



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM
DIOCESAN VOCATIONS OFFICE

Ask · Invite · Pray



REFERENCE GUIDE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Role of the Teacher in Awaking
the Hearts of Pupils for Vocation



www.vocations.org.uk

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

- Matthew 9:35-38

DIOCESAN PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, send labourers into your harvest.

*Inspire, in the hearts of your people, vocations to the
priesthood, diaconate and religious life.*

Bless our families with a spirit of generosity.

*May those whom you call to the priesthood, diaconate and
religious life have the courage to give themselves to your
Church as co-operators in your work.*

Amen.

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INTRODUCTION

“We cannot say that young people are the future of the world. They are its present.”
- Pope Francis

As a teacher, you know that you are called to do more than transmit knowledge, deliver a curriculum or coach students through assessments; you are called to form pupils by helping them develop fully as young people. As a teacher in a Catholic school, this takes on a further dimension of helping make Christ known and loved in their lives.

Most children in a Catholic school can define vocation as “God’s call”, but their understanding of what this truly means in its fullest sense should be constantly developing. The purpose of this reference guide is to help equip you to share the message of vocation and encourage vocations to priesthood, diaconate, religious life, holy married life and apostolic celibacy (the single, lay life), without necessarily sacrificing time needed to complete the curriculum.

This reference guide includes an exploration of what the term ‘vocation’ means, gives definitions associated with vocation and provides some ideas that can be used day-to-day in school, or as part of an off-timetable vocations day or cross-curricular vocations week.



Eli and Samuel: the account of the call of Samuel in the Bible (1 Samuel 3) shows the key role of others in helping the young recognise God’s call and in guiding them to respond.

VOCATION

The Lord calls each person to holiness and also to have a special mission on earth. God had a plan for our lives even before the creation. So, everyone you meet has a great purpose on earth, in service of God and others.

There are so many ways that God calls us and reveals himself to us: through the Sacraments, Scripture, liturgy, prayer, music, lives of the saints and the actions of others.

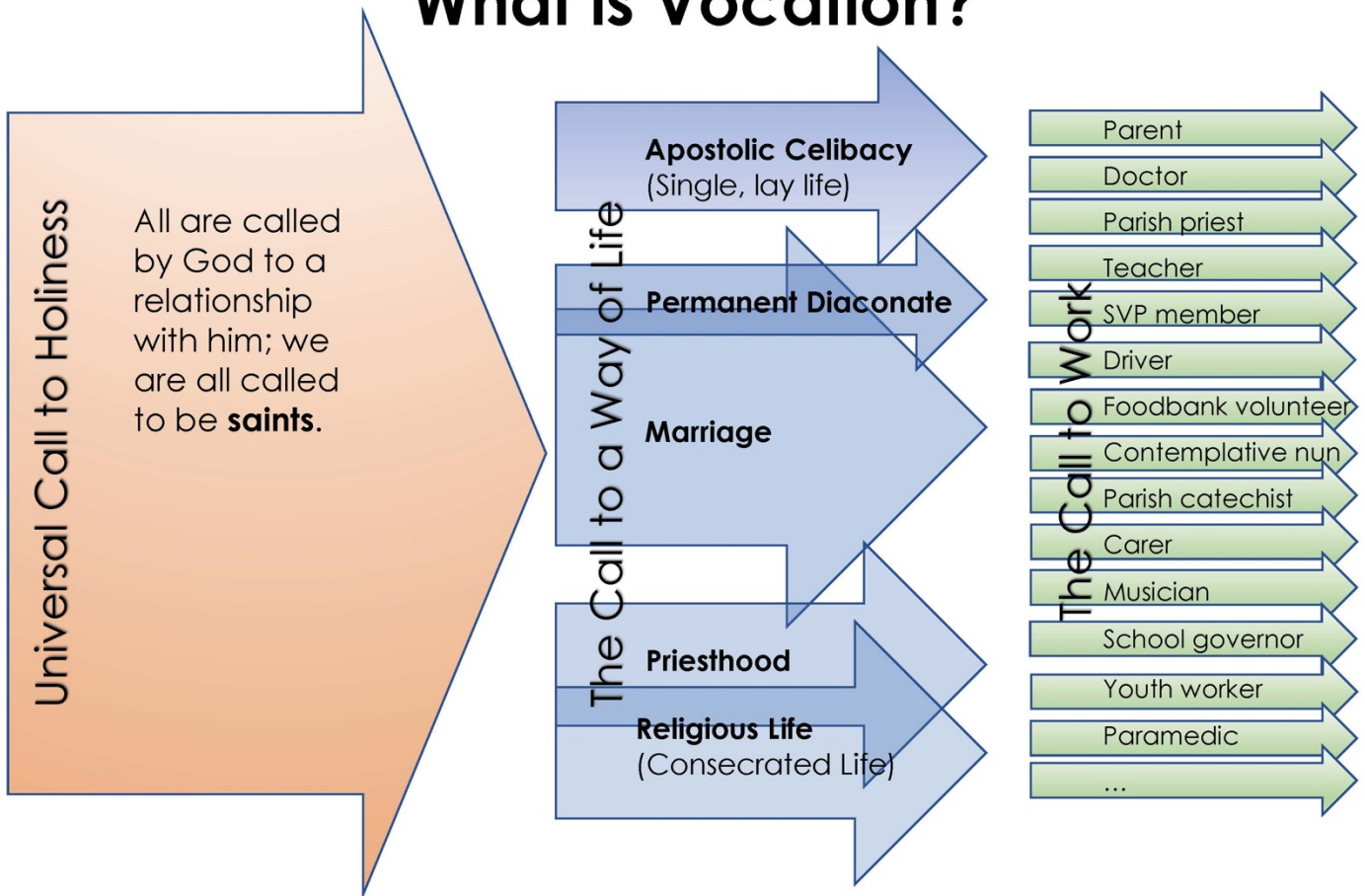
Part of the challenge in discerning one's vocation is the modern-day distractions of life – young people may find they have little chance in the busyness of school to have the time and space to hear the call from God, and their free time finds his call drowned out by counter-messages of secular culture.

Each of us has the choice to say 'yes' or 'no' to God's plan for our lives. However, when we generously respond with a 'yes' – rather than trying to initiate his plan – we feel fulfilled, but also challenged to go out of our comfort zone.

The expression 'culture of vocation' is used to mean an environment in which we acknowledge that we are called to holiness and that we need to take time to discern our vocation. The work of the Diocesan Vocations Office focuses on promoting and supporting a culture of vocation across the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Although we have a focus on vocations to the diocesan priesthood, promoting vocations to the priesthood cannot take place in isolation from other vocations, because promoting vocation is the task of encouraging people to seek an encounter with Christ in which he will reveal the specific vocation he has in mind for them.

As a staff member of your school, you support parents and our parishes in building a culture of vocation. You can help your pupils to develop an openness to fulfilling not only their potential in their work, but also the possibility of priesthood or religious life. Their discernment process might begin with you!

What is Vocation?



The Universal Call to Holiness

God created humans to have a relationship with him, which is the greatest relationship a human can have. Having a personal relationship with God is crucial to grow in holiness.

All are called by God from the moment of conception. God wants us to know his love and respond freely. His plan is a plan of happiness and fulfilment. God is revealed to us through Scripture, liturgy, prayer, the Sacraments etc. Modern life can distract us and drown out this call. Therefore, it is so important to spend quiet time with God to hear his voice clearly.

The Call to a Way of Life

All have a great and unique mission on earth, which they will realise in this life or the next. Out of God's unconditional love for the human race, God gives us a choice to say 'yes' or 'no' to this call. The call to a way of life is also known as a permanent *state in life*.

In the diagram, permanent diaconate and marriage overlap as most deacons are married. Marriage and priesthood also overlap because there are some Eastern and former-Anglican priests who are married and later ordained as Catholic priests. Priesthood and religious life overlap because there are men in religious life who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders.

The Call to Work

This call is about using God-given talents to serve him and others. This could involve working for the common good and not for self-service. This strengthens and builds up the Church.

The call to work includes the following: career, occupation, profession, using gifts and talents as a service to others, building up God's kingdom, volunteering in parish groups, engaging in the works of mercy, being a part of Church organisations (e.g. the SVP, Legion of Mary) and helping those in need.



Ask God: "What is your will?"
He will Invite you to follow him
Pray and respond

SOME DOS AND DON'TS WHEN SPEAKING ABOUT VOCATION

Do:

- ✓ **Make sure vocation is presented as something for everyone**
 - God has a wonderful plan for everyone, not just those with a vocation to priesthood or religious life. No-one is excluded.
- ✓ **Reflect on gifts and talents**
 - Vocation celebrates what a person is, can do and can be.
- ✓ **Give opportunities to discern**
 - Make times for reflection in prayer and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.
- ✓ **Invite witnesses to speak and meet students**
 - Clergy, religious, seminarians, married and single people and also those who live the call to work through employment or voluntary work.
- ✓ **Use testimonies of your own school's staff on how their faith shines through their work**
 - It doesn't always need to be outside speakers, there are plenty in the school community who can speak of their vocation.
- ✓ **Present vocation as a positive part of God's plan**
 - Although there are always difficulties, challenges and sacrifices, these are always outweighed by the fulfilment in living God's plan.

Don't:

- ❖ **Shy away from the idea of any vocation being a possibility**
 - Men and women in the 21st century *do* become priests, nuns, consecrated virgins.
- ❖ **Shy away from the vocabulary of vocation**
 - Students are expected to know and use technical vocabulary in all areas of learning – science, English, maths; vocation is no different.
- ❖ **Vocation = job, career, profession**
 - Vocation is who you are, not what you do to earn money.
- ❖ **Vocation = future**
 - Whilst a permanent state in life and a call to work will come as an adult, a young person's call to serve God and others has already begun.
- ❖ **Say, "You can be whatever you want to be."**
 - Vocation is not self-determination, instead it is self-realisation of the wonderful plan of who God has created a person to be, leading to true fulfilment.

EASY WAYS TO BUILD A CULTURE OF VOCATION IN SCHOOL

- Pray for the ability to see the children you teach as God sees them. Pray especially for students who have qualities of potential Church leaders.
- Encourage pupils to find opportunities to serve others, whether that is in school, at home, in the parish or in the community e.g. altar serving or acting as welcoming ministers, charitable volunteering.
- Establish a lunchtime club for altar servers, making links between serving in school and in the parish.
- Compile a list of people who are willing to come into school and answer questions about priesthood, diaconate, religious life, marriage and apostolic celibacy, as well as living the call to work.
- Have a whole-school vocations day or week in school, annually.
- Include a symbol/ picture/ prayer for vocations in every classroom where it is visible for everyone.
- Display our diocesan seminarians poster prominently in school.
- Use the accounts of lives of the saints. Saints have heard God's voice in a variety of ways, and they have answered in different ways and despite facing the challenges of their own times.
- Use accounts of those whose lives are or were motivated by their Catholic faith, such as monk and geneticist Gregor Mendel, TV's Anne Hegarty or author J.R.R. Tolkien.
- Provide opportunities to spend time in personal prayer within school, which develops confidence in quiet stillness and contemplation. Provide students with retreats and pilgrimage experiences.
- Include a regular bidding prayer for students' own vocation during school Masses and liturgies, as well as praying for our clergy, religious and seminarians.
- Give opportunities to study and reflect upon the Scriptures. Reflecting on one verse a day can bring students into a closer relationship with God over a short period of time.

- Participate in the Days of Adoration and Prayer for Vocations by contacting the Diocesan Vocations Office; we are able to support with planning (both in practically and spiritually) so that the whole school benefits from time spent with the Lord.
- Foster a classroom environment where it is okay to consider priesthood and religious life by being open to conversations about vocation even amidst your busy schedule.
- Integrate vocations into all subjects, not just RE, collective worship and assemblies.
- Staff members are often looked up to as role models by students. You could reflect on and share your own call to holiness and your important mission as a member of the Catholic Church.
- Pray for seminarians, clergy and any religious brothers/sisters in your community regularly. They rely so much on other people's prayers for strength and grace.
- Be on the lookout for emerging qualities that may apply to vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Point these qualities out to pupils, encourage them to consider themselves as potential future leaders in Church.
- If you have a local Deanery Vocations Group or a vocation prayer group in a local parish, coordinate with them and use their resources.
- Encourage participation in competitions run by the Diocesan Vocations Office and Church charities (such as CAFOD).
- Mark the annual worldwide Day of Prayer for Vocations, also known as Vocations Sunday (4th Sunday of Easter). Use materials provided by the Diocesan Vocations Office.
- In social media posts, use the hashtag #vocation and tag the Diocesan Vocations Office (@AskInvitePray on Twitter).
- Use the printed resources (prayer cards, posters) and online resources (YouTube videos) produced by the Diocesan Vocations Office.
- Children from Year 3 upwards are expected to know the *Angelus* prayer; all KS2 classes could pray this daily at midday for the intention of vocations.
- Arrange a visit to our diocesan seminary, Oscott College. They have a Schools' Outreach Programme each June - details for booking are sent by email to headteachers in spring.

VOCATIONS WORKSHOP

The Diocesan Vocations Office encourages all of our diocesan primary schools to have a Vocations Workshop, **free-of-charge, although we appreciate a donation to the Clergy Training Fund to cover travel costs.**

The workshop has been developed for Year 6 classes, since these pupils are beginning to think about decisions they make in life as they prepare for secondary school. We also make links to the Sacrament of Confirmation; the workshop works equally well before, during or after class preparation for the Sacrament.

The workshop involves a presentation, with activities and opportunities for questions and answers to explore:

- The fulness of the definition of 'vocation',
- God-given gifts and talents,
- The universal call to holiness and the call to work,
- Permanent states in life: marriage, single life, religious life, diaconate and priesthood,
- The role and importance of the priest,
- Saints as models of vocation,
- Discerning and praying for vocation.

There are opportunities for you to take photographs of pupils dressed up and standing behind our vocations cut-outs. We leave you with resources help make prayer for vocations an ongoing part of class life.

To book your workshop, contact the Vocation Promotion Outreach Fieldworker for your area of the diocese.



Year 6 pupils engaging in Vocation Workshops delivered by the Diocesan Vocations Office.

VOCATION DEFINITIONS

Apostolate: The type of work or mission someone has. For example, the work of a religious community, through which their order's particular charism is lived out.

Apostolic life: Religious who do work in world for God's people.

Bishop: A man ordained to the fullness of Holy Orders. A successor of the apostles. *Archbishops, auxiliary bishops, most cardinals and the pope are all bishops – these titles and roles are not extra degrees of the Sacrament.*

Brother: Men in religious communities. Some religious use 'brother' even for priests in their community.

Celibacy: Giving up married life and marital relations for the sake of God's kingdom.

Charism: Supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit needed by the Church, communities and individuals to fulfil the mission of the Church and of individuals. Every religious community has a charism(s).

Chastity: One of the vows made by religious. In this context, it has the same definition as celibacy - giving up the possibility of married life and marital relations for the sake of God's kingdom. It is also the virtue by which all people integrate and live the gift of sexuality according to their state in life (i.e. married or single).

Clergy or **cleric:** A man in Holy Orders – a bishop, priest or deacon. *In previous times, this also included seminarians.*

Clerical dress: The clothing worn by priests, deacons, and seminarians. Includes the cassock or black suit and clerical collar (the "dog collar").

Consecrated life: A permanent state of life, entered freely in response to the call of Christ by making public vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Also referred to as the religious life.

Consecrated virgin: A woman who has made a public vow to remain single and chaste, but who lives in the secular world.

Contemplative life: Religious who are enclosed and spend time in prayer for the world.

Deacon: A man ordained to a third degree of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Ordained to the ministry and service, but not the priesthood. He is a minister at the altar, of the Word and of charity. He can assist the priest at Mass, baptises and presides at weddings and funerals. Either **permanent** (a man who may be married, called to be a deacon) or **transitional** (a seminarian in the final stage of formation for ordination for his call the priesthood). The Order is called the **diaconate**.

Discernment: Discovering one's vocation through prayer, reflection and discussion as to who God is calling you to be.

Friar: A man in vowed religious life in a mendicant order. Friars are sent to wherever they are needed in the world, rather than living an enclosed contemplative life. E.g. Franciscans and Dominicans.

Habit: The distinctive clothing worn by members of religious communities. May include elements such as a veil for women, a hood, a rosary.

Holy Order: The Sacrament received by ordained men. It has three degrees – bishop, priest and deacon. Those in Holy Orders make promises, rather than vows, at ordination.

Laitiy or lay faithful: They are people who are not ordained as bishop, priest or deacon. People within the Church and includes religious brothers and sisters, and all single and married people.

Mendicant: Religious who rely on charitable almsgiving of others, rather than having communal property. E.g. Franciscans, Augustinians.

Monastery: A building occupied by an enclosed community of monks or nuns living under religious vows. An abbey is a larger monastery.

Monk: Male religious who stays enclosed in a monastery and makes vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. E.g. Benedictines or Cistercians (Trappists).

Novice: A man or woman in the second formal stage of joining a religious community.

Nun: Female religious who is called by God to pray and serve the needs of the Church in a more hidden way. Nuns live in cloistered, contemplative communities and do not leave their convent or monastery for outside apostolate. E.g. Poor Clares or Benedictines. *Apostolic religious sisters are often informally, if technically incorrectly, referred to as nuns too.*

Obedience: Being submissive to God's authority. One of the vows made by religious. Diocesan priests and deacons make a promise of obedience to their bishop.

Ordination: the ceremony in which a man, through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop, receives the Sacrament of Holy Order, to be become a deacon, priest or bishop.

Post-nominals: The letters after a religious' name denoting their order or congregation E.g. OSB (Order of St. Benedict – Benedictines) or CSsR (Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer – Redemptorists).

Postulant: A man or woman in the first formal stage of their discerning life to in a religious community.

Poverty: Holding all things in common. The community takes care of each other's needs through the providence of God and our charity.

Priest: A man ordained to the second degree of Holy Orders, to teach, govern and sanctify. Only a priest can celebrate the Eucharist, Reconciliation, or the Anointing of the Sick.

Profession: The ceremony in which religious make their vows.

Religious: When used as a noun, refers to man or woman in consecrated life, who has made vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Religious life: A group of men or women who live a way of common life. Every religious community has their own founder(s), charism(s) and mission in the Church. These can be communities of priests, brothers or sisters. They pronounce publicly the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The apostolates of a community vary according to their mission. Those dedicated primarily to prayer are contemplative communities; those who combine prayer with apostolic ministries are called active communities. *Also informally*

applied to communities of secular priests and brothers (such as Oratorians).

Secular clergy: Men in Holy Orders who are not in consecrated life; they have not made vows. Usually refers to diocesan priests and deacons.

Seminarian: A man in formal formation for the priesthood (a process that typically takes 6-7 years).

Seminary: A place where men study and live to be formed to become priests. From the Latin for seed bed.

Sister: Female religious who has taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to live a life in service to God and the Church. E.g. Marists or Sisters of Mercy.

Vestment: Clothing used by clergy (and those who assist them) during the liturgy. E.g. stole or chasuble.

Vocation: A call or an invitation from God to do what he has planned for us to do from the beginning.

Vows: Formal commitments made to God, which can be temporary or permanent, simple or solemn. Consecrated religious make public vows to follow Jesus in poverty, chastity and obedience as members of religious communities. Those who marry and consecrated virgins make permanent vows.

SCRIPTURE RELATED TO VOCATION

Genesis 12:1-4	<i>Leave your family and country - The call of Abraham.</i>
Exodus 3:1-12	<i>I shall be with you – Moses and the burning bush.</i>
1 Samuel 3:1-10	<i>Speak, Lord, your servant is listening - The call of Samuel.</i>
1 Kings 19:16-21	<i>Elisha rose and followed Elisha - The call of Elisha.</i>
Isaiah 6:1-8	<i>Whom shall I send? The call of Isaiah.</i>
Jeremiah 1:4-9	<i>Before I formed you in the womb I knew you... go now to those whom I send you - The call of Jeremiah.</i>
Jeremiah 20:7-9	<i>There seemed to be a fire burning in my heart.</i>
Psalms 39 (40)	<i>Here I am Lord, I come to do your will.</i>
Matthew 9:35-37	<i>The harvest is rich but the labourers are few.</i>
Mark 10:17-27	<i>Go and sell everything you own, then come, follow me - The rich young man.</i>
Luke 5:1-11	<i>From now on it is men you will catch - Peter, Andrew, James & John follow Jesus.</i>
Luke 9:57-62	<i>Follow me.</i>
Luke 14:25-33	<i>Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.</i>
John 1:35-51	<i>Follow me - Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip & Nathaniel follow Jesus.</i>
John 15:9-17	<i>You did not choose me, no, I chose you - Discourse on love.</i>
2 Corinthians 5:14-20	<i>We are ambassadors for Christ.</i>
Philippians 3:8-14	<i>I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us upwards to receive in Christ Jesus.</i>

There are other passages of scripture related to specific vocations, such as priesthood (e.g. the Last Supper), diaconate (the first deacons in Acts 6), marriage (the creation of man and woman in Genesis).



THE ARCHDIOCESE
of BIRMINGHAM

DEANERIES



DIOCESAN VOCATIONS OFFICE

“If you are what you should be, you will set the world on fire.”

– St. Catherine of Siena

The Vocations Office exists to build up a culture of vocation across the Archdiocese of Birmingham. We support our seminarians and men in formation to be permanent deacons, as well as providing for the ongoing formation of clergy. Through our vocation promotion work, we engage with schools, university chaplaincies and parishes. We produce a range of prayer materials to help build your relationship with Christ. We also administer the diocesan Guild of St. Stephen, supporting altar servers in their commitment to God and his people.

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