DIOCESE OF PROVIDENCE **OFFICE OF VOCATIONS**

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School Announcements

Theme: *Come Follow Me!*

This week is *National Vocation Awareness* Week for the Catholic Church. God has a vocation for each one of us, which means God has a plan for our lives that He would like us to follow. In following His plan, we open ourselves to the happiness which only He can bring. Often times, however, we are unsure about God's plan for our lives and so we must go through a process to figure it out. This process is called discernment and requires four steps. We will be talking about these steps throughout this week.

Monday: Prayer

Today we will focus on the first step of discernment, which is prayer. In order to hear God speaking to us, we must go to Him in prayer. Receiving the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation is the most important form of prayer, for it is in these sacraments that we receive the grace we need to discern God's plan. Once we receive this grace, we will be more open to hear God as he speaks to us through His written word. After reading the Bible, we must be ready to sit in silence and listen to God as we allow the words to resound deep into our souls. Finally, prayerfully and humbly we ask God to give us the signs to follow and to reveal the path He has set before us. Take the time to Pray daily!

Tuesday: Spiritual Mentor

The second step to discernment is finding a spiritual mentor. Many of us have heard, "two heads are better than one," and the same is true for discernment. As we begin the process of discernment we quickly realize that we cannot do this alone and so it is important to find someone we trust to help us along the way. Often times this person will be one who is more spiritually mature than we are (like a priest, deacon, religious sister or religious brother) who can answer spiritual questions and direct us toward the answers we seek. However, we might also want to ask our parents, a friend or close relative who is willing to help along the way of faith but who is also seeking just like us. Growing in faith and trust together will ultimately bring us closer to a God who is always calling. Ask for help along the way!

Wednesday: Education

Today we focus on the third step to discernment: Education. Too often in our lives we make judgments about things on which we have no valid information. Our vocation is no exception. We often find ourselves saying, "I don't want to be a priest because it is too boring" or "I don't want to be a sister because I want to be happy." The truth of these statements is not backed up by facts, but by our personal assumptions. In

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discerning God's call for our lives, we must make the effort to learn about all the possible vocations that utilize our God given talents. So, first we examine ourselves and determine the many talents we have been given by God. Then, take the time to learn about people who are currently living those vocations; about the school that teaches the people in those vocations; and about the saints who lived fully those vocations. By reading and learning about each vocation, we will be better prepared to follow God down the right path for each of us. Explore your options before you make a choice!

Thursday: Respond

The fourth and final step in discernment is our response. We can pray, listen and learn all about the vocation that God has called us to, but until we respond openly to that calling, we are still left living a life that will never completely satisfy us. In responding to God's call, we say to God that we are ready to do His will and not our own. This means that we will follow where He leads despite what that means for the plans we have made or the ideas we may have about our lives. It does not mean that we know all that God has planned for us and it does not mean that we become a robot that is directed by a remote control. Most of the time this response means talking to our family about our vocation or making the steps to enter a religious community or seminary. Or, possibly, it means deciding to change the way we are living to allow time for God to work more in our lives. In all cases, sacrifices must be made and courage must be found. Be willing to let go of your life that you might truly live!

Friday: A Recap

The four steps of discernment are praying, finding a spiritual mentor, educating ourselves about different vocations and responding to the vocation we think God is calling us towards. All of these steps take time and none of them need to be completed before moving on to the next step. Each of them will happen gradually and simultaneously with prayer being the foundation for the other three steps. Without prayer, there is no relationship with God and without a relationship there is no way to hear God speaking. Prayer does not have to be formal, but it is important to set aside some time during the day to be silent and listen to the Lord speak to our hearts. Talking with a spiritual mentor and learning about the various vocations to which we may be called both help us to take the next step in our path toward happiness. Most times, that path is not the easiest path or the most popular, but with faith we should all take the right steps and fight the good fight because the harder the struggle, the more satisfying the victory!

Thanks to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for producing these documents.