

A Home Where Vocations Grow

12 Things Parents Can Do

Do you want to help your children discern whether they're called to religious life, or to married or single life in the world? These suggestions can help.

1. Talk with your kids about their gifts and abilities, about the importance of their contribution to the Church and the world. They should know that every Christian, young or old, has a part to play in building up the body of Christ.
2. Pray for vocations as a family—for singles, married couples, priests, and religious. This year's World Day of Prayer for religious vocations falls on Tuesday, May 15. Mark it on your calendar and decide on a way to observe it.
3. Avoid disparaging remarks about marriage and the single life. Watch how you speak about bishops, priests, and other religious. Your attitude of respect will help your children be open to God's call on their lives.
4. Build your marriage. Growing up in the context of a strong and healthy marriage gives kids vision for every vocation. Most of priests and religious brothers and sisters say they were always "keenly aware" that their parents loved each other. "From them they received the inspiration and desire to give themselves fully to someone or some thing."
5. Spend quiet time with the Lord, and help your children develop this habit, too. Try stopping in at church during the day, or sign up for Eucharistic adoration. And pray the Holy Rosary together.
6. Keep learning about your faith, and encourage your kids to do the same. How many vocations have been found or strengthened simply because someone read the Catechism, dipped into spiritual writings, or attended a good lecture series on some aspect of the faith?
7. Introduce your children to the lives of saints and Bible figures who loved the Lord. For inspiration, it's hard to beat a story of how God awakens this love in a person's heart.
8. Look for good vocation stories. When appropriate, invite visitors and extended family members to share their experiences with you and your children. It is moving to hear how God calls people to marriage, the priesthood, the consecrated life, to a renewal movement, or service of others.
9. What about volunteering as a family? Is there a service project that would be a good fit for an older child? Meeting needs, discovering one's gifts, seeing others give of themselves—all of this stimulates generosity and desire to follow God's call.
10. Give your children freedom to find and follow their vocation. Talk with them, but refrain from steering them into the religious life or the career you always wish you had chosen.
11. Eat dinner together. The benefits of regular family meals are well documented (see www.casacolumbia.org and www.familytable.info). If you want a new twist on the subject, watch for the upcoming TV series from PBS, *Grace before Meals*. It's a cooking show with a message about the need for family time. In each episode, Fr. Leo Patalinghug, a personable young priest from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, helps a family prepare a meal, then sits down to enjoy it with them. You can view the pilot and trailer online at www.gracebeforemeals.com.
12. Trust God. Your child's vocation doesn't ultimately depend on you! Parents can nurture the seed, but it's God who gives the growth (see 1 Corinthians 3:7).