

Vocation Ideas for Parents

How can adults encourage church vocations? Some parents talk directly about vocations. Others simply try to help youth to learn Christian values. Both kinds of encouragement are helpful! Here are some ideas for use in your family. Don't feel that you have to follow all these suggestions. Choose those you can integrate easily into your family life.

These first suggestions have more to do with creating an environment of care and Christian service in your home.

1. Tell stories about your "falling in love." Let the children see the care you have for each other. Share equally in the tasks of creating a Christian home.
2. Share freely your vocation as parents; what you value, how you came to that decision, how you feel about religious vocations.
3. Make prayer a normal part of family decision-making. Pray with and for members of the family, parish, and neighborhood. Give children opportunities to lead prayer and to pray in their own words.
4. Take part in parish activities as a family. Give children a sense of joy that comes from serving.
5. Teach your children to share their time, talent and treasure. Help them to share with those who have less.
6. Talk positively and enthusiastically about the activities of priests, sisters and brothers. Speak with respect about priests and religious, especially where differences of opinion arise. Be careful of the way criticism of the church is handled.
7. Set aside a "family time" each week. Give each child time to share.
8. Watch the way your children exhibit their own style. Some children are organizers (possible teachers, doctors, lawyers, homemakers, etc.). Some children like to play alone (possible researchers, writers, etc.). Help them develop their particular gifts. Compliment them on their gifts.
9. Talk openly about items in the news that speak of a commitment to values, service or church stances on issues.
10. Make time for the teenagers in your life; your children and their friends, nieces and nephews (baby-sitters, those who deliver papers, mow lawns, etc.).
11. Let the priests, sisters and brothers in your parish know they are welcome in your home. Invite them to visit with you and your children.
12. Include a prayer for vocations as part of your meal prayer. Institute some special observance as a family for vocations. Choose a particular day to fast, pray the rosary, or pray together in some other suitable way.
13. Tell your children the stories of the saints and founders of orders. Talk with them, in an age-appropriate way, about what priests, brothers and sisters do today.

14. Keep an eye open for television shows, movies, and videos that present Gospel-centered role models. Watch them with your children; express your admiration for the characters and engage the children in a conversation about their values and choices.
15. Do some research to discover the orders of men and women religious active in your Diocese. Who are they? Where are they? What ministries are they involved in? What houses of formation are located in your area? Pray for their life and ministry, or perhaps call a group you would like to know better and visit, as a family. You may be able to be of help to them.
16. Consider becoming an associate or lay member of a religious community.
17. Keep abreast of current ideas as to the training, life, and role of priests and religious in the church. Familiarize yourself with their goals and the manner in which their role evolves as it pertains to their ministry in education and social justice.
18. Plan an informative and relaxed evening with a small group of parents, and a priest, brother, or sister who can answer your questions about priesthood and religious life.
19. Share with your children why you chose the profession you chose, and why your lifestyle (vocation) choice helps you do that.
20. Talk to your children's friends about the life choices they are considering. They may notice your interest and support and be more prepared to talk to you than to their parents.
21. If you know of any young people who would be a good priest or religious, ask them if they have ever considered such a vocation. Tell them what gifts you see in them, and why you think they would be effective ministers for God's people.
22. Explore the feelings you might experience should one of your children choose to give his or her life to church ministry.
23. Dream with them about what the church of the future can be.
24. Speak of your life as a vocation.

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