



Five steps for Catholic families to build faith and promote vocations:

- Go to Mass on Sundays.
- Pray together (e.g., grace before meals, bedtime prayers, morning offering, special intentions).
- Share your faith. Talk about the importance of faith in your daily life.
- Be active in your parish as a lector, greeter, altar server, choir member, service volunteer. Participate in Eucharistic adoration and rosary recitations.
- Encourage your children to consider a religious vocation as they discern their life choices.

Source:

2015 NRVC/CARA Study on the Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations to Religious Life and Priesthood. Read the complete study online at www.NRVC.net.

Find additional family, parish, and vocation resources at the NRVC's VISION Vocation Network. www.VocationNetwork.org.

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN NURTURING VOCATIONS TO RELIGIOUS LIFE AND PRIESTHOOD

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

THE GOAL OF THE 2015 STUDY ON THE ROLE of the family in vocations was to provide information that will help Catholic families create a culture of vocations and encourage the option of religious life and priesthood based on a survey of recent entrants to religious life and their families.*

Start with a strong Catholic foundation

- Family members of seminarians, priests, and religious are usually Catholic themselves and are more likely than Catholics in general to have attended a Catholic school. They are more likely than other Catholic adults to say that their Catholic faith is the most important part of their daily life. One in five had a priest or a religious already in their extended family.
- These family members report a more engaged prayer life than do other Catholic parents or other Catholic adults in general. Nearly nine in ten pray daily, compared to just over half of U.S. Catholic adults and just over a third of Catholic parents. They also feel more strongly than Catholic adults in general that it is important that younger generations of the family grow up Catholic.

Build a culture of vocation in families

- Religious faith was at least “somewhat” important to these families at the time their family members was considering a vocation. Six in ten say the family was attending Mass together weekly and a quarter say the family typically prayed at home together daily, apart from grace.
- Family members were engaged in their faith in public ways. Eight in ten were active in parish life, two in three say the family participated in Eucharistic Adoration, and three in five say the family prayed the rosary together.
- Families typically ate dinner together daily and two in three report that the family gathered together at least once a week for a game or movie night, family discussion, or family prayer.
- More than half report that Catholic media, such as books, movies, and TV shows, were important religious activities in the family. About the same proportion say that volunteer or charitable service in the community were important to the family.

Support and promote vocations in families

- More than half of responding family members say they have encouraged a family member to consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life. Most often, it is parents or grandparents who encourage vocational discernment.
- Family members recommend acceptance, encouragement, and support for those considering a vocation. They suggest that families should uphold priesthood and religious life as options for young people when they are exploring and considering their future.

* The Center for the Applied Research to the Apostolate (CARA) surveyed men and women religious and diocesan priests and seminarians who entered since 2000. The survey also asked respondents to provide contact information for a family member. CARA then contacted family members with an invitation to complete a similar survey. CARA received completed responses from 1,279 men and women religious and 1,352 diocesan priests and seminarians, for a response rate of 59 percent and 33 percent, respectively, and 892 family members, for a response rate of 58 percent. Another 15 family members participated in one of two focus groups, held in Washington, D.C. and Chicago in May 2015.

Common misconceptions about religious life and priesthood that families report were dispelled after their family member entered:

■ Community life

Thought priests, sisters, brothers were old and crabby. Families in the study report they were "surprised by the friendliness" of the community.

Thought people who entered religious life were choosing it as a "last resort."

Community life is "stifling."

■ Priests and religious

Didn't think priests and sisters had struggles or had issues that weighed on them—aren't real people."

Thought you had to be holy to become a priest, sister, or brother. Realized that "it's a process. [My child] is not there yet. But neither am I!"

■ Impact on the family

Depending on the vocation:

Family members thought they would lose contact with a family members, but they didn't.

Family members assumed they would have daily contact with their family member who entered religious life or priesthood, but the rules or demands of the vocation didn't allow it.

Thought their family member's vocation would have a negative impact on the family.

■ Sense of fulfillment

Thought it was an easy life; didn't appreciate the challenges and responsibilities to others.

Worried that their family member would be lonely.

Not a fulfilling life.

Thought it was an end to laughter and joking with their family member.

Thought it was a difficult life, until they saw the joy.

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FROM THE VISION YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE PARISH RESOURCE PACKET

Dear Parents:

Your child's vocation—or answer to God's call—begins with you. Through your prayers, examples of holiness and faithfulness, and invitation to pursue noble goals, you provide the foundation for your child to live a full life of great joy.

AS PARENTS, you are your children's first teachers and witnesses to the gospel. The church relies on you to awaken in your children the knowledge that they are loved and that they have a sacred purpose: to share that love with others for the greater glory of God. From teaching them their first prayers to introducing them to the art of questioning and listening, you are providing your children with the essential skills they'll need to discern where God is calling them on the path of love, service, and fulfillment.

■ 10 SUGGESTIONS FOR FOSTERING HAPPY AND HOLY FAMILIES—ESSENTIAL FOR NURTURING VOCATIONS

1. Pray daily as a family in thanksgiving, for guidance, for forgiveness.
2. Talk with your children about their worries and concerns; their hopes and dreams.
3. Share meals together as often as possible.
4. Tell stories about your family history—the good and the bad. Talk about how you became a family, and the day your children were born.
5. Decide together your family goals and what your biggest do's and don'ts are.
6. Be active in your parish and your community. Encourage your children to participate in the ministries of the parish.
7. Teach family members to fight fair and forgive easily.
8. Talk about your faith and the men and women, including sisters, brothers, and priests, who have had an important influence on you.
9. Work to reduce stress among all family members. Have fun and play together each day.
10. Encourage your children to be creative and compassionate and know that those are the greatest of God's gifts.

■ **AN EVENING OF PRAYER FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES** *with an outline for the evening and a sample opening talk by Beth Mahoney, National Mission Director, Holy Cross Family Ministries*

Available online at VocationNetwork.org (under Year of Consecrated Life tab).

■ **PARENT WORKSHOP ON HELPING YOUR CHILDREN MAKE WISE DECISIONS** *with an outline for the gathering and a sample opening talk by Patrice Tuohy, publisher of TrueQuest Communications; Executive Editor, VISION Vocation Guide.*

Available online at VocationNetwork.org (under Year of Consecrated Life tab).

Find other activities to foster faithful families

online at VocationNetwork.org. View the results of the recent Family Study at NRVC.net.