



SPARK

The 7 Greats



Adopt-a-Seminararian



Traveling Chalice/Crucifix



Parish Vocation Ministry



Priesthood Sunday



The 31 Club



Social Media



Holy Hours

INTRODUCTION

Expand Your Vocation Activities

This sampler contains the **7 Greats**®, seven tools from the Serra SPARK® toolkit. The Serra Promotion and Resource Kit (SPARK) can be found at serraspark.org. The tools were built for Vocation Directors by the US Council of Serra International in collaboration with the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD). Serra SPARK® is a valuable resource for anyone involved in vocation work both at the diocesan and parish levels.

Serra clubs, pastors, and parish vocation ministries can all learn and expand their vocation activities with the ideas and tools made available through this **7 Greats**® booklet coupled with the online version containing more than 28 tools and resources.

The website also includes Serra SPARK Helpers® for many of the tools. They are documents that can be downloaded, personalized and used immediately.

All tools and programs can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the local community. The online resources are continually expanded and updated, so start with these tools but expand your vocation activities at serraspark.org. Sign up for automatic updates at the foot of the home page.

Vocation Tool Types

Distinctions should be made in the process of choosing vocation tools depending on your goal. The tools have been classified into the following types to guide your selections. This will help to ensure that your vocation activities are well-rounded. Look for the designations for each tool in this guide. Note that more than one type may apply to an individual tool.

- **Affirmation Tools:** These encourage people who are currently serving the church in their roles as pastor, priest, brother, sister, nun, deacon. They express appreciation to those in Church vocations and can offer support and friendship.
- **Awareness Tools:** These are aimed at building a positive culture of vocations. They aim to create a spiritual atmosphere conducive for the Holy Spirit to bring forth vocations in the community, parish, classroom, and household.
- **Invitation and/or Encouragement Tools:** These are intended to help the laity who may or may not have indicated their desire for a vocation in the Church openly but who have shown a dedication to church service and a love of the faith. These tools offer appreciation to those who may possess the right qualities for a religious vocation and encouragement to remain faithful servants of the Lord in a greater capacity.
- **Prayer Tools:** These tools acknowledge our dependence on God to call those who will serve in those special roles of service to the Church. These "ask the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for His harvest." [Mt. 9:38] Some promote communal prayer activities, and others encourage family or individual prayers for vocations.

Table of Contents



Adopt-a-Seminarian

The 'Adopt-a-Seminarian' program develops a bond between seminarians and parishioners, as they encourage, pray for, and assist with the spiritual and material needs of the seminarians.

5



Traveling Chalice/Crucifix

Aided by the visual reminder of a chalice or crucifix, a family or individual prays for vocations for a week. Many times this effort turns into a great reflection on one's own vocation.

9



Parish Vocation Committees

Parish vocation ministries are the bedrock of vocations-related efforts. Experienced Serrans can hold an "Ignite Workshop" in your parish to help you launch or enhance your vocation ministry.

13



Priesthood Sunday

Priesthood Sunday is observed the last Sunday in September, bringing together the entire parish to thank priests for their leadership. Other Vocation Events are just as easy to celebrate.

17



The 31 Club

The 31 Club is a simple program in which parishioners choose a day of the month to consistently pray for vocations.

21



Promoting Vocations via Social Media

Social media posts on vocations-related themes can spark interest, create a culture that normalizes vocation, and ignite conversations to inform and inspire.

25



Holy Hours

The two most powerful ways to grow your parish vocation ministry are individual and group Holy Hours before the Blessed Sacrament.

29







Adopt-a-Seminarian

- ✔ Invitation/Encouragement
- ✔ Prayer

The 'Adopt-a-Seminarian' program develops a bond between individuals or families and a seminarian. The parishioners work together to encourage, pray for, and assist with the spiritual and material needs of the seminarians. The 'Adopt-a-Seminarian' program is a great way for families to become involved in supporting vocations.

Serra Participation

- Serrans can correspond with seminarians to give them support and strength to persevere in their vocations.
- Prayer for seminarians is important and volunteers should be solicited for prayer commitments to individual seminarians.
- Serrans can help parishes organize 'Adopt-a-Seminarian' programs.

Summary

Many dioceses around the country have brought about special programs—often called 'Adopt-a-Seminarian' or some derivation thereof—to accomplish the aim of supporting priests-in-training at the parish level.

Those programs vary in their operational specifics; however, one common format involves dioceses asking their parishes to encourage their families and schools to pick a seminarian from their diocese for whom they will pray for and correspond with on a regular basis.

'Adopt-a-Seminarian' programs are not limited to spiritual support for priests-in-training.



Best in Early Fall



Lead Time 2-3 months



Low Effort



Low Cost



In some cases, 'Adopt-a-Seminarian' programs include supporting seminarians both spiritually (prayer) and materially (such basic living needs as toiletries and laundry items). In other cases, the programs provide financial assistance to seminarians. This material support should be provided in accordance with the protocols of and in coordination with the seminary.

Program History, Development, and Additional Resources

Encouraging men who are studying for the priesthood is a key component of supporting vocation.

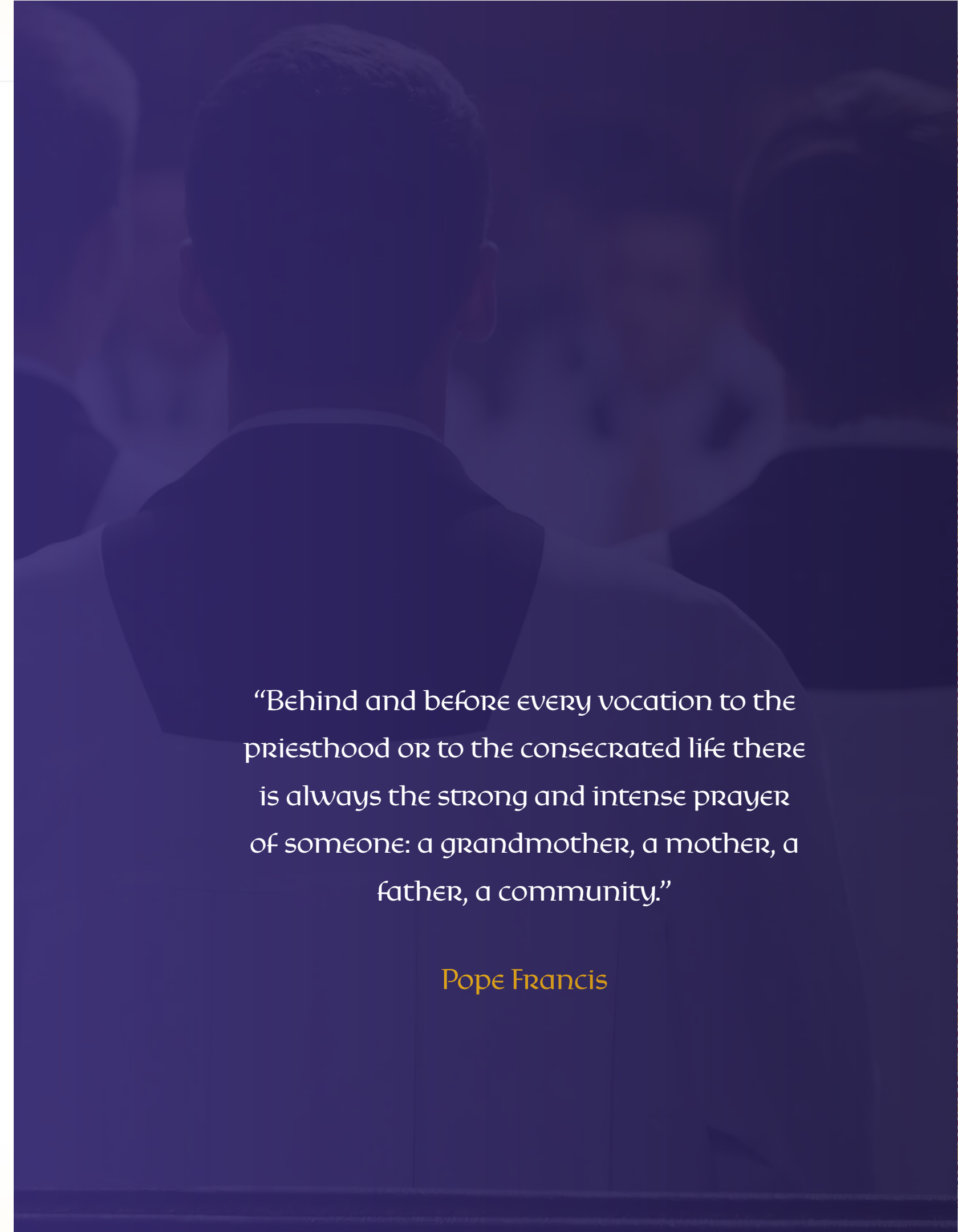
'Adopt-a-Seminarian' programs vary in scope and specifics of operation, but one relatively common way of proceeding in these programs can be seen in the example provided by the Archdiocese of Saint Louis (MO), which encourages all families and its parochial elementary schools and secondary schools to choose a seminarian whom they will "spiritually adopt" and pray for (and also correspond with) on a regular basis.

Tying its 'Adopt-a-Seminarian' program into its 'Adopt a Priest' program, the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, MO, writes the following basic instructions for use in local Catholic schools:

- Choose a seminarian and/or priest for each classroom
- Pray daily for your seminarian and for seminarians throughout the world (Mass, rosary, Holy hour, Adoration, our own words, etc.)
- Send a note, picture, or card on special feast days or holidays
- Pray about and ponder your own personal vocational

'Adopt-a-Seminarian' programs are not necessarily limited to spiritual support for priests-in-training. The program at one particular parish within the Diocese of Ft. Wayne-South Bend (IN), for example, provides both spiritual and material bolstering for diocesan seminarians. Interested parishioners would, after attending Mass, receive information sheets for each diocesan seminarian—sheets which would, among other things, list that person's housing-related needs, such as laundry and toiletry items; parishioners could then send the items along to their 'adopted' seminarian at the seminary. In another case, at a parish in Louisiana, the lay faithful invite seminarians into their homes for meals, games, and Christian fellowship.

These expansions of the 'Adopt-a-Seminarian' concept have been warmly received by both the laity and the seminarians of the dioceses involved.



“Behind and before every vocation to the priesthood or to the consecrated life there is always the strong and intense prayer of someone: a grandmother, a mother, a father, a community.”

Pope Francis





Traveling Chalice/Crucifix

✓ Awareness

✓ Prayer

Aided by the constant visual reminder of a prominently placed chalice or crucifix, a family or individual prays for vocations for a week and writes down their personal experiences in prayer. Many times this effort turns into a great reflection on one's own vocation.

Serra Participation

- Serra clubs can secure chalice and kit.
- Serrans may coordinate the Schedule for families to take the kit.
- Serrans can remind the next family that it's their turn to take the chalice and memory book.
- For young children, a coloring book that has images of the priest during Mass, the monstrance and other images that allow them to start to understand the greatness and importance of the Eucharist is available on the website to download. This will be a treasure of the that faith they can retain as they grow up.

Summary

The Traveling Chalice Program is a simple, effective way to get parishioners directly involved in supporting vocations. (It should be noted that the program can also be done using a crucifix; we shall refer to a chalice here for the purposes of explaining how the program is implemented.)

On Sunday, an individual—or a couple or family—takes the chalice. This can be done in different ways. The priest can present the chalice at the end of Mass, or the chalice can be picked up in the sacristy after Mass. The recipient(s) then takes the chalice home, puts it in a prominent place in the home, and

 <p>All Year</p>	 <p>Lead Time 4-6 months</p>	 <p>Medium Effort</p>	 <p>Low Cost</p>
---	---	--	---



prays every day for vocations during the week. Those participating utilize a 'memory book' to write down their experiences for the week, as well as the prayers that come about as a result; the book then becomes a source of inspiration for subsequent recipients and the parish vocation team.

Recipients should be reminded to return the chalice to the parish on the Friday or Saturday following pick-up; or they may return it before the Mass on Sunday. Succeeding recipients should be prompted as to when their turn is coming.

Program History, Development, and Additional Resources

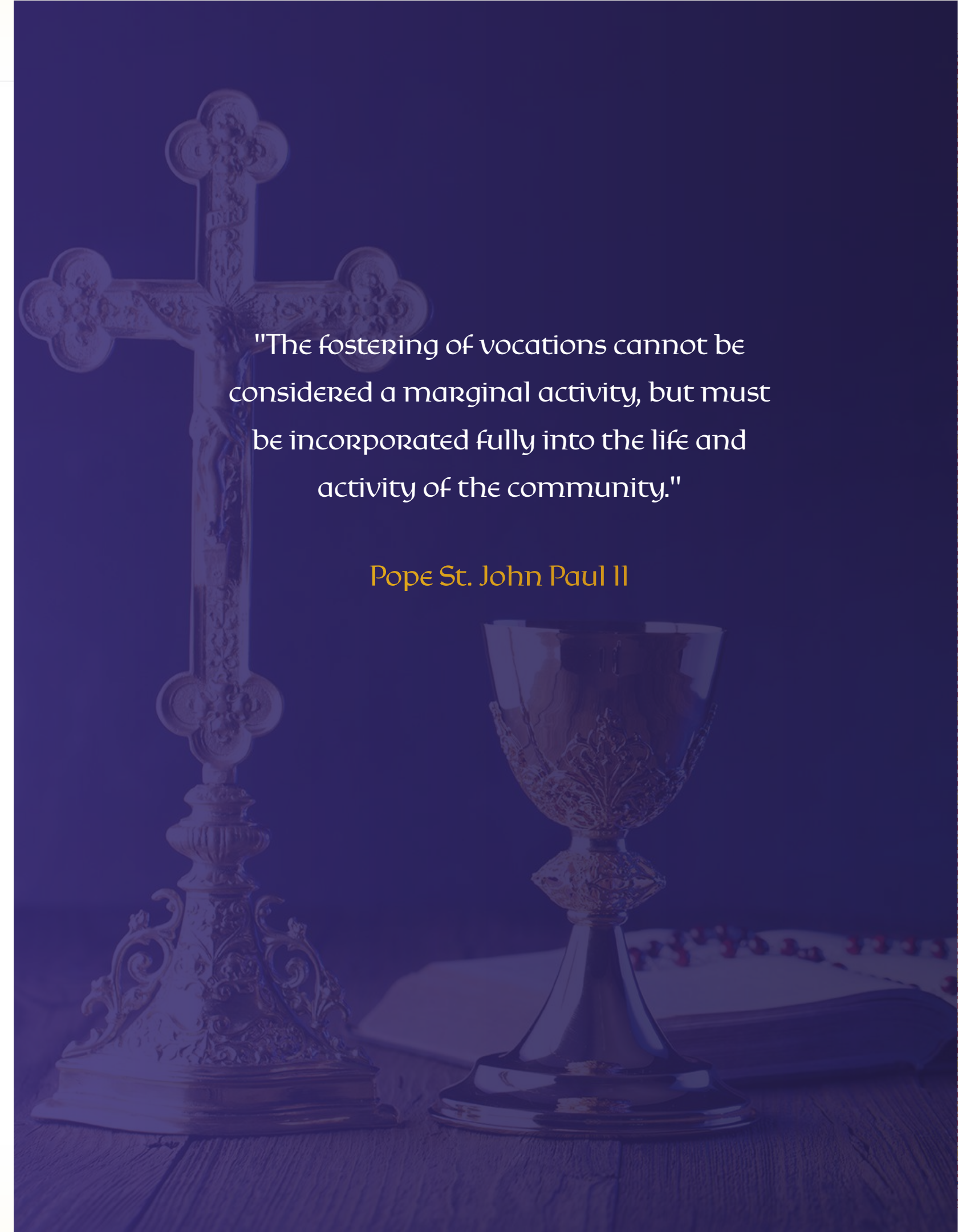
A vocations-promotion endeavor that's been popular for years within parishes around the country, the Traveling Chalice or Crucifix Program is a simple, effective way to get parishioners directly involved in supporting the vocations effort. It is also a great way to encourage families to pray together at home.

It may represent the first time the topic of vocations has been explored by the recipient(s), and be an important week for the recipient(s). It presents a good opportunity to invite family and friends to join in sharing and prayer.

A given week's recipient should be reminded to return the chalice to the parish on the Friday following pick-up—or to simply bring it to the sacristy before the scheduled Mass on Sunday. The succeeding recipient should be prompted as to when their turn is coming.

Establishing a Traveling Chalice Program in your parish is a straightforward matter. First, obtain the support of the pastor and select a leader to administer the program. Second, purchase a chalice or obtain a chalice from the parish. Third, purchase a memory book and vocation prayers—and, if appropriate, a child's Mass kit for families with young children.

An enthusiastic invitation by the pastor is the best way to get parishioners started with the program. The program leader needs to encourage all parishioners to welcome the chalice into their homes. Sign-up cards can be placed in the pews and in the church vestibule or passed out on donut Sunday. Where there is a school, an invitation can be sent home with students. Frequent articles in the church bulletin, a post on the parish website, and a listing in the bulletin of the names of those taking the chalice over the next four weeks are all good steps to keep the program moving forward.



"The fostering of vocations cannot be considered a marginal activity, but must be incorporated fully into the life and activity of the community."

Pope St. John Paul II



Ignite
Your Parish
Vocation
Ministries with
SPARK

Saint Gabriel



Parish Vocation Ministry

✔ Awareness

Parish vocation ministries are the bedrock of vocations-related efforts within local churches. Experienced Serrans can hold an “Ignite Workshop” in your parish to help you launch or enhance your vocation ministry.

Serra Participation

- Serrans participate in planning, organizing, establishing parish vocation committee.
- Serrans staff events supported by the parish vocation committee.
- Serra clubs can help underwrite committee operations.

Summary

Parish vocations ministries most commonly take the form of parish vocation committees.

Driven by the laity and working in concert with pastors, parish vocation committees can be powerful engines of vocation-related outreach at the parish level. As a single, cohesive unit, a parish vocation committee’s general aim is to work and pray toward cultivating vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life.

Many resources can be found on the formation, structure, and activities of parish vocation committees. Best practices from dioceses around America hold that there are a number

 <p>All Year</p>	 <p>Lead Time 4-6 months</p>	 <p>High Effort</p>	 <p>Medium Cost</p>
---	---	--	--



of critical steps to be taken in the proper formation of these groups. Among those steps are organization, communication, and planning. Also of special importance in the formation—and maintenance—of a vocations committee is strong leadership from parish members.

What's more, parishes that have their own schools afford opportunities for synergy. Parish vocation committees can work with the schools via special activities. These could include such things as a traveling crucifix program—wherein students in each class pray for vocations and their own personal calls to holiness (e.g., in a religious vocation or marriage in the Church)—or seminarian/religious visits to classrooms, or even field trips to seminaries and/or religious communities. The program can also be modified for religious education classes.

Program History and Development

Making families more actively vocation-conscious has been an aim of the Church since the Second Vatican Council.

Many parishes have started their own vocation ministries in response to the magisterium. These ministries most commonly take the form of parish vocation committees.

Such committees work and pray for vocations to the diocesan priesthood and the

diaconate, and to religious orders—even though they might not directly work with religious orders. Typical functions of parish vocations committees include, but are not limited to: 1) educate the parish with pertinent information on vocations; 2) pray for vocations; 3) support the needs of seminarians; 4) come up with names of parishioners who could be good candidates for the priesthood, diaconate, or religious life; and 5) collaborate with other parish committees (e.g., faith formation) in areas such as providing speakers for meetings.

Resources for guidance in the formation, structure, and activities of parish vocations committees abound; many dioceses around the country have developed their own guidelines concerning the topic. Best practices hold that there are a number of critical steps to be taken in the proper formation of vocation committees; among those steps are organization, communication, and planning.

One doesn't have to look far to see strong evidence of the efficacy of these grassroots, parish-based groups. For example, one of the largest dioceses in the Southeast, the Diocese of St. Petersburg (FL), has stated that "...one of the most effective ways for parishes to foster vocations is through a parish vocations committee."

There are vocations...

...which manifest themselves.

They must be fostered.

... which are not conscious of themselves.

They must be awakened.

... which do not dare manifest themselves.

They must be found and encouraged.

... which are in fear of being lost.

They must be reassured.

... which meet with opposition.

They must be strengthened.

... which are paralyzed by poverty.

They must be helped financially.

Let Serra bring an IGNITE Parish Vocation Ministry Workshop to Your Diocese.

Experienced and enthusiastic Serrans will come to your diocese to train parish leaders in the set-up of a Parish Vocation Committee! Using the tools offered on the SPARK website as a guide, talented Serrans will help you uncover your group's vocations mission

statement, short- and long-term goals, strategy and pathway to success. What's more, they'll mentor you as you build your committee and initiate your vocations projects. For more information, please contact us via email: info@serrainternational.org.



Celebrate!

PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY





Priesthood Sunday

- ✓ Affirmation
- ✓ Awareness
- ✓ Invitation/Encouragement
- ✓ Prayer

Planning for an annual Church vocation appreciation and awareness events like Priesthood Sunday, traditionally observed the last Sunday in September, brings the entire parish together to thank the pastor and associate priests for their prayerful and spiritual leadership. Organizers are encouraged to start several months prior to each event.

Serra Participation

- Serrans can participate in planning, organizing, and carrying out events.
- Serrans may work with parish officials to support events.
- Serra clubs can underwrite events.

Summary

Several times a year, the Church provides opportunities for the faithful to celebrate vocations. These events include:

- Winter: World Day for Consecrated Life (First Sunday following February 2nd)
- Spring: National Catholic Sisters Week (Second week of March)
- Spring: World Day of Prayer for Vocations (Fourth Sunday of Easter)
- Spring: Religious Brothers Day (May 1)
- Fall: **Priesthood Sunday** - (Last Sunday in September)
- Fall: **National Vocation Awareness Week** (First full week of November)



Spring, Fall,
Winter



Lead Time
6-9 months



High
Effort



Medium
Cost



Serra Spark

Celebrating vocations is an important part of community life in the Church.

World Day of Prayer for Vocations, National Vocation Awareness Week, National Catholic Sisters Week, World Day for Consecrated Life, Religious Brothers Day, and Priesthood Sunday are all events through which the Church provides opportunities for the faithful to celebrate vocations. Some of these events are rather new, while others go back decades—for example, observance of National Vocation Awareness Week started in 1976.

Thanks to the efforts of lay groups and the USCCB, there are several ‘planning kits’ available online. Using these kits can

streamline the planning process.

These kits are often available in downloadable format as ready-to-print PDFs. They typically include such items as prayers, liturgy planning guides, bulletin announcements, and cards.

Several such kits are available via the links in the next section of this summary, ‘additional resources.’ Additionally, since, as the Office of Vocations of the Archdiocese of New York has noted, “Our first priority in promoting vocations is to pray,” that section includes links to vocations prayers to be used during the Prayers of the Faithful within the Mass—as well as the previously mentioned prayers.



SPARK

Additional Resources: serraspark.org

Tool #11, Annual Vocation Events Resources

Several Serra SPARK Helpers© are also available on the website. They include materials to collect Spiritual Bouquets and sample Priesthood Sunday Cards.

A hand holding a chalice against a bokeh background. The image is overlaid with a dark blue filter. The chalice is a clear glass cup with a stem and a base, held by a hand. The background consists of out-of-focus light spots.

“Where there is life and fervor,
and a desire to bring Christ to others,
genuine vocations spring up.”

Pope Francis



Offer one Mass each month for Church vocations

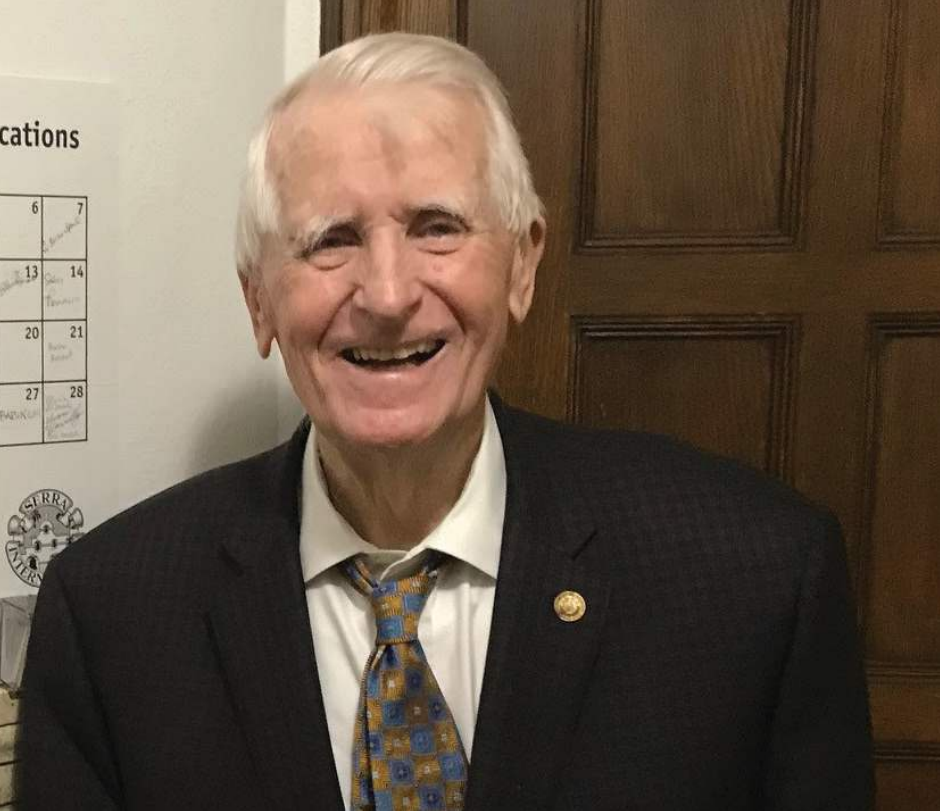
the **31** club

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

* A unique club: Each member chooses one date in the month and offers Mass on that day for Church vocations.

* At this Mass, 31 Club members pray for past, present and future priests, religious sisters, brothers and deacons who serve the parish.

* Anyone can join. Just pick a date. Then, each month for the next year, offer your Mass on that day. Please print your name on the poster under the date you select.





The 31 Club

- ✓ Awareness
- ✓ Prayer

The 31 Club is a simple, easily-established program ideal for the involvement of parishioners in daily prayer for vocations. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you decide the best type of prayer activity for your assigned individual's vocation.

Serra Participation

- Serra Clubs can publicize the effort.
- Serra members can solicit parish participants.
- Serra clubs handle sign-up and distribute out reminder cards.

Summary

One of the easiest—and most direct—ways for the faithful to take part in the overall vocation-promotion effort, the 31 Club has become a mainstay at parishes around America and, indeed, around the world.

After signing up, a member picks any date of the month—from 1 to 31—that suits them; then, they commit to go to Mass or a Holy Hour on that day each month over the following year... and to devote that Mass or prayer to an increase in vocations, and for priests and religious already serving the Church.

The 31 Club does not hold meetings, nor does it require its members to pay dues. Membership is

 All Year	 Lead Time 4-6 months	 Low Effort	 Low Cost
---	--	---	---



open to all—including parishioners who are homebound and wish to offer their sufferings and prayer for that day.

Program History and Development

The history of the 31 Club goes back to the 1970s in New Zealand. A local priest saw a need for an increase in vocations in addition to a need for support of current vocations, and asked his parishioners to pick one date in the month that did not fall on a Sunday. After choosing the date, they were to attend Mass on that date, and offer it with prayers for priests and religious serving the Church, as well as for an increase in vocations. Thus, they'd attend one extra Mass every month as an offering for vocations initiation and support.

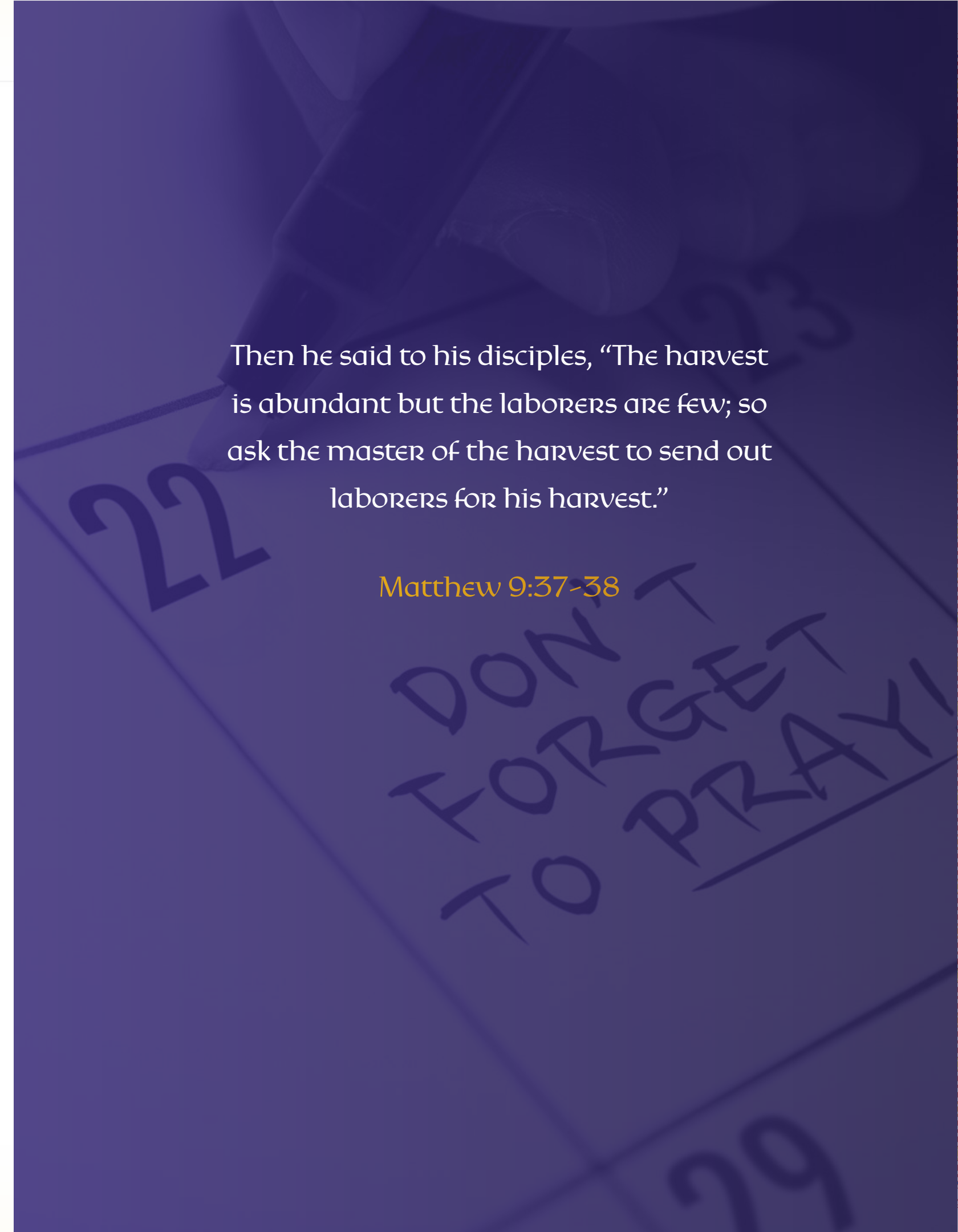
Catholics all over the world now pray for vocations through the 31 Club program. In some cases, parishes are bringing back the program to their locale as part of a renewed effort to promote vocations.

Membership in this club requires one to sign up via a simple form and pledge

to attend an extra Mass or make a Holy hour once a month. The person signing up picks any date of the month—from 1 to 31—that suits them; then, they commit to go to Mass on that day each month over the following year...and to devote that Mass to an increase in vocations, and for priests and religious already serving the Church. Club leaders use a special calendar to track the names of members and the days of the month on which they've committed to attend the extra liturgies. Signing up for the 31 Club is often facilitated via sign-up sheets at the entrances of churches and notices placed in parish bulletins.

The goal, within a given parish, is to build up enough membership to cover all 365 days of the year.

31 Club membership is open to all—including parishioners who are homebound.

A hand holding a pen is shown writing on a calendar page. The page is numbered '22' and has the text 'DON'T FORGET TO PRAY!' written on it. The background is a dark blue gradient.

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”

Matthew 9:37-38





Promoting Vocations via Social Media

- ✔ Affirmation
- ✔ Awareness
- ✔ Invitation/Encouragement
- ✔ Prayer

Social media exists to connect people together through content. We share and discuss ideas, lifestyles, and interests. Posting on vocations-related themes can spark interest, create a culture that normalizes vocation, and ignite conversations to inform and inspire.

Using Serrans

- Serra clubs can organize, execute, and maintain a social media presence.
- They can provide liaison with parish officials regarding vocations website and bulletin announcements.
- Serrans can create announcements for parish bulletins. See the Bulletin Blurbs and general Intersessions on the Serra website.
- Holy Hours for the Youth are very positive. Involve them in the prayerful process of adoration of our Lord.

Summary

Most young people are connected to each other and their favorite brands through social networking. These online platforms make sharing content that matters fast and easy. Unless they are browsing Church-related websites, or opening their parish bulletins, they won't encounter invites to priestly or religious vocations.

Here are suggestions to help young people encounter and share vocations-related content:

- Create a page on a parish website

 All Year	 Lead Time 3-6 Months	 Medium Effort	 Medium Cost
---	--	--	--



specifically designated for promoting vocations.

- Establish social media profiles dedicated to vocations-related content
- Establish a schedule for sharing pictures, quotes, videos, and resources available online.
- Invite comments on your social media pages.
- Always respond to every question, and thank every comment. Demonstrate that an empathetic and intelligent person is present 'behind' the page, ready and willing to engage in conversation.

Social networking can feel intimidating when we're not used to it. The key to successfully sharing content is to understand the intent of the network you are using.

Each social media network has a specific focus, and rewards particular behavior to encourage people to stay on their platform.

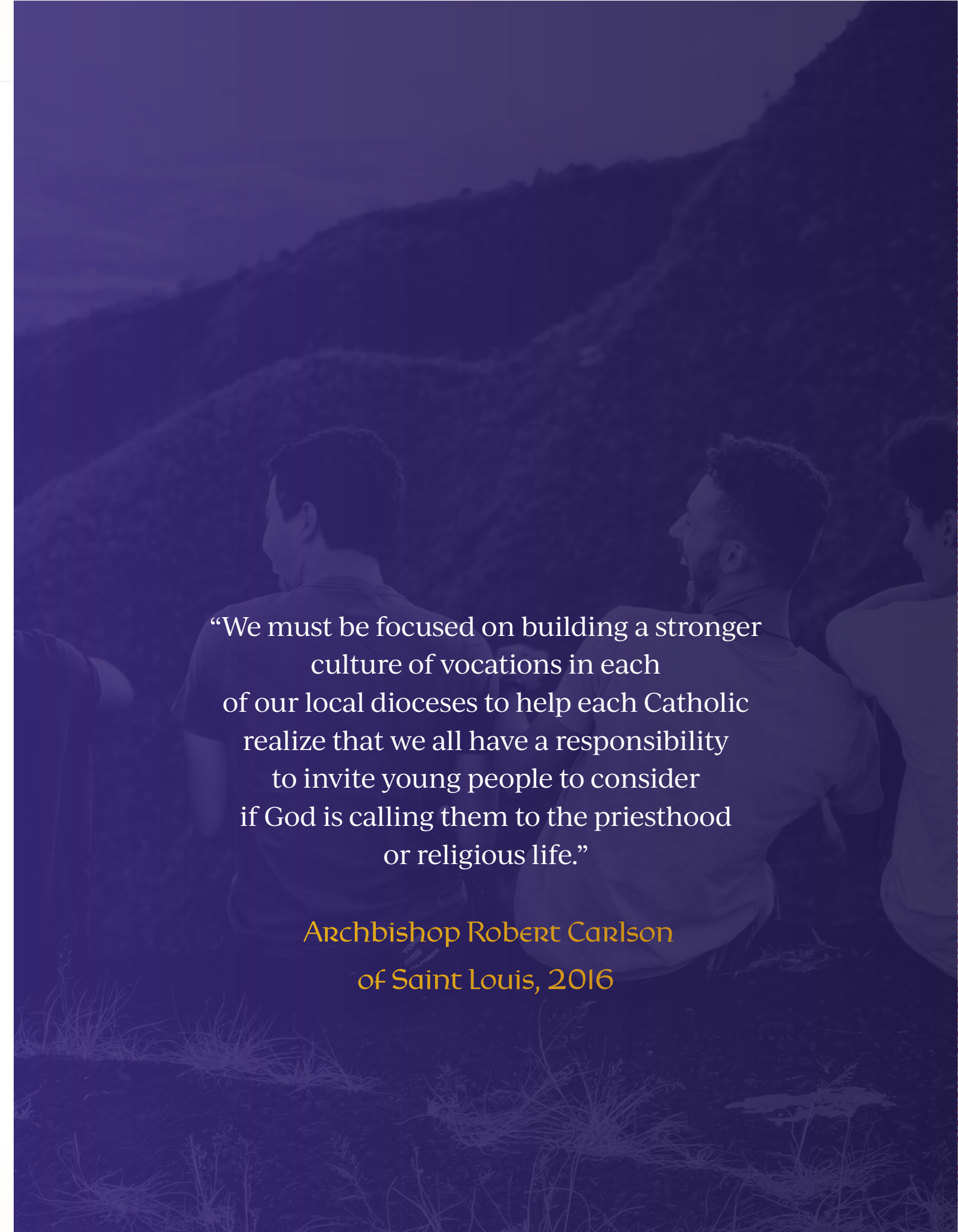
Understanding the age and interests of your audience will guide you to choose the right network. It may be that the network you choose is more popular with the parents of young people with potential vocations.

Be intentional about building up a community around your page through understanding your audience. If they are parents, speak to them as such, and provide discussion prompts and resources for them to pass on to their children or loved ones.

Social media is all about networking socially. Build up rapport through collaboration with other fan pages. Show support and endorsement to other brands and parish-related activities.

Collaboration is key. Content drives conversations. And community creates confidence.

Be social on social media.



“We must be focused on building a stronger culture of vocations in each of our local dioceses to help each Catholic realize that we all have a responsibility to invite young people to consider if God is calling them to the priesthood or religious life.”

Archbishop Robert Carlson
of Saint Louis, 2016





Holy Hours

✓ Prayer

The two most powerful ways to grow your parish vocation ministry are individual holy hours before the Blessed Sacrament and, once or twice a year, celebrating a vocation holy hour as a parish community.

Serra Participation

- Serrans contact parish officials to get approval for Holy Hour at church.
- Serra club Publicizes the Holy Hour for Vocations.
- Serrans prepare Holy Hour script and program.
- Serrans organize and coordinate the Holy Hour at the church.

Summary

The Catholic devotional tradition of a Holy Hour has taken on a new dimension with the increasing popularity of priestly vocations as a main intention.

Praying a Holy Hour for an increase in vocations has found some prominent advocates, from associations devoted to Eucharistic adoration to high-ranking Church leaders. What's more, reports from various dioceses have told of parallels between the growth in frequency of Eucharistic adoration and the growth in the number of vocations.

The USCCB encourages Catholics to engage in Holy Hour with the intention of an increase in vocations to their respective dioceses and around the world. Serra has its own customized resources to provide

 <p>All Year</p>	 <p>Lead Time 1-2 months</p>	 <p>Low Effort</p>	 <p>Low Cost</p>
---	---	---	---



guidance on this to members within their respective chapters—and these resources can also be utilized by any other lay organization within the Church.

Program History and Development

Holy Hour is a Catholic devotional tradition that dates back to the 17th century and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque of France. Over the years, there have appeared numerous variations on intentions to be prayed for within the hour-long devotion, which is undertaken by spending an hour in Eucharistic adoration.

The power of such prayer has been extolled throughout the Church; as applied to vocations, Holy Hour has found some prominent advocates. The Pope John

Paul II Eucharistic Adoration Association holds that, “Grace through group prayer puts a great resource within our midst... [i]nspiration from the Holy Spirit guides us to help channel some of this prayerful energy to support our ordained clergy and seminarians, as well as amplifying the call to vocations.”

More generally, the role of laypeople in engaging regularly in prayer for vocations has been emphasized strongly by Church leaders. In a homily to the faithful of the Archdiocese, Bishop Raymond Goedert of Chicago once remarked, “You have been called to be leaders. Pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. You, the laity, have the power to save the Church!”



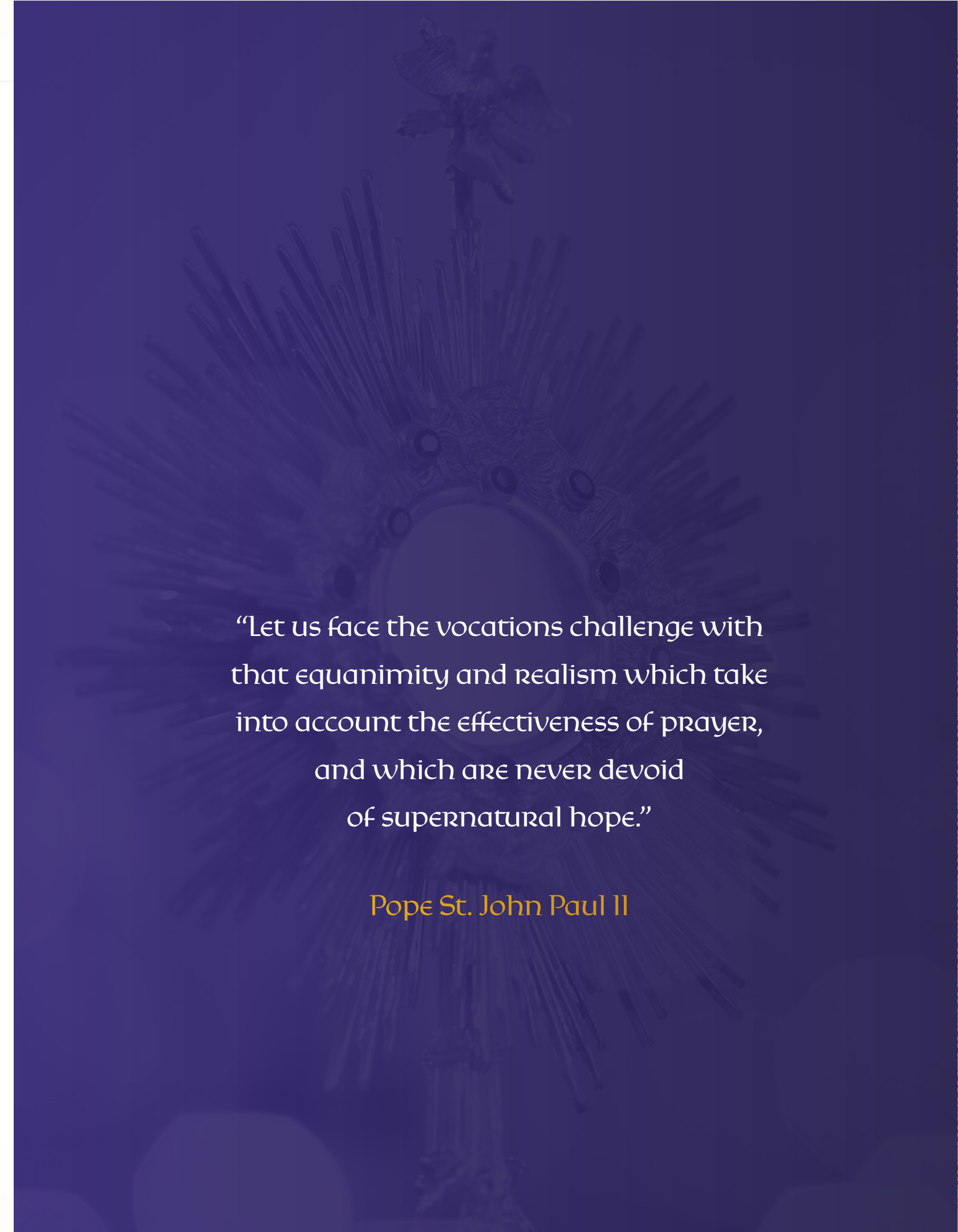
SPARK

Additional Resources: serraspark.org

Tool #20, Holy Hours

Several Serra SPARK Helpers© are also available on the website; they include:

- Sample Scripts and Programs, both English and Spanish
- Posters announcing the Holy Hours



“Let us face the vocations challenge with that equanimity and realism which take into account the effectiveness of prayer, and which are never devoid of supernatural hope.”

Pope St. John Paul II



SPARK

The vocation activities featured in this sampler are just the start!

Check out the full selection of vocation promotions tools online at serraspark.org and spark your parish vocation ministry today.

serraspark.org

SPARK: Built by Serrans for Vocation Directors. A service of the United States Council of Serra International in collaboration with the NCDVD.

© SERRA'S NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE UNITED STATES, INC.