



PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH TO BE THE MOTHER OF VOCATIONS

*F*ather of mercy, who gave your Son for our salvation and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit, grant us Christian communities which are alive, fervent and joyous, which are fountains of fraternal life, and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate themselves to you and to the work of evangelization.

Sustain these communities in their commitment to offer appropriate vocational catechesis and ways of proceeding towards each one's particular consecration. Grant the wisdom needed for vocational discernment, so that in all things the greatness of your merciful love may shine forth.

May Mary, Mother and guide of Jesus, intercede for each Christian community, so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit, it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the holy People of God. *Amen.*

from Message of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Occasion of the 53rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, April 17, 2016

USCCB VOCATIONS

Prayers of the Faithful

For young men and women; That God may give them the gift of understanding to discern their service in the Church, the priesthood, diaconate, or consecrated life; And for the gift of courage to follow His call. We pray to the Lord. . . .

For young people; That they may know the personal love of the Lord for them, and respond with open and generous hearts. We pray to the Lord. . . .

Bulletin Quote

World Day of Prayer will be observed on Sunday, April 17th, also known as "Good Shepherd Sunday." The purpose of this day is to publically fulfill the Lord's instruction to, "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). Please pray that young men and women hear and respond generously to the Lord's call to the priesthood, diaconate, religious life, societies of apostolic life or secular institutes. You can find many resources to promote a culture of vocations on the [USCCB Vocations webpage \(www.usccb.org/vocations\)](http://www.usccb.org/vocations)..

POPE FRANCIS: DO THESE 4 THINGS ON APRIL 17

by Sam Alzheimer

How do young Catholics discover their vocations? There's not an app for that. Often there's not even an "aha moment." Just as dating couples have some ups and downs then eventually decide to marry, most twenty-something seminarians will tell you that their discernment was a gradual process. It involves intense prayer, doubt, struggling with sin, learning to love the Church, learning to love *members* of the Church, and mostly, being open to the gentle tug of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis has a suggestion: don't discern your vocation alone. In his papal message for World Day of Prayer for Vocations (April 17, 2016), the Holy Father uses the term "*con-vocation*" to explain that a vocation is not an isolated "me-and-God" experience. (Read: you can't do it on your smartphone.) Instead, people hear God's call *within a real Church community*.

The Pope offers four concrete ways for young people to discover their vocations, emphasizing these things should be done *together*:

1. CO-TEACH WITH A CATECHIST

We learn best by teaching. Somehow, when we give our faith away, we get more! Ask the DRE in your parish if teens or young adults can co-teach a religious education class.

2. VISIT A CONVENT OR MONASTERY

This doesn't have to be a highly-planned formal visit. Perhaps a group of girls from the youth group can attend a Saturday Mass at the nearest convent, followed by breakfast with the sisters. Even better, why not join in their work for the morning?

3. HELP MISSIONARIES

In your city, who are the people on the "front lines" of evangelization? Who is serving the poor? Ask if you can help for a day. Coming up blank on ideas? Maybe *you* need to be the missionary!

4. SPEND TIME WITH PARISH PRIESTS

Again, this doesn't have to be a formal "meeting." Keep it simple. How about asking Father to host a cookout for teen boys and their dads at his rectory? Ask him to talk about the priests who influenced his own life, and how he felt called to seminary.

It's interesting that these four suggestions come from an annual papal letter that typically emphasizes prayer for vocations. It's as if the Holy Father is telling us that our *prayer* needs to lead to *action*. Pope Francis' greatest point—one that comes from the heart of a true pastor—is that because every vocation is ordered toward others, it only makes sense that we discover it with others. "In this way, the community becomes the home and the family where vocations are born."