

Vocation Talk: Middle School (Grades 6-8)

PLEASE NOTE: the presenter does not have to memorize or read from this script; they should feel free to put it in their own words, and, if desired, to add their own personal examples and stories.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE: to go along with this talk, the following videos from the preceding chapter, 'Video Resources on Religious Vocations for Different Ages,' may be used: From Pro Soccer to the Priesthood: The Witness of Fr. Chase Hilgenbrinck; How to Start Discerning the Priesthood; A Vocation Story from CMSWR; Do You Wanna Be a Sister?; Top Ten Friar Questions; Why Become a Priest?

Let me ask you a couple of questions—and please raise your hand when you hear something you agree with: when you think about the job you want to have when you grow up...why do you want to have that job?

Is it because it's considered a 'cool' job? [PAUSE]

Is it because it will make you a lot of money? [PAUSE]

Is it because it's a family business type of job and there might be an expectation that you will take over the family business one day? [PAUSE]

OK. Hold that thought for a moment. How many of you want to have the job you're thinking about having when you grow up...because it's a job where you get to help other people? [PAUSE]

If you raised your hand and said 'yes' to that last question, know this: you might very well have the foundation for a religious vocation.

Helping other people is something that sisters, nuns, priests, brothers, and deacons get to do every single day. They make a difference in other people's lives every single day. And they often get to see the fruits of their labor. They can often see—very directly—that they're making a difference by helping people.

Let me expand my question: who in this classroom does not like helping others? Who in this classroom does not like to help people? [INDICATE THAT KIDS SHOULD RAISE THEIR HANDS – OR NOT – IN RESPONSE TO THIS]

I'm glad to see that nobody raised their hand to that one.

I don't know about you, but I think that'd mean everyone in this classroom likes to help others.

And that's one of the main things that it takes, my friends, to build up the Kingdom of God on Earth. A desire to help others. To do the greater good. To represent, as we say at Church, the Risen Christ present on Earth. We are all called to do that—to help each other.

But some of us are called to go an extra mile or two. To help others in a special way. To serve the Church in a unique way. When people are called in such a way, they're being called to a religious vocation – to be a sister or nun or priest or brother or deacon...to serve a diocese or to serve a religious order. It's not everyone's call. But if, in your heart, you know that you like to help others, then you have one of the most important things you need—one of the most important ingredients.

So many young people these days, it seems, look at the idea of having a religious vocation and say to themselves, "Me?!?" As in, "I can't imagine being a priest or sister or deacon or nun or brother." But I'm telling you today: if the idea of helping other people on a daily basis is attractive to you, then you should examine the idea of applying that desire to help others in a religious context. Investigate it. Think about it. And, most important, pray about it.

What I just told you is actually a pretty good reflection of my own vocation story. [SPEAKER NOW WEAVES HIS/HER VOCATION STORY—WITH THE PIVOT-POINT OF HELPING OTHERS— INTO THE TALK. FEEL FREE TO MAKE THIS A GOOD MINUTE-AND-A-HALF IF NEEDED.]

Let's review what the four vocations are. Does anyone remember what they are? You might have learned these in grade school. [ENCOURAGE KIDS TO RAISE HANDS AND TRY TO REMEMBER WHAT THE FOUR VOCATIONS ARE]

OK. Thank you! The four vocations are: single life...married life...religious life...and priesthood.

And—just to be clear—you also remember the difference between a vocation and a career, right? [WAIT FOR ANSWERS, THEN:]

OK. A vocation is a call; it's a call from God to a specific path or way of life. It comes from God. We receive it at baptism. It's not the same as a job or a career. A career deals with how each of us uses our talents (which God gives us and we then develop) and our gifts (gifts of grace which come from God) within our vocation to make a living for ourselves—and our family, if we have a family. So, there are a number of careers within our vocation.

So—that leads us to...how do we discover our vocation? How do we know what God is calling us to do?

There's a lot out there you can read that will help you on your vocation path. But, in the interest of time today, I'd suggest three big things to start with: prayer...finding quiet time to be with God and just listen...and sharing your thoughts with a trusted adult, like your parents or a priest or a sister or nun.

PRAYER: you really need to ask God to help you find your way. You need to regularly ask Him for his help. It can be something as simple as this:

OK. Let's pray. Please repeat after me:

"God, our Father [STUDENTS REPEAT]

You call us to be holy [STUDENTS REPEAT]

Help us to know your will [STUDENTS REPEAT]

Help us to listen to your call [STUDENTS REPEAT]

Help us to say 'Yes' to you. Amen." [STUDENTS REPEAT]

Good! Now, the second step...take time to listen. Do you know what the adoration chapel is at your church? It's a great place to go for a little bit every week...even just a few minutes...to sit quietly and listen. The Bible tells us that God speaks to us in the silence. Seek that silence. Find it. Sit in it. Just be. That's one of the times when God will speak to you.

Finally...the third step: talk to a trusted adult. Tell them what you're feeling, what you're thinking, what's happening to you when you pray and when you're taking a few minutes to sit quietly with God. Ask them for their thoughts on what you're telling them. Now, keep in mind – this is someone you should feel comfortable with...you're going to be sharing some private information with them, and the last thing you want is to have something you feel like you should share, but not being comfortable enough with that person to where you actually will share it with them. Make sure you know and trust this person deeply.

Now, before I finish—are there any questions you have? [PAUSE TO FIELD QUESTIONS]

OK. Thank you for your time and attention today.

A great Jesuit priest once said, "Vocation is really about becoming the person who God really wants you to become." Think about your vocation in that way. If you have a true desire to help others, then doing so as a priest or deacon or sister or nun or brother could very well be your path—that could very well be the person who God wants you to become.

Pray about it. Spend time in silence considering it. Talk to someone about it. Be open to what you hear in those times of prayer and silent reflection. It's one of the most important things you'll do while you're growing up.