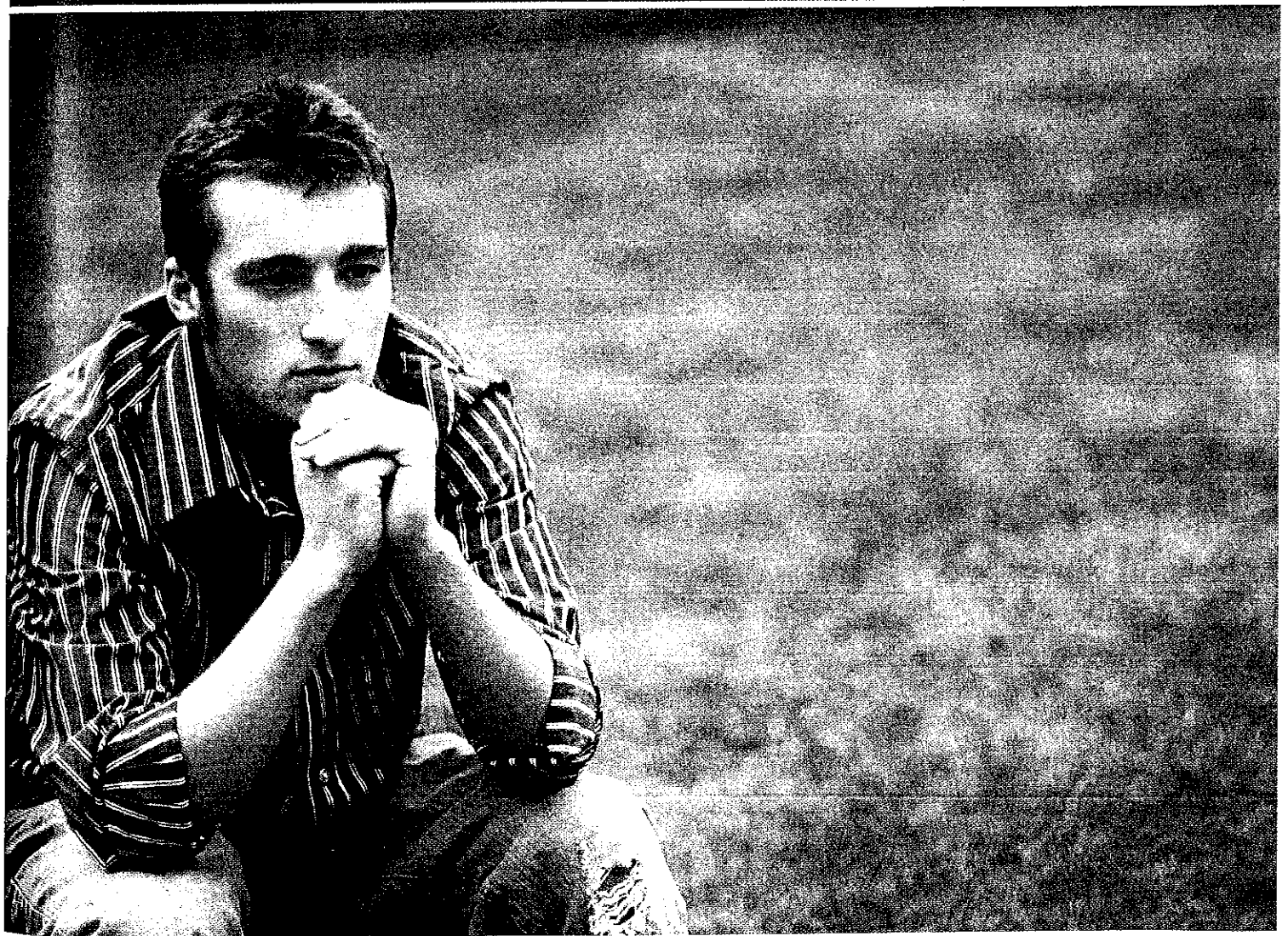
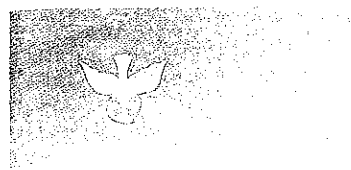


Journal  
Teen

# Vocation

God's Call, My Response





*Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (all make the Sign of the Cross).*

*All respond: In the divine image, Lord, You created him; male and female You created them.*

*Reader 1: God, You made us good, both body and soul.*

*Response: In the divine image, Lord, You created him; male and female You created them.*

*Reader 2: God, You saw that it was not good for us to be alone, so You gave us one another for loving relationships.*

*Response: In the divine image, Lord, You created him; male and female You created them.*

*Reader 3: God, You are love, and You made us for love.*

*Response: In the divine image, Lord, You created him; male and female You created them.*

*Reader 4: God, You made us without anything to hide from You.*

*Response: In the divine image, Lord, You created him; male and female You created them.*

*Reader 5: God, You made us to be happy with You forever.*

*Response: In the divine image, Lord, You created him; male and female You created them.*

*Leader: Jesus, You taught us to address Your Father as You did, and so in the Holy Spirit we pray...*

*All: Our Father...*

notes

## STORY STARTER

### Holy Matrimony

The day Aimee and I got married was the best day of my life. I know people always say that, but this really was. At 8:30 a.m., my best friend, Greg, woke me up at the hotel where we were staying with several other friends. I jumped up, excited to put on my tuxedo. With my red hair and scruffy beard, I ended up looking like a cross between James Bond and the Lucky Charms leprechaun.

But I had way too much nervous energy just to hang out at the hotel. I asked my best man to drive me to the Eucharistic adoration chapel where I had proposed to my future wife nine months before. There I knelt down,

had a good heart-to-heart chat with God, and tried to prepare for the big moment.

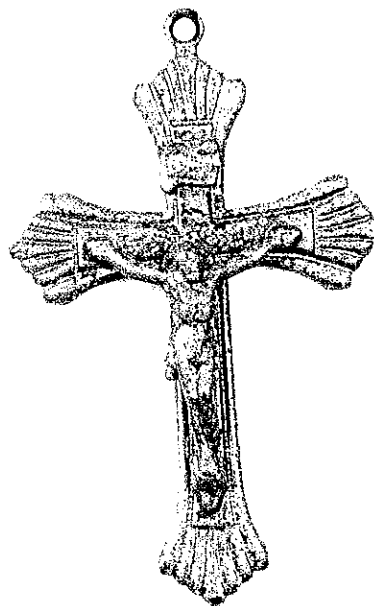
We left the chapel and headed to the church, but there were still a few hours until the wedding began. Every minute seemed like ten. I could hardly wait! I paced. I prayed. I waited... and waited... and waited. Finally, guests started arriving. I headed to my position and watched as people filled the church. Before I knew it, I was standing next to Greg as music played and bridesmaids started strolling down the aisle.

Then—a burst of light! The heavy church door opened. It was better than a vision in any Hollywood movie when I saw my beautiful bride make her entrance on her father's arm. With every step they took down the aisle, my heart beat faster until she was finally only two feet away. Her father reached out to shake my hand, but then he stopped. Instead of the traditional short handshake, he put something cool and metallic in the palm of my hand and began to speak.

"There was once a husband who loved his bride so much that he would do anything for her. Anything." I knew his words were intense and serious, but they didn't really register at first. When he let go of my hand, I looked down to see the object he had placed in my palm.

It was a small silver crucifix. Suddenly I understood. The husband was Jesus, the bride was the Church, and He had done not only anything, but everything, for her. He gave His life in love. And this was the same reason I stood at the altar that day, to lay down my life in love for my bride. What an awesome call to be like Christ to the person I love most—awesome and holy.

— Colin MacIver



## BRIDGING THE GAP

Have you ever thought about your parents or other married people as holy? What about your friends? What about yourself?

The idea that only a few special people are supposed to be holy is common. Many people never think about marriage as holy. Often, we think holiness is something for priests and nuns, not regular people or typical families. Priests and nuns are supposed to be holy—it's their job, isn't it?

But Jesus never said anything like that. He said without limits, "Follow me." He called all kinds of people to holiness. This makes sense if we understand what holiness really is. It's not wearing a "Jesus t-shirt" or praying twenty



## In Your Faith

*"Every vocation, every path to which Christ calls us, ultimately leads to fulfillment and happiness, because it leads to God, to sharing in God's own life." — Blessed Pope John Paul II*

rosaries every day. Holy means "reserved for" or "dedicated." And we all should be reserved for and dedicated to God, right?

Every call from God is a call to holiness. This call is known as a **vocation**. Vocation means simply "a call from God." So whether God calls you to become a priest, monk, nun, husband, or wife, every human person on the planet has a vocation to holiness.

A reporter once asked Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta to define holiness. She said, "Holiness is not a luxury for a few, but a simple duty for you and me."

You have a vocation to holiness, too. That doesn't mean you have to wear a giant cross or preach on the sidewalk, although you are welcome to do both. Your vocation to holiness means simply to become the best you, "Saint Me," that God is calling you to become to prepare you ultimately to be with Him in heaven forever. In exactly the same way Jesus called St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalene, He calls you right now: "Follow Me."

But don't think that your vocation is something for later or that you can just worry about "God stuff" when you're older. Your vocation starts now. You are called to be holy in your daily life as a student, as a friend, and as a son or daughter in your family. Every day when you wake up, you have the choice to become more you and grow closer to God (and heaven), or to become less of yourself and move farther away from Him. God is inviting you to say yes to holiness right now—and for the rest of your life.

### IF YOU ASK ME ...

1. Someone I know who lives their vocation to holiness: \_\_\_\_\_
2. I would grow in holiness if I \_\_\_\_\_



In this program, you have done some pretty intense thinking—about your identity; your weaknesses and strengths; what it means to be human; virtue and vice; and sexuality and relationships. All are part of fulfilling your vocation to holiness and becoming the saint God made you to be.

You may think it sounds scary to be a saint. You may be afraid that sainthood would mean losing your identity and living a boring, cookie-cutter life. The truth is that the closer you get to God, the more you become yourself. Sainthood is when your individuality reaches its perfection. It's not about being put into a mold. On the contrary, it's the unique, full bloom of

your personality. For example, St. John Bosco and St. Teresa of Avila were both known to be practical jokers. As a little girl, St. Thérèse and her friends walked around town pretending to be blind beggars until they accidentally knocked over a bunch of oranges at a produce market. St. Joseph Cupertino used to randomly levitate. St. Joan of Arc led the French army to victory in battle when she was only a teenager. Do these sound like boring, typical lives? It is sin that dulls our individuality.

The other aspect of your personal vocation is God's call to a particular way of life within the Church—to be married; consecrated as a nun, sister, consecrated single, monk, or religious brother; or ordained as a deacon or priest. All vocations are important signs of Jesus' love for the Church. All are ways to become a saint. And all vocations require us to give ourselves unselfishly in love.

## Marriage

The most common vocation is **marriage**. In marriage, a man and a woman exchange vows that make their relationship a great sign of God's love. First, they promise to give themselves only to each other until death. This lifelong commitment is a reminder of God's eternal love for us. They also promise to accept any children that God sends as a gift. This family love is a reminder of God's life-giving love and of how precious every human person is to God.

These wedding promises are the most important part of the sacrament of Matrimony—much more important than the flowers, dress, tuxedo, and cake—because they are the most important part of marriage. The whole purpose of marriage is to stay committed to your spouse, who should always come first. If a couple doesn't want to stay together for the rest of their lives, or if they don't want to be open to children, they can't live out the ultimate meaning of marriage.

In Scripture, St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians discusses that ultimate meaning. He calls marriage "a great mystery." It is not just about a man and a woman, but actually about Christ and the Church. In other words, marriage is much more than a couple signing a legal contract or agreeing to share a household. A husband and wife are called to be a visible reminder of the profound love that Jesus has for His Bride, the Church, which is especially revealed in His Passion and Resurrection.

When a husband and wife enter marriage with unselfish love, their home becomes like a little Church. And because their vocation is holy, the everyday tasks of marriage and family—like doing laundry and mowing the lawn and even changing diapers—become holy too. Husbands and wives can become great saints just by living out their vocation with love.



## In Your Faith

*"The Church and the world today more than ever need married couples and families who generously let themselves be schooled by Christ."*

— Blessed Pope John Paul II

*"Religious orders are not formed for the purpose of gathering perfect people, but for those who have the courage to aim for perfection."*

— St. Francis de Sales



## IF YOU ASK ME ...

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are a good example of married life to me.

### Consecrated Life

Another vocation is **consecrated life** as a religious sister, a nun, a religious brother, or even as a consecrated single person. Consecrated people make vows, too, but to God instead of to a husband or wife. Consecrated people vow not to have an earthly marriage or many earthly possessions so that they will have more time, energy, and focus to do special work for God, such as serving the poor, running hospitals, traveling as missionaries, or praying daily for the pope and the entire Church. People in consecrated life usually live in a community with other people who have made the same vows. There are hundreds of different orders, different communities with distinct ways of life, each fulfilling a different need in the Church.

Consecrated life requires an unselfish gift of self to others. Like marriage, consecrated life is a type of lifelong commitment. This is why a nun wears a veil—to symbolize that she is the “bride” of Christ Himself rather than the bride of an earthly husband. This close union with Jesus is like a sneak preview of heaven, where we will all be united intimately with God.

### Overview of Consecrated Life

There are many forms of consecrated life, so describing them all can get complicated! Here is a brief overview. Sisters, nuns, monks, brothers, and religious-order priests are all referred to as being part of *religious life*. In religious life, a community of brothers or sisters lives, works, prays, and even has fun together. If you feel interested in consecrated life, talk to someone who is living out that vocation.

Others live out the consecrated vocation as *consecrated virgins*, members of *secular institutes*, or in other forms. They may or may not live in community with others, but they all commit themselves to their bishop and serve the Church specifically as a consecrated single person in the world. All those called to consecrated life live out their call to love in a way that is entirely dedicated to Christ and the Church, reminding us all that we are destined for heaven. Celibates aren't people who couldn't find a spouse. Instead, they choose to consecrate themselves to love and serve God with an undivided heart.

### Ordained Priesthood

Catholic priests are ordained into a special vocation called **Holy Orders**. Priests act “*in persona Christi*,” which means “in the person of Christ.” This means God works through priests to do the things that Jesus did on earth before



### In Your Faith

*The simple difference between a religious sister and a nun is this: nuns commit their lives totally to prayer, separated from the world, while sisters commit their lives to deep prayer as well as going out into the world to perform service in many different ministries.*

He ascended to heaven. Like Jesus, Catholic priests commit their lives to the Church as their family. That is why priests are called "Father." They serve their family, the Church, in all the really meaningful times of life. They attend weddings and baptisms. They help people through the hard times of life like serious illness, divorce, or death. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, priests are God's special instruments who bring the sacraments to us. When they consecrate the bread and wine at Mass, the elements become the Body and Blood of Christ. When we go to confession, they absolve our sins.

### Discernment and the Five L's

Sometimes you see posters or billboards that say things like "Is God calling you?" The answer is "Duh! Of course!" You can be sure that you have a vocation. The question is simply which vocation God is calling you to.

First, be not afraid! God will never call you to a vocation that makes you miserable. Second, don't stress about figuring it out. God usually calls us to a particular vocation gradually. You don't have to know today or even in high school or college. Your job is simple. Just learn to listen to God and have the courage to trust Him.

This process of understanding your vocation by listening to God is called **discernment**. The most important parts of discernment are finding time for silent prayer and striving daily to grow in virtue as you learn to love unselfishly. There are also five practical steps to help you become more aware of God's plan. We have nicknamed them the "Five L's."

**LOOK** for the face of Christ. Jesus came to show us who we really are, so we should start by looking for Him. This isn't like playing "Where's Waldo?" with a bearded guy wearing sandals. Looking for Christ means training our eyes—and the eyes of our hearts—to see the places where Jesus is present to us. The Eucharist is a perfect example. At first glance, it looks like bread and wine, but when we learn to look deeply, we see that it is actually Jesus. Jesus is also present in other places in a hidden way. Maybe you will see Jesus in someone who needs your help. Maybe you will see Jesus in volunteer work. The places where you find Jesus are the places you are called to be. Look for Jesus in your daily life and, when you see Him, follow.

**LISTEN** to the voice of Christ. In our crowded, noisy lives, it can be hard to listen to God because we can't hear Him in the first place! So we have to listen harder. This means taking time for prayer. First, reading the Bible is an important part of listening to Christ in prayer. If we don't know God's Word, how can we know what He is saying to us? In fact, St. Jerome said, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." Pick a short Bible passage and ask Jesus what He wants to tell you through it. Then, sit quietly and read the passage slowly again. Be open to any particular words or phrases that strike you, and then relate your own ideas and feelings about them back



### In Your Faith

*"I will take my stand to watch,  
and station myself on the tower,  
and look forth to see what he will  
say to me." — Habakkuk 2:1*

*"We must understand that in  
order 'to do,' we must first learn  
'to be,' that is to say, in the sweet  
company of Jesus in adoration."  
— Blessed Pope John Paul II*

to God. If this sounds like a conversation, it is! Good times to do this are first thing in the morning or before you go to bed. Second, Eucharistic adoration is a powerful way to pray. Spend time with Jesus in the Eucharist, either near a tabernacle at church or in an adoration chapel. Instead of talking, just listen. Even just five or ten minutes will make a big difference. Third, listen to Jesus' voice when He speaks through others, especially those whom you know to be good examples of what it means to be a Christian.

**LEARN** your purpose. Learning is important, especially about the most important things in life! This program has focused a lot on your human identity and why God made you. Really try to learn these truths—not just memorize them. What is your real goal in life? It's not just to get an "A" on your report card or to be a world champion athlete, but to be fulfilled, happy, and with God. Learning to be holy and specifically striving to be with God as a young man or a young woman is where the learning sometimes gets tricky. But when you put this goal first, all your other goals will fall into place. Jesus made a promise about this. He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides" (Matthew 6:33). He doesn't break promises. Another way to learn about your purpose is to visit a married couple, a convent, monastery, or seminary to get a real feel for how your gifts and desires may fit with the life of these people you visit.

**LIVE** it to the max. The Christian life is not supposed to be boring. It's an adventure. It's about living life to the maximum, not the minimum. There's an old Christian saying, "Remember your death." Sound spooky? Well, it could be, but when we remember that this world isn't permanent, we have two choices. We can either get scared or we can start making each day count. It doesn't mean living in fear. In fact, it's the opposite. It's like spiritual bungee jumping. You're nervous at the edge, but the rush that comes from living a proactive and confident life makes you want to leap again and again. Be proactive and confident about the life you live. You've probably already experienced the deep satisfaction that comes from doing something 100 percent—all the way. So, try it with your faith. Make your days count to the max. Do volunteer work, get more involved at your church, and try different things. Be virtuous. Be different. Be bold. Live your faith in courageous ways. As the old saying goes, "If you don't stand for something, you're going to fall for anything." Living your faith in a radical way brings great freedom and great joy, and it also brings confidence as you discern God's call in your life. This will help to make the next step as clear as it needs to be.

**LOVE** like God. This one is the most important. If you want to know your vocation, you need to practice loving like God loves. That means loving with your whole heart—selflessly. The more we love others, the more we become our true selves. When we focus on others before ourselves and live for God by loving like He loves, we finally fulfill who He made us to be. If you learn to love like God in your daily life, then discerning your vocation will become an exciting adventure, not a stressful experience.





These five steps will help you have better relationships and be happier and freer. When you need to know, God will make clear what your next step should be and give you the peace and courage to take that step. You will gradually see more and more where you are called—to marriage, consecrated life, or priesthood. You will also understand how to use your talents to serve God best.

Remember, you are unique and unrepeatable. God, who knows and loves you, has a unique and unrepeatable plan for your life.

### IF YOU ASK ME ...

Three things that distract me from seeing Jesus' face and hearing God's voice:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Three things I could do in order to see Jesus more clearly in my daily life and listen more closely to God's voice:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### What about Now?

One practical question you may ask is how to live out the "Five L's" in your everyday life. Sometimes advice about how to live our faith can seem hard to fit into our unique schedules and personalities. You can start by setting aside just five minutes of quiet prayer each day. Spending five minutes listening to God can make a big difference in how you spend the rest of the day.

You can also start spending quality time with your friends and family. Having fun with others can be an opportunity to look for the face of Jesus, to hear his voice, to learn, live, and love. Allow the "Five L's" to find their way into your daily habits. You may find it helpful to review your day each evening, asking yourself, *How did I or did I not look for the face of Christ, listen to His voice, etc.?* Reviewing your day takes only a few minutes and can be a prayerful way to fall asleep. *As you review, celebrate* with Jesus whatever you did faithfully and *resolve* to do better tomorrow in areas where you fell short. A good way to get better at anything is consistently reviewing and working on your goals.

Doing a daily review may reveal things in your routine that you should cut back or avoid entirely. Like what? Remember the activity at the beginning of



### In Your Faith

*Mary is the Church's highest example of listening to God's plan and carrying it out. When God invited Mary to her own particular vocation, she said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). What Mary told the servants at the wedding feast at Cana, later, is still the greatest advice of all: "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). No one wants to help you get closer to Jesus more than His mother. Ask Mary for help living out the "Five L's"; she mastered all five in her own life! She is our Mother in heaven whose prayers will help you find your vocation.*



## In Your Faith

Paragraph 1877 in the Catechism says: "The vocation of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of the Father's only Son." This means that all of us are called to show the world who God is by becoming more like Jesus! Wow! How are we going to do that, except through love? St. Therese of Lisieux, a French saint who died in 1897 at age twenty-four, really captured this teaching in her simple motto: "My vocation is love!"

**Let us thank God for the Good News we have heard in this chapter as we pray:**

Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be His own.  
From heaven the LORD looks down; He sees all mankind.  
Our soul waits for the LORD,  
who is our help and our shield.

May Your kindness, O LORD,  
be upon us who have put our  
hope in You.

Glory be to the Father and to  
the Son and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is  
now, and ever shall be, world  
without end. Amen.

— From Psalm 62

this chapter. Too much noise in our lives drowns out God's voice. If we live noisy lives, it is much harder to recognize God's voice and follow His lead. For example, as long as you watch uplifting shows, some TV is fine. But too much TV, too much Internet, obsessive texting, or any other kind of constant distraction can sidetrack us from our real purpose.

Maybe you also wonder about dating. Remember that the real purpose of dating is to find a spouse and discern the vocation of marriage. Practically speaking, this is often not the purpose that dating serves. Dating can be intense, confusing, dramatic, and even hurtful. These problems often come from speaking lies with the language of the body, but also from too much seriousness in relationships. These experiences can leave you confused, hurt, and not very hopeful about the future. Committing sexual sins will guarantee that your experience of middle school and high school is even more confusing and negatively dramatic. Chastity, on the other hand, will enable you to focus on the right things and become who God knows you can be. That's why it is best to spend time with a group of friends rather than deal with the pressure of exclusive (just the two of you) relationships. You will have plenty of time for exclusive relationships later. Why enter a serious relationship now when there is little chance of it lasting?

With your group of friends, practice the "Five L's" by treating others as brothers and sisters. Practice being kind, considerate, attentive, forgiving, and helpful. Also practice these attitudes with your parents and siblings, too. If you keep your relationships focused on these virtues you will have a much clearer and more hopeful vision of God's plan for you.



### A. Vocation Detective

Interview all three of the following: a married couple, a religious sister or brother, and a priest. Ask them about their experiences of their vocations. Ask each person the following four questions. Bring your interview next time to discuss their answers.

- How did you know you were called to be in your vocation?
- What does a typical day of your life look like?
- How is your vocation helping you get to heaven?
- How does your vocation help others get to heaven?

### B. Five L's Rap/Song

Compose a rap or a song to help you remember the "Five L's." (You could always use the tune of a song that you already know.) Perform it if you dare!

# GOT IT?

1. "\_\_\_\_\_ is not a luxury for a few, but a simple duty for you and me." – Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta

2. Three vocations in the Church are...

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The Five L's are...

L \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_  
L \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_

## VŌ·CAB'·U·LAR'·Ȳ

### MARRIAGE:

A sacramental, holy bond, binding until death, between a man and a woman and God in which a couple becomes a sign of Christ and the Church. Marriage calls for a free, total, faithful, and fruitful relationship that brings new life into the world.

### CONSECRATED LIFE:

A vocation in which a man or a woman vows to love God, often lived in a community of others with the same call. Consecrated religious men are often called "brothers" or "monks" while consecrated women are usually called "nuns" or "sisters."

### HOLY ORDERS:

The sacrament received when a man enters *ordained life* by being ordained as a priest, deacon, or bishop. Men who receive Holy Orders in the Roman Catholic Church have a special responsibility to be God's instruments by giving the sacraments and being totally dedicated to the Church instead of to a wife and children.

### DISCERNMENT:

The process of listening to God in order to understand gradually His particular calling for you, then choosing to respond "Yes."

**VOCATION:** First, the universal call to holiness that each of us received at our baptism. Next, this is the particular, specific way that God calls a person to live out their call to holiness in marriage, consecrated life, or ordained life.