

1. Root Your Homily in the Scriptures for the Day

There are plenty of Scripture texts that lend themselves well to preaching about vocations. The themes of call and response, community, discipleship, self-giving and mission are regular features in the cycle of readings for the church year. When any homily is preached, its focus should always be the Word which has been given for the day. When you make a pastoral decision to focus on an invitation to priesthood and religious life, it is appropriate to do so when the Liturgy of the Word lends itself to that focus. There are several very appropriate days to preach about vocations including **Priesthood Sunday** (the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Oct. 25, 2009), the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, when the church in the US begins its observation of **National Vocation Awareness Week** (Sun, Jan. 10, 2010 to Sat, Jan. 16, 2010), and the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday, which is also observed as **World Day of Prayer for Vocations** (Apr. 25, 2010), and finally **World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life** (Sunday closest to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord - Sun, Feb. 7, 2010).

2. Use Contemporary Images

When choosing images and stories for a vocation homily, ask yourself, "Will a seventeen-year-old parishioner relate to this story?" Examples like Pope John Paul II, Mother Theresa, Dorothy Day, and other heroic Christians will probably strike a chord with young people because they have most likely heard of them outside of their church experience.

3. Focus on Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life – Be Direct

Perhaps you have noticed that often young men and women who make a choice for priesthood or religious life are already involved in some level of parish ministry, whether as paid professionals or as volunteers. When preaching on vocations to priesthood and religious life, remember that your parish includes these young adults who are already dedicated to serving God as lectors, music ministers, and catechists. Without implying that lay ministry is a lesser form of service, be direct in your invitation to consider the lifestyle of a vowed or ordained minister

4. Affirm the Faith of Your Listeners

People who worship regularly in our parish communities demonstrate that they are people of faith searching for more. The motivations that carried them to Mass are already counter cultural. Thank God for their faith... Jesus did.

5. Tell Your Story

"Young people have immense curiosity about the lives of people who appear to have discovered sense, meaning, and a measure of fulfillment" (Michael Hunt, CSP). Share a concrete moment from your story so your listeners might make a connection with your discernment, vocation, joy, and sense of mission.

6. Give a Bold, Personal Invitation

The number one reason young people say they haven't considered vowed or ordained ministry is that no one had ever asked them. Ask your listeners directly to consider the possibility of a church vocation. Be courageous. *"Today, I'm asking, I'm asking the young people in our parish to think about what it would be like to serve the People of God as a priest, deacon, brother, or sister."*

7. Ask Parents and Grandparents

Enlist the help of parents and grandparents in the vocation effort of the church. Pope John Paul II clearly points out that vocations begin at home. *"Parents and Grandparents, please talk with your children and grandchildren about the possibility of serving in a religious vocation. We owe it to them to offer them the possibility."*

8. Include Religious Life

When preaching vocations, include reflections on deacons, consecrated virgins and the members of religious orders. Do not neglect to promote communities of religious women and men. For years, sisters, brothers, deacons and committed single people have generously supported vocations in our schools. Priests should return the favor. *"Think about what it would be like to do the work of a brother, to do the things a sister does, etc."*

9. The Church Needs You"

Let your listeners know that they are important. They could make a great contribution to the mission of Christ by serving as a priests, sister, brother or deacon. *"The church needs you! Just one generous person can make such a difference in the mission of God by offering their lives in service of Jesus Christ and his church.*