



Vocational Pastoral Care

In a context where we observe a drastic decrease in the number of servants of God in our Church in general and in Gatineau in particular, it is urgent to develop a vocational pastoral care capable of helping young Christians in our archdiocese discern God's call and the mission that their Creator has entrusted to them. Each of us, at our level, according to our means and status, must be involved in promoting vocations. Priests, religious, and nuns do not appear out of nowhere; they are born and grow up mostly in Christian families. Parents should be the primary promoters of vocations. Nowadays, it is easier to guide young people towards lucrative careers that promise a bright future than towards priestly or religious life. We must feel challenged by the proclamation of the Gospel, which leads to eternal happiness, the ultimate goal of life. Who will guide us there if we lack laborers, people responding to God's call?

The vocational pastoral care of young Catholics is an essential dimension of the Church's life, aiming to help young people discern their vocation and respond to the specific call that God addresses to them. This approach is crucial in a context where young people are often faced with numerous choices and challenges, and where the search for meaning and identity can be particularly complex.

Context and Issues

On one hand, our Church is experiencing a crisis in vocations. Presbyteral ordinations are now very rare, if not non-existent. We fortunately have to rely on priests from other dioceses to assist us. Religious men and women are becoming increasingly scarce in our ecclesial environments, and we are witnessing their gradual disappearance.

On the other hand, today's youth live in a world marked by a wide diversity of life and career options, as well as societal challenges such as economic insecurity and

uncertainty. In this context, vocational pastoral care has the mission of offering young people a space to reflect on their life project in relation to their faith and personal aspirations.

Objectives of Vocational Pastoral Care

Vocational pastoral care aims to achieve several objectives:

- **Help young people recognize and understand their personal vocation:** Whether for religious life, marriage, or other forms of commitment, it involves guiding them through authentic discernment.
- **Foster a personal encounter with God:** Spirituality and prayer play a crucial role in helping young people perceive God's call in their lives.
- **Encourage engagement in the Christian community:** Young people are called to actively participate in the life of the Church, bringing their talents and energy to serve others.

Methods and Approaches

To be effective, vocational pastoral care can employ several methods:

- **Individual Guidance:** Through meetings with spiritual counselors or clergy members, young people can benefit from personalized support.
- **Retreats and Reflection Moments:** Significant times such as spiritual retreats offer young people moments of pause to reflect on their vocation in a setting conducive to meditation.
- **Workshops and Sharing Groups:** Group activities allow for discussions about personal calls and sharing experiences, while strengthening the sense of community.
- **Training and Education:** Training programs can help young people understand various aspects of vocations and develop relevant skills.

- **Living Testimonies:** The experiences of those who have followed a particular vocation can inspire and guide young people in their own discernment. Our spiritual experiences can become contagious and enriching.

Challenges to Address

Vocational pastoral care faces several challenges:

- **Increasing Secularization:** In an increasingly secularized world, it can sometimes be difficult for young people to perceive the meaning of vocation in a religious context.
- **Diversity of Paths and Aspirations:** Each young person is unique, and vocational pastoral care must adapt to varied life paths and aspirations.
- **Lack of Personnel and Resources:** Pastoral teams are often limited in number and resources, which can restrict support possibilities.

Implementing Vocational Pastoral Care

To develop vocational pastoral care in our diocese, it is important to:

- **Pray:** Jesus invites us to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest (Matt 9:37-38). Vocation comes from God, and we cannot undertake anything without turning to Him. During celebrations, we can offer prayers for vocations, organize prayer evenings before the Blessed Sacrament, and invoke the Holy Spirit upon the youth, as no discernment will be authentic without Him.
- **Raise Awareness Among Pastors and All Parish Workers:** For many, this will be a novelty. Everyone should contribute so that this pastoral care becomes a collective responsibility, allowing young people to question their true vocation.
- **Involve Young People in Vocational Pastoral Care:** To better understand the aspirations of young people, it is essential to involve them. Vocational

promotion must adapt to the language of young people, and who better than a young person can help us in this regard?

- **Use New Media and Technologies, Social Networks:** Digital tools can be effective means of reaching and engaging young people.
- **Train the Facilitators:** Offering ongoing training to those involved in vocational pastoral care is essential to ensure quality support.

Ultimately, vocational pastoral care for young Catholics is a vital ministry that requires constant attention, renewed creativity, and deep commitment to help young people respond to the call God addresses to them. It is a journey of faith and discernment where each step is an opportunity to grow in self-knowledge and knowledge of God. "We are here to help and support you. - Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart as you did during the time of testing (Hebrews 3:15). Do not be afraid to commit yourself to the Lord's service. He is calling you, hiring you to work in His vineyard. The Lord says to you, 'My child, go work today in the vineyard' (Matthew 21:28; cf. Matthew 20:1-15). Embrace this grace of being part of His workers."

If you have any questions or would like more information:

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