

Christmas
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for the parishes of Ogdensburg, Heuvelton & Lisbon

Vocations Newsletter

Religious Education Catechists look at the relationship between the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) and vocations.

Baptism, Bishop Terry LaValley

Bishop Terry R. LaValley recently shared with the Diocese of Ogdensburg Vocation Society (DOVS) their call to support vocations to the Church, a call which springs from their Baptism.

"Baptism makes all the difference in the world. It's not a magical moment; it is a sacramental encounter. Because of our baptism, we have been charged with a mission, every one of us, we are disciples in mission."

Summarizing Bishop's thoughts, we realize that never more so than today, the Church needs us to take our baptismal commitment seriously. Studies have identified several stages of motivation in the growth process. These impact our faith development.

1. **What's in it for me?** The most basic stage is when a person is motivated by simple desire for reward and fear of punishment. Many people remain at this level their whole lives.

2. **I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine.** Assistance is based on a return. Help is offered with is a price to pay.

3. **See me!** A person is willing to make a sacrifice or take a risk to help because people will notice and be impressed by what the person offering assistance.

4. **Law and order.** Everyone must law but nothing over and above the law. An obligation to attend Mass on Sunday is obeyed, but does the person put anything into the experience.

5. **Gospel values.** A person begins reaching out beyond self by recognizing their place in the faith

community. They share responsibility by getting involved even if it does not benefit them or it requires sacrifice.

6. **Total selflessness.** At the sixth stage, a person recognizes that all people are God's precious children, so they will to spend energy to bring about the Kingdom of God though sacrifice. God's love and compassion take stronger root in their heart, and they are content with that and seek no further reward.

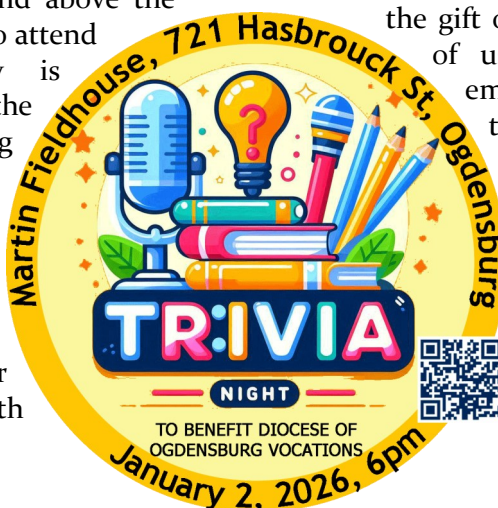
Looking at how volunteer service organizations struggle to find new participants, we can see the peril of the it's all about me mentality.

Understanding these stages does not mean that we grow through them; personally, I know I haven't. But the stages challenge us to look at our motives in what we do and don't do.

Who I truly am is reflected in how I live my life and relate to others. The humble person knows how God sees them and lives accordingly. With the virtue of hope the heart doesn't close itself in the dark past or scrape along in the present. With hope, the heart believes in tomorrow.

I want to be a fellow disciple in mission because of Christ's tremendous love for me. Out of a real sense of gratitude for the gift of your baptism, each of us should choose to embrace the Cross on the highway to heaven, and experience the joy of the Gospel enroute.

- Summary by Sr. Mary Eamon Lyng, SSJ and Deacon James Crowley



First Holy Communion and Eucharist

Patricia Conger and Lil Dailey

The Eucharist is an experience that shapes our spiritual, moral, and communal lives. By participating in the Eucharist, children are invited to grow closer to their faith, understand the values it teaches, and become active members of their community. This makes the Eucharist a vital and meaningful part of a child's spiritual journey.

The purpose of First Communion is to celebrate a child's growth into the Catholic church. This is their first reception of the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ. It is a very important moment for them; each child receives Jesus into their hearts while affirming his or her faith. Each time the child receives this Sacrament it strengthens their relationship with God.

Learning about Jesus' teachings and about his love and sacrifice helps children grow in their faith.

To begin to understand the Eucharist, children need to learn about where it all comes from. We start each year out learning about the beginning of creation and life. They quickly learn that God is a loving God and created everything for us. They learn about sin, about Adam and Eve, and God's great mercy and forgiveness. Next, we talk about community and what it means to belong. We learn about our church community, how they belong and why it is so important. When the church community shares in their First Communion, the

children see our witness of a loving community, and how we support one another.

Preparing for First Holy Communion takes time and patience. Teaching children how Jesus shows us kindness, forgiveness and compassion helps to shape their moral values. Witnessing these morals within our church community helps to deepen their faith.

Learning about the Last Supper as well as the Crucifixion and Resurrection, shows Jesus' love and forgiveness for each of us. We learn how we should treat others.

First Communion is one of three Sacraments of Initiation that helps children prepare to become adult members in the church. It offers them a way to participate more fully within the Mass and strengthens their faith. Some children may choose to become Altar servers, greeters or lectors. This is an invitation to see how God is calling them. Maybe he will call them to the ordained or consecrated life as a Deacon, Priest, Brother or Sister.

We are all asked to look for people within our church that may be good candidates for religious life. Maybe one of the First Communion Students will be called. Anything is possible with our community support.

Confirmation, Deacon Jim Crowley

Jesus said to his disciples: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven (Matthew 7:24)."

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us that lip service is not enough; we must do "the will of my Father in heaven." How does one know the will of the Father? How do I discover the Lord's vocation for my life?

In Confirmation, which completes our Baptism, the soul is imprinted with a permanent spiritual mark. This fulfillment of the Sacraments of Initiation brings Gifts of the Spirit, which are not for the confirmed but for the confirmed to bring to their community, to share with everyone they meet. The seven Gifts of the Spirit are Wisdom, Understanding, Right Judgement, Courage, Knowledge, Reverence and Fear of the Lord. Our attempt to live a life of virtue, sharing the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, is how each person participates in the common priesthood of the faithful. Put plainly, Jesus tells us, "It's not about the talking, it's about the doing."

Vocare, the Latin root of vocation, means to call. God calls us to Him, to a unique path and a mission for each person. The person seeking vocation, intentionally and even unintentionally, can hear God's call from many sources like prayer, from loved ones, from the community, from the Church...

A life lived in the Spirit of Confirmation includes prayer, participation in community, service and intention. It is not a perfect, sinless or struggle-free life. But a life of prayer and service cannot help to be in dialogue with God and with neighbor. It seems that a life lived in the Spirit is far more likely to be open to hear God's call, to be listening for God's prompting.

How do I know the will of my Father in heaven? Our Lord is stubborn and persistent and patient. He continues to call each of us, to lead us onto our unique path to live our best life and to find Him. The sacrament of Confirmation is a toolbelt; a toolbelt from which we can always pull the Gifts of the Spirit to serve those along the path of our life and find God calling us to Him.