within the Home**

**A**nswer your children's questions about priesthood or religious life; never discouraging them or ridiculing them if they bring it up.

**A**sk your child to identify a talent which he or she has; imagine together what work or ministry God might want someone to do with that type of talent. Also talk about what good things can be done with the talent right now. For instance, singing talent could be used to sing a baby brother or sister to sleep. Talent at soccer could be used to help someone on the team who needs extra practice.

**B**ring your family to the next ordination mass or prayer vigil for religious.

**C**hallenge teens and young adults to consider a Church-related vocation. Tell them about the gifts in ministry you see in them. Encourage them to participate in at least one special vocation event (ordination, vocation retreat, discernment group).

**C**ultivate an attitude of service by responding as a family to the needs of others. Seek out those in need and find ways to care for them.

**D**iscuss your own vocation to family life, explaining that God calls some people to priesthood or religious life, some to marriage, and some to life as single laypeople. You can talk about vocations firsthand!

**E**ncourage your children to be involved in the liturgical life of the parish as servers, lectors, musicians, etc. (and see to it that they get there on time).

**E**xplore the feelings you might experience should one of your children choose to give his or her life to Church ministry and discuss with your spouse your feelings and reactions if one of your children should decide to become a priest or nun.

**F**ind opportunities to affirm the gifts and talents of your children, and help them relate their gifts to various career and life choices (including priesthood and religious life).

**G**uide your junior high child to pray that he or she might discover and use the gifts God has given.

**H**ave a priest come and bless your home

**H**ave your younger children make a cross to hang in each bedroom in your home.

**I**nclude the diocesan vocation prayer in your personal and family prayer especially on Fridays.

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**I**nvite a priest, brother or sister to dinner or to an outing with your family.

**J**oin together in prayer as a family; include a short vocations prayer when you pray before meals (especially on Friday).

**K**eep an eye open for TV shows and movies that present Gospel-centered role models. Watch them with your children and engage in a discussion.

**L**et your children see their Baptism pictures. Have the children make and send a card or note to the priest who baptized them promising him they will pray for him.

**L**et your children notice an attitude of openness to God's will in you.

**M**ake time for teenagers in your life; your children and their friends, nieces and nephews, babysitters, etc.

**N**ame the gifts of each family member on their birthday. Express gratitude for these gifts.

**O**n the date of your child's baptism, talk about the life of the saint for whom the child is named (or the saint's day it is). There is plenty of information about the background of saints on the Internet. The saints are people from all walks of life who tried to make a positive difference in the world—a goal as real today as it was for the saints.

**P**ray for the seminarians of the diocese by name (you can get their names, bios, and birthdays on this website); you may want to "spiritually adopt" one of them.

**Q**uiz your children and discuss with them stories of calls in Scripture (e.g. Mary's response to God in Luke 1:26-39, Jesus' calling the Apostles in Mt 4:18-22, etc.).

**R**emember in prayer by name those who minister to your family and include in your family prayers petitions for those called to priesthood and consecrated life.

**S**et aside a "family time" each week for kids to talk about what is happening in their lives. Let them share about their day.

**S**hare the story of your own vocational choice with your children. Celebrate the occasion of your wedding anniversary as you share the story of your vocation to married life.

**S**upport and participate in any school or parish vocation activities.

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**T**alk about your family's ethnic or cultural heritage at supper, while driving in the car, or at some other time when family members are all together. Pass along memories of cultural aspects of holiday and other celebrations that you remember.

**T**alk positively and enthusiastically about the priests, sisters, brothers, deacons in your parish and share with your children the stories of the priests or sisters who have inspired you and how (e.g. priest at your wedding, or baptized your children, priests or religious from school, etc.).

**T**ell your children why you chose your particular profession. Who helped you form your decision?

**U**se books and videos to familiarize your children with saints who are priests or vowed religious. Use these lives of the saints as a springboard for discussion on these lifestyles.

**U**tilize opportunities to share your vocation as parents; what you value, how you came to that decision, and the importance of faith in your life.

**V**isit Churches and Shrines while on vacation and offer prayers together as a family.

**W**itness to your own vocation by telling stories about how you fell in love. Let the children see the love and care that parents have for each other.

**XYZ** – the end of the alphabet, but certainly not the end of ways or ideas to foster vocations at home!