

Do's and Don'ts

Reactions can vary widely when parents discover that their son is considering a single-hearted life of service to God's people and His Church as a priest. Some parents are very happy and eager to provide support while others may have questions or concerns about their son's discernment process or intended vocation. Here are some do's and don'ts for parents of those who are discerning a call to the priesthood or religious life:

DO'S

- **BE RECEPTIVE:** Don't overreact. Trust the Holy Spirit is at work in your son's life but also in your own in some mysterious way in this process. Ask for docility to the Spirit.
- **BE SUPPORTIVE:** There are so many cultural and societal factors that can negatively influence a man's priestly discernment. Many deride or mock a life of sacrificial love. Verbalize your support in word or writing but only when you are sincere and ready. Avoid negative comments or put downs of his possible vocation or the Church.
- **BE INFORMED:** Supporting a vocation should not happen blindly. Ask questions but be aware that your son may not have many answers initially. Find out how discernment or seminary works from them. Talk to a priest you trust. Call or email the Vocation Director to set up a time to meet. Remember that no one is ordained right away; it takes anywhere from six to eight years of formation to become a priest. Throughout that entire process they will discern freely, and remain always free to leave and pursue other paths in life.
- **BE PATIENT:** The road to the seminary and to the priesthood is paved with ups and downs and graces and crosses similar to those preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage. Initially some seminary candidates may not share much: some because it is so personal, others because they are anxious, and some from fear of rejection or mockery.
- **BE CHRIST-LIKE:** Reactions will vary as others find out about your son's intentions. Be careful not to feel pressure to answer questions you can't or choose not to. See this as an opportunity to get to know others spiritually and to grow in your own knowledge of the faith.
- **BE LOVING:** Love your son, love God, love the Church. Ask God for the grace to love all three.
- **BE PRAYERFUL:** Lift your son up in prayer each day as well as his vocation. Don't forget to do the same for your other children! Give God gratitude for your children. Do not be too anxious about the future...as Scripture says, "fear is useless, what is needed is trust!"

DON'TS

- Don't ordain your son today or tomorrow. Your loved one and the Church will decide if and when he is ready.
- Don't badger him about his vocation. Don't belittle his experience, sincerity, or experience of the Church that may be different from yours.
- Don't fall into the modern trap that unless one is sexually active one cannot be happy. Celibates have the gift of sexuality as Jesus did. We must all struggle to give that gift in a way that honors God and His plan for us and the Church.
- Don't think it is just a phase that will go away. The Lord may be up to something special with your son. He chose simple fishermen, a tax collector and a physician...God chooses whom He wishes.
- Don't try to figure it all out. Pope John Paul II said of his vocation that it was a "gift and mystery."

- Adapted from HELP! MY SON WANTS TO BE A PRIEST! What to do...and not to do by Fr. Marcel Taillon