

VOCATION

VOCABULARY



Love. Grow. Serve.

DIOCESAN PRIEST

Priest ordained to serve in one particular diocese, or area of the Church overseen by a bishop or archbishop.

MONASTERY

Home of monks or nuns devoted to prayer.

MONK

Member of a men's religious community who lives a life of prayer in a monastery.

MOTHER HOUSE

The main home for sisters.

NOVICE

A man or woman in the second formal stage of becoming a consecrated religious. This stage of the novitiate usually takes one to two years.

NUN

Women in religious orders (sisters) living a cloistered (secluded) life of prayer in a monastery.

ORDINATION

Ceremony for men who have fulfilled all the requirements to become a priest; they received the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

PERPETUAL VOWS

Promise made to commit oneself as a priest, sister or brother for the rest of one's life.

POSTULANT

The first formal stage of becoming a consecrated religious is called a postulant. The postulancy stage usually takes six months to a year.

PRIEST

Men who offer leadership and service to the Church and administer the sacraments to God's people.

RELIGIOUS ORDER/ CONGREGATION

National or international group of priests, sisters or brothers who take vows to serve the Lord in a special way, such as teaching or missionary work.

SEMINARY

School specializing in classes for students who are studying to become a priest (seminarians).

SISTER

Woman who takes vows to serve God in a special way, such as teachers, doctors, parish workers.

TEMPORARY VOWS

Promise a man or woman makes to spend a period of trial and testing with a religious order.

VOCATION

Vocation means a call. It is God's invitation, His call to each person to love and serve Him and His Church in a particular state or way of life. Each person's vocation flows from the grace of Baptism.

BROTHER

Men who live in religious communities and take vows and promise to use their talents to serve God wherever the community decides they are needed. Brothers are not ordained and thus do not serve as sacramental ministers.

CONSECRATED LIFE

A permanent state of life recognized by the Church, entered freely in response to the call of Christ to the perfection of love and characterized by the making of public vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

DEACON

An ordained minister who may preach the Gospel, teach, baptize, lead prayers, witness marriages and conduct wake and funeral services. A married man can be a Deacon if he is over the age of 35.

DISCERNMENT

The process of vocation discovery through prayer, reflection and discussion as to how God calls each person to love Him, whether as a priest, a consecrated religious man or woman, a married person or a single person.

Vocation Vocabulary Awareness

What is consecrated life?

In responding to their baptismal call, some men and women join religious communities in order to consecrate their lives to God as a way of seeking holiness. To consecrate something means to set it aside or devote it to a holy purpose. When a man or woman decides to accept Christ's invitation to leave everything and follow Him in a more radical way, they make vows to live like Jesus in poverty, chastity, and obedience. They participate in a ceremony in which they make this commitment, much like a married couple exchanges their vows on their wedding day. They promise Christ that they will live the rest of their lives dedicated exclusively to Him. These vows help them to live simply, to be more open with God, and to depend totally on Him.

What are vows and what do they mean?

A vow is a public sacred promise or commitment made to God with the approval of the Church. The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are also known as evangelical counsels; they may be taken for one, two, or three years, depending upon the decision of the community and the individual. These promises are renewable for up to nine years. As soon as three years after making temporary vows, a person can make a promise to live the vows for life.

- **Poverty:** Poverty is a call to share all goods in common, live a simple life, and depend totally on God.
- **Chastity:** Chastity is a call to love and serve God and all God's people, rather than to love one person exclusively in marriage. A life of chastity is a witness and testimony to God's love.
- **Obedience:** Obedience is a call to live in community and to surrender one's own will to the will of God. In community, religious listen to their superiors and the voice within to discern God's call for their life.

Do You Know...

The difference between a Religious Nun and a Religious Sister?

While the titles are often used interchangeably there is a difference. Nuns take solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and live a contemplative lifestyle most often in a cloistered environment. They live a life of silence and prayer. They engage in some work to help support themselves.

Religious Sisters live in a convent but work and minister in the world outside of their communities. They take simple vows. Sisters live an active vocation of prayer and service taking the Gospel to and serving people where they are.

The difference between a Religious Brother and a Religious Priest?

A Brother lives in a religious community and works in nearly any ministry: teacher, cook, lawyer, etc. Brothers do not feel called by God to the ordained ministry as priests and deacons are. Thus, since brothers are not ordained, they are not sacramental ministers.

A Religious Priest takes the same vows as a brother and may also work in a variety of positions, but he is also ordained to the priesthood and serves as a sacramental minister.