

From the Deacon's Wife

Before every Mass, we recite the prayer for vocations. Many parishes do this. Prayer is a powerful tool, but there is much more we can and should do to LIVE that prayer and actively foster vocations. I have always been a firm believer that you should **“Work like it all depends on you, and pray like it all depends on God.”** So what “work” do we need to do so that more young men and women will see the priesthood or religious life as a life choice for themselves? Who among us of a more mature age should consider the diaconate as a second vocation?

First of all, young people cannot aspire to become something with which they cannot identify. That's why children often follow in their parents or older siblings footsteps. I'm certain no child would decide to study math to become an actuary unless he or she actually knew one. It is certainly not a profession glamorized on TV! In the 1950's, when teachers in Catholic schools were almost entirely nuns or priests, kids saw they were ordinary people with a special calling and a gift for serving God. They could see, too, that most of them enjoyed life and exhibited a sense of joy and peace. That is something that should attract anyone! Unfortunately, there just aren't as many nuns and priests around us today. Contact has become more limited, and because many religious no longer wear habits, they are not as recognizable as they once were.

The problem becomes how to give kids more awareness of religious men and women in our world, and an understanding that it is a valid, rewarding career choice. Encourage your children to greet Fr. Frank – or any other priest or nun you know – wherever you see them. Children should not be shy about shaking Father's hand or asking him a question, whether it is after Mass on Sunday or at one of the many Parish functions he attends. It is wise to **surround your kids with the kind of people you want them to become.** People who share your values and faith, whatever their vocation in life, will become role models for your kids by this association. Choose well!

When you talk with your kids about what they want to be when they grow up, suggest becoming a priest or nun along with other options – policeman, doctor, lawyer, auto mechanic, actuary, etc. If you know a young man who is filled with faith, appears to have the qualities you would want in your pastor, **be bold enough to say “Have you ever thought about becoming a priest?”** If you listened to our seminarians tell their stories at the end of the summer, you will remember that often it was just such an affirmation that nudged them to act upon their calling.

Recruiting for the priesthood is a responsibility all of us share. Just as the Apostles asked the community to choose from among themselves those men who became the first deacons, we should look among our community to identify and foster those who have the gifts and the calling to become priests, and religious men or women. And ask yourself what YOU are called to do, or to become. Is the diaconate right for you? Are you called to be a lay affiliate of a religious order? Pray for discernment for yourself as well as for others, to see how God is calling you! Pray, too, for the courage to say “Yes!” to His call.