



VOCATION VOCABULARY

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional resources for promoting and teaching about vocations to religious life, visit the store for the National Religious Vocation Conference at:
NRVC.net/store.

We also invite you to read articles about religious life, watch videos from religious institutes, and learn about discernment events in your area at:
VocationNetwork.org



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MANY OF US ARE VERY FAMILIAR with the scripture story of Peter and Andrew responding to Jesus by dropping their fishing nets and following him or the story of Jesus sitting with the woman at the well telling her everything she needed to know about herself. These “call” stories of the Gospel, where a person understands that their life task should be following the way of Jesus, have been repeated down through the centuries as men and women choose to answer the Christian call. Most people choose the vocation of marriage. Some choose to live as single disciples. But each generation also has a small group of disciples who choose to answer God’s call to discipleship through vowed communal life as sisters, nuns, brothers, priests, monks, or friars. This glossary is designed to help readers understand more about this unique and important vocation within the church.

Whether you are discerning your own vocation or promoting or directing other vocations, it is helpful to know and understand the vocabulary of vocation. Let this guide serve as your primer, with easy-to-understand definitions that will help you speak with confidence about vocations in all their diversity and mystery.





A

ABBEY

An abbey is a church, **monastery**, or **convent** used by a monastic community governed by an abbot (male leader or superior) or abbess (female leader or superior).

AFFILIATE or ASPIRANT

An affiliate or aspirant is a person who has made an official connection to a **religious institute** while each (the community and the person) is mutually discerning the call. This stage is also called pre-postulant or pre-candidate.

APOSTOLIC RELIGIOUS LIFE

Apostolic religious life is a form of **consecrated life** centered on direct service in active ministries, such as education, pastoral **ministry**, healthcare, or social services. In the spirit of the apostles, apostolic religious **sisters, brothers**, and **priests** are sent out on mission to serve wherever the need is greatest. The word *apostle* comes from the Greek verb meaning “to send forth.”

ASSOCIATE

An associate is a single or married person who makes a formal commitment for a stated length of time (often annually) to a specific **religious institute** usually through a process of **discernment** and **formation**. Associates commit to embody the **mission** and the spiritual life of the **religious institute**. Some institutes allow **diocesan priests** as well as people of other faith traditions to become associates.

B

BISHOP

A bishop is an ordained man appointed by the **pope** to be entrusted with the authority and leadership of a **diocese**. Bishops can be **diocesan** or **religious priests**. There are over 400 active and retired bishops in the United States.

BROTHER

A brother is a man who publicly professes **vows** to God and models his commitment by serving others as ministers of mercy and compassion in ways that express the **charism** of his **religious institute**. Striving to imitate Christ by living the gospel, **brothers** relate to others as Jesus did, as a brother.

C

CALL or CALLING

A call or calling is one's vocational way of life, such as married, single, consecrated, or ordained life. The word *vocation* stems from the Latin verb, *vocare*, which means “to call.” In Baptism, each person is called by God to follow Jesus in a life of holiness and sacred service.

CANDIDATE, or POSTULANT

A candidate, or postulant, is a person who requests and is officially accepted



to live with a religious community, to be immersed in its prayer, **ministry**, customs, and common life in order to discern his or her capacity to live that life. Often candidacy, or postulancy, begins with a simple entrance ceremony and provides for ongoing **discernment** conversations with a director of candidates or postulants. This period usually lasts six months to two years and precedes admission into the **novitiate**, the next step in the entrance process.

CANON LAW

Canon law is the body of universal and fundamental laws that governs the Catholic Church. **Candidates to religious life** must adhere to the **novitiate** admission requirements specified in canon law.

CANONS REGULAR

Canons regular, which are clergy living and praying and sharing goods in common, but engaged in apostolic ministries, such as preaching and sacramental administration, represent the second great wave of **religious life** in the Catholic Church (after Benedictine **monasticism**).

CARDINAL

A cardinal is appointed by the **pope** as a church leader. Cardinals are collectively known as the College of Cardinals, and one of their primary responsibilities is to elect a **pope**, or Bishop of Rome, when necessary. The word *cardinal* comes from the Latin *cardo*, meaning “hinge.”

CELIBATE

A celibate is a person who voluntarily abstains from **marriage** and sexual relations.

CHARISM

Each **religious institute** has a **charism**—a spirit, or way of life, which is inspired by the founder(s) of the congregation. From the Greek word *charisma*, meaning “gift,” a **charism** is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the common good of the church.

CHASTITY

The virtue of **chastity**, or self-giving love, is required of all Christians. For those in **religious life**, **consecrated chastity** is freely choosing sexual abstinence and giving oneself to God and all God’s people wholeheartedly. The **vow** of **chastity** requires a balance of prayer, work, rest, relaxation, companionship, and solitude.

CLOISTER

A cloister is the part of a **monastery** reserved only for the **monks** or **nuns** who live there. Such monks and nuns may be referred to as “cloistered” or “semi-cloistered. As cloistered **religious**, they rarely leave their monasteries, and all or most of their work is done within the **monastery** itself.

COME AND SEE EXPERIENCE

The Come and See experience is designed to help those considering **religious life** learn more about **religious life** by visiting the places where men and women in **religious life** serve and live. A vocation team plans a schedule that may include time for prayer, conversation, **ministry**, meals, catechesis, and informative presentations.



COMMUNAL LIFE

Inspired by the Early Christians, who “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42), communal life as it relates to **religious life** refers to groups who are dedicated to living together under a common rule to share resources and pursue common interests for the benefit of others.

COMPLINE

Compline, also known as Night Prayer, is the final prayer of the day in the Christian tradition of the **Liturgy of the Hours**. The word *compline* is derived from the Latin *completorium*, which means “completion.” In some monasteries the custom of the “Great Silence” begins after Compline; all present observe silence until Morning Prayer, also called **Lauds**.

CONSECRATED LIFE

Consecrated life is a state of life recognized by the Catholic Church and characterized by the public **profession of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience**. Since the Second Vatican Council, consecrated life has grown to include **religious life**, **secular institutes**, **hermits**, and **consecrated virgins**.

CONSECRATED VIRGIN

A consecrated virgin is a woman who makes a public commitment to live permanent celibacy in a rite presided over by a diocesan bishop. Consecrated virginity is the oldest recognized form of **consecrated life** in the church, predating **religious life**. The Eastern Church also has a provision for consecrated widows.

CONSTITUTIONS

See Holy Rule.

CONTEMPLATIVE RELIGIOUS LIFE

Contemplative **religious life** is a form of **consecrated life** centered on prayer, solitude, silence, and penance. Contemplatives tend to live in greater solitude than **apostolic communities** as a way of growing in deep relationship with God.

CONVENT

During medieval times *convent* referred to the community or building where **mendicants** lived; today, convent generally refers to the residence where **women religious** live. It typically has a chapel for communal prayer.

CONVERSATIO (FIDELITY)

Conversatio is the monastic promise of fidelity to the monastic way of life.

D

DEACON

A deacon is an ordained minister in the Catholic Church. Men who are transitional deacons are ordained typically six months to one year as a step prior to **ordination** as a **priest**. Permanent deacons are men, at least 35 years old, married or single, who may have employment beyond their diaconate **ministry**. Deacons assist and preach at liturgical celebrations; they may also preside at baptisms, marriages, and funerals.



DIOCESE

A diocese is a geographic area under the leadership of a **bishop**, also known as its ordinary. There are almost 200 dioceses in the United States. The word *diocese* comes from the Greek *dioikesis*, meaning “administration.”

DISCERNER

A person who is considering a religious vocation is commonly referred to as a **discerner**. As the discerner begins to contact specific religious communities, he or she is usually referred to as a **vocation inquirer** by the community.

DISCERNMENT

Discernment comes from the Latin *discernere* meaning to “separate” or “sift apart.” It is a skill and spiritual gift that allows one to make wise and authentic choices and distinguish right from wrong and good from bad, often with the assistance of others. Vocation discernment is a process of praying, listening, deciding, and freely responding to God’s call to holiness and sacred service. For some, vocation discernment will lead to **marriage**, for others it will lead to **single life**, **consecrated life**, or **ordination**. **Vocation directors** are typically professionally trained to assist Catholics in discerning their **vocation**.

DISCERNMENT RETREAT

Discernment retreats are usually overnight or weekend experiences to provide those interested in **religious life** focused time to recognize the movement of the Spirit. The schedule includes time for personal and communal prayer, **spiritual direction**, spiritual reading, faith sharing, and common meals. Meeting with members of a **religious institute** and a vocation team offers extended time for questions and discussion.

DIVINE OFFICE, or LITURGY OF THE HOURS

The Divine Office, also called the Liturgy of the Hours, is the official, public, daily liturgical prayer of the Catholic Church. It is composed of psalms, hymns, prayers, scripture, and spiritual readings. Many **religious institutes** pray the Divine Office together at set times throughout the day.

DOWRY

A dowry is an amount of money required for entrance to a **religious institute**, a practice no longer in use by most religious institutes. This money was kept by the community and returned if a member left **religious life**.

E

EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

The evangelical counsels are the **vows** of **poverty**, **chastity**, and **obedience**. They are called *evangelical* because they are described by Jesus in the gospel (*evangelium*) as the way to become perfect: “Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Matt.19:21).

EVANGELICAL RELIGIOUS LIFE

Evangelical religious life is a form of **consecrated life** that prioritizes relationships with all cultures and all creation. Most Franciscan communities practice **evangelical religious life**.



F

FEAST DAY

Feast days are days to commemorate patron saints of a person, **religious institute**, parish, or **diocese**. **Religious institutes** often have several patron saints and celebrate feast days with special devotions and festivities.

FINAL VOWS

See **Perpetual Profession**.

FORMATION

Formation is the process that each **religious institute** designs to incorporate new members. Initial formation can last up to 10 years. It involves an entrant learning the customs, traditions, spirituality, **mission**, **vows**, **charism**, practical elements, and history of **religious life** and his or her chosen community. Formation directors are appointed to guide new members throughout initial formation. Formation also provides for the lifelong spiritual, human, and apostolic development of all the members of a community.

FRIAR

A friar is a male member of a **mendicant order**, such as the Dominicans or Franciscans, although the term may be used with other men in the monastic tradition. Unlike **monks** who ordinarily work within the **monastery** where they live, a friar most likely works outside their community's residence, known as the **friary**.

FRIARY

A friary is the residence where friars live, similar to a **monastery** for **monks** or a **convent** for **sisters**.

H

HABIT

A habit is the distinctive religious garb worn by members of some **religious institutes** as an external sign of **consecrated life**. **Religious institutes** have the choice to determine the external signs that symbolize their identity, such as a **profession ring**, crucifix, tunic, scapular, veil, or pin. Some **religious institutes** choose to wear the habit all the time while others offer various options.

HERMIT

A hermit is a person who professes public **vows** before a diocesan bishop to live in solitude according to a rule approved by the bishop. This form of **consecrated life** is commonly called the *eremitic* life.

HOLY MATRIMONY, or MARRIAGE

Holy Matrimony unites a woman and man before God through public vows and is one of the seven sacraments. The vocation of marriage is the most common response to live God's call to holiness.

HOLY ORDERS

In the sacrament of Holy Orders, ordained men are given the role of carrying



out Christ's mission as servant to all. **Priests** become representatives of Christ to the Church—as witnesses of holiness and love, preachers of the Gospel, shepherds of the faithful, and conveners of divine worship. Deacons also receive a special grace through **ordination** and are called to assist the ministry of bishops and priests in response to God's call to holiness.

HOLY RULE, or CONSTITUTIONS

The holy rule, or constitutions, of a **religious institute** is the established way of life, in written form, for the community, which is approved by the **Vatican**.

I

INQUIRER

An inquirer, similar to a **discerner**, is someone interested in **religious life** but still unsure of his or her vocation. Inquirers spend time gathering **information** about church vocations and specific religious communities. They make use of print and online resources, such as **Vision Vocation Guide** and **Vision VocationMatch.com**, to understand the diversity of **religious life** and the options that might be right for them. They often participate in **come and see** weekends, communal prayer, or service opportunities to experience a community's way of life. Inquirers have no formal commitment to **consecrated life** or a specific **religious institute**.

J

JUBILEE

A jubilee, as it relates to **religious life**, is the celebration of the anniversary of a person's **final vows** ceremony. A silver jubilee recognizes 25 years since **perpetual profession**, and a golden jubilee recognizes 50 years.

L

LAUDS

Lauds, also known as Morning Prayer, is part of the **Liturgy of the Hours** and is prayed at sunrise as a reminder that the first prayers should be praise. Morning and Evening Prayer are the most important elements of the **Liturgy of the Hours** and are most often prayed in common.

LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTER

Lay ecclesial ministers are co-workers with the **bishop**, **priests**, and **deacons** of a **diocese**. They are not ordained but most have completed formal education and are often certified by their dioceses in which they serve in education, healthcare, liturgy, social service, and other pastoral ministries.

LAY ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS

Lay ecclesial movements emerged primarily in the 20th century and are church organizations whose vowed and mostly non-vowed members gather together for a **mission** and are formed in the spirituality of the movement. These include Catholic Worker Movement, Focolare, the Sant'Egizio Community, L'Arche, Marriage Encounter, and many others. The Vatican's Pontifical Council of the Laity publishes a directory of associations of the faithful at vatican.va.



LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio divina, or “divine reading,” is a practice of reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating scripture, God’s Living Word.

M

MAJOR SUPERIOR

The major superior is the elected or appointed leader who is entrusted with the ultimate authority of a religious institute. Terms can be for a lifetime or limited to a set number of years, depending upon the **holy rule**, or **constitutions**, of each **religious institute**. The major superior may have titles such as abbot or abbess, prior or prioress, president, congregational leader, general superior, superior general, master general, or provincial superior.

MENDICANT ORDER

Members of mendicant orders have what they call the “privilege of begging.” When these orders began to flourish in the 13th century, their ideal of **poverty** was to have no dependable sources of income or property ownership and to depend on God and God’s people for daily sustenance.

MINISTRY

Ministry is the use of a person’s gifts and talents, time and energy, in the service of others. Ministry can be volunteer, paid, full time, or part time and offered through a parish, **diocese**, **religious institute**, nonprofit organization, social service agency, and many other ways. Professional preparation is often required before a person engages in ministry, including social service, counseling, **spiritual direction**, catechesis, or pastoral care.

MISSION

The mission of a **religious institute** refers to the purpose for which the community exists within the church to bring the Good News to all and transform humanity. The mission of the community is inspired by and expressed in its founding **charism**.

MISSIONARY

Missionary communities focus their lives on spreading the gospel globally or in areas of their own country in need of evangelization, advocacy, and service. Missionaries need to be flexible and adaptable, respecting diversities of cultures, races, and faith traditions. Some communities not founded to be missionary may send some members to be part of missionary efforts.

MONASTERY

A monastery is the residence for **monks** and monastic **sisters** or **nuns** who center their lives on the monastery’s **holy rule**, prayer, work, and common life. Each monastery has its own history and character.

MONASTICISM

American Roman Catholic **monasticism** is a form of **consecrated life** focused on *ora et labora*, prayer and work. Monastics seek God in common life under the direction of a prioress (women’s communities) or abbot (men’s communities). Benedictines and Trappists are some of the better known monastics, professing vows of **stability**, **obedience**, and **conversatio (fidelity)** to the monastic way of life, which includes **chastity** and simple living.



MONK

A monk is a male member of a monastic **religious institute**.

MOTHERHOUSE

A motherhouse is a religious house from which other “local” religious houses have sprung. In many cases the first house of an order or congregation in new country becomes the motherhouse—the place where leadership is centered and where new members began their initial **formation**, or introduction and instruction, into the community.

N

NATIONAL CATHOLIC SISTERS WEEK

National Catholic Sisters Week is celebrated annually March 8-14 to recognize the vocation of Catholic sisters and to invite women to consider this vocation.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF DIOCESAN VOCATION DIRECTORS (NCDVD)

The NCDVD promotes diocesan priesthood and provides resources for the **formation**, support, and advocacy of diocesan **vocation directors** as they work within the Catholic Church to foster a culture of **vocations**. Learn more at NCDVD.org

NATIONAL FUND FOR CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS (NFCRV)

The NFCRV is dedicated to increasing the number of women and men entering religious communities by offering financial assistance to **religious institutes** so that they may accept **candidates** who have educational debt. Visit NFCRV.org for more information.

NATIONAL RELIGIOUS VOCATION CONFERENCE (NRVC)

The NRVC is a professional organization of vocation ministers, officially recognized by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, that presents **religious life** as a viable option in the Catholic Church. With over 1,000 members representing over 350 **religious institutes** and organizations, NRVC promotes vocation awareness, invitation, and **discernment** to life as a religious sister, brother, or priest. Learn more at NRVC.net.

NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK

National Vocation Awareness Week is an annual, week-long celebration instituted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1976 dedicated to the promotion and celebration of **vocations** to **Holy Orders** and **consecrated life**. It is observed the first full week of November.

NOVICE

A novice is a person who is formally admitted to a **religious institute** to prepare for religious **perpetual profession**, or **final vows**. Canon law (Church law) requires all new members of **religious institutes** to have at least one full year of canonical **novitiate**. This year usually consists of intense prayer, spirituality, scriptural, and theological study in the way of life of the institute. An optional second year, called the apostolic **novitiate**, is a time of integrating the learnings of the canonical year with the lived experience of full-time ministry and local community living.



NOVITIATE

A novitiate is the house where **novices** live. It also refers to the time during which a person is considered a **novice** in a religious community. The novitiate, including canonical novitiate or apostolic novitiate, is the period a community requires of new members to prepare for **perpetual profession**, or **final vows**.

NUN

Although the terms *nun* and *sister* are often used interchangeably, the Church makes a distinction between the two with *nun* referring to a woman religious living a cloistered, **contemplative** life. Nuns devote the majority of their time to personal and communal prayer for the good of the world, and they typically work in and around the **monastery**. There are more than 100 cloisters of nuns in the United States.

O

OBEDIENCE

The word *obedience* comes from the Latin word “to listen.” Those who vow obedience commit themselves to lifelong attentive listening to God’s call, including how it is heard through their elected or appointed leaders and community. Obedience is more than following orders; it is humbly responding with radical availability. Ministry assignments and congregational responsibilities are typically decided in conversations between community leaders and the member.

OBLATE

Oblates are laypeople or clergy who in their desire to offer themselves to God, affiliate with a **monastery**. Though they are not vowed monastics and usually live outside the **monastery**, they commit to following the monastic rule in their life and work as their circumstances allow. Some **religious institutes** use the word *oblate* in their name, but their members are actually vowed **religious**.

ORDINATION

Through the Sacrament of **Holy Orders**, ordination, a man is enabled to act on behalf of the church to administer the sacraments to the People of God. Both **deacons** and **priests** are ordained, although their roles in the church are distinct.

P

PERPETUAL PROFESSION, or FINAL VOWS

Perpetual profession, also called final profession or final **vows**, is the public proclamation of a definitive, permanent commitment of vowed **communal life** until one’s death.

POPE

The pope is the **bishop** of Rome and the leader of the worldwide Catholic Church, recognized as the traditional successor of Saint Peter. The word *pope* comes from the Latin, *papa*, and the Greek, *pappas*, both meaning, “father.” Popes are elected by the College of **Cardinals**. Of the 266 popes in Church history, 34 have come from religious communities, including Pope Francis, who is a member of the Society of Jesus.



POVERTY

Women and men who **vow** poverty commit themselves to living simply, sharing all things in common, and not exercising ownership over things. They do so for the good of their **religious institute** and its **mission** in the church. Paychecks, stipends, and donations are for the benefit of all members of a **religious institute**.

PRIEST, DIOCESAN

A diocesan priest is ordained through the Sacrament of **Holy Orders** to serve the local church primarily through parish **ministry** in a specific geographic area known as a **diocese** (or archdiocese). He is accountable to his (arch)bishop and the people he serves. A diocesan priest makes promises of **obedience** and **celibacy** to his bishop. He does not take a **vow of poverty** or to live in community.

PRIEST, RELIGIOUS

A religious priest is a man who professes **vows** in a **religious institute** and is ordained to the priesthood through the Sacrament of **Holy Orders**. A religious priest, also known as an order priest, is accountable to his **major superior** and the other men in his community, as well as to the local bishop and the people he serves. Religious priests serve in various ministries, such as preaching, teaching, parish **ministry**, retreat work, social **ministry**, and youth **ministry**. Religious priests take **vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience**, and any additional **vows** of his community.

PRIORY

The priory is the home for monastic communities whose **major superior** bears the title of “prior” for men or “prioress” for women.

PROFESSION

Profession is the religious rite in which a person formally enters a religious community by making public **vows**, most commonly **poverty, chastity, and obedience**. Profession follows a **formation** program of **discernment**, education, and spiritual development. Typically a person in initial **formation** makes **temporary profession** annually for three to nine years before **perpetual profession**, or final vows.

PROVINCE

A province is a geographic grouping of communities of a **religious institute**. The religious superior of the group is called a provincial or provincial superior. The province must be self-sustaining.

R

RECTORY

The home or residence of **diocesan priests**.

RELIGIOUS

When used as a noun, *religious* refers to a man or woman who professes public **vows** and is a member of a **religious institute**. More specifically, one may speak of a male religious who may be a **priest** or **brother**, or of a woman religious, who may be a **sister** or **nun**.



RELIGIOUS BROTHERS DAY

Religious Brothers Day is celebrated annually on May 1, the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. The purpose of this day is to celebrate the vocation of religious brothers and to invite men to consider this vocation.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE (formerly ORDER or CONGREGATION)

A religious institute is one of two types of institutes of **consecrated life** recognized by the Catholic Church (the other is **secular institute**). Members of religious institutes, both men's and women's, publicly profess **vows** and live a life in common, that is, in community under a common rule. Each religious institute, formerly called an *order* or *congregation*, is founded for a specific **mission** and is involved in ministries based on the **charism**, or spirituality, of the institute.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Brothers, sisters, and religious priests who profess **vows** and embrace the spirituality, teachings, and customs of their **religious institute** belong to the category of baptized people called religious life.

RETREAT

A retreat is a period of prayer, recollection, and reflection dedicated to deepening one's relationship with God. Retreats can last one day, several days, or weeks. All members of **religious institutes** are required to make an annual retreat.

S

SECULAR INSTITUTE

Secular institutes were recognized by Pope Pius XII in 1947 as a form of **consecrated life** in which a layperson professes private **vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience** after a period of **formation**. Members of secular institutes manage their own finances, live alone or with their families, and have no common **ministry**. Approximately 20 secular institutes are active in the United States.

SEMINARIAN

A seminarian is a man in the **formation** process of becoming a **priest**. He remains a seminarian until he is ordained.

SEMINARY SISTER

A seminary sister is a woman in the initial **formation** process of becoming a Daughter of Charity.

SINGLE LIFE

A person who chooses the single life as his or her **vocation** is called by God to serve generously, love selflessly, and live chastely.

SISTER

A sister is a woman **religious** who professes public **vows** to an **apostolic** (or active) **religious institute**, distinct from a **nun**, who is a woman religious who lives a contemplative life in a **cloister**. Sisters have a long legacy of dedicating their prayer and **ministry** to serving wherever the need is greatest, particularly with the abandoned, neglected, and underserved.



SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

Members of societies of apostolic life live in common and pursue a particular **ministry** inspired by its **mission** and founding **charism**. Some, but not all, societies profess sacred **vows** or other bonds and oaths. There are over 20 societies of apostolic life in the United States.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Spiritual direction is a process for individuals to facilitate spiritual growth. It usually consists of a periodic meetings with a spiritual director who listens to he person's experiences of God, helps them recognize God's presence in their lives, and suggests readings, prayers, and practices that can deepen their faith. A spiritual director is a **priest**, **sister**, **brother**, or layperson who is trained in spiritual direction.

STABILITY

Stability is a **vow** taken by many who follow a monastic way of life. These **religious** vow to live with others for a lifetime in a specific **monastery**.

T

TEMPORARY PROFESSION, or TEMPORARY VOWS

Temporary profession is typically the first **vows** men or women **religious** take following their **novitiate** and are preliminary to **perpetual profession**, or final vows. Those in temporary vows spend three to six years living in community and are engaged in full-time **ministry**. Temporary vows are usually renewed annually after evaluation and mutual **discernment** with the **formation** director and religious leadership.

V

VESPERS

Vespers, also known as Evening Prayer, are part of the **Liturgy of the Hours** and are prayed at sunset. The word vespers comes from the Greek and Latin words meaning "evening." Morning and Evening Prayer are the most important elements of the **Liturgy of the Hours** (also called the **Divine Office**) and are usually prayed in common.

VISION VOCATION GUIDE

VISION Vocation Guide, a publication of the National Religious Vocation Conference, is the most comprehensive resource available for those discerning a religious vocation. It is available in print and digital editions and online at VocationNetwork.org. Since 1987 **VISION** has provided information about **religious life** through first-person accounts, profiles, photo stories, and articles about **discernment**, community life, **vows**, **ministry**, and Catholic teaching.

VISION VOCATION MATCH

Vision Vocation Match (VocationMatch.org and EncuentroVocacional.org) is a popular, award-winning online service of the National Religious Vocation Conference that helps those considering **religious life** understand their vocation preferences and narrow their search for the right vocation.



VOCATION

The word *vocation* stems from the Latin verb *vocare*, which means “to call.” Thus, a vocation is a calling from God to a way of life such as **marriage, single or consecrated life, or ordination**. A vocation is more than a career choice or occupation. It is a response to one’s baptism call by God to follow Jesus in a life of holiness and sacred service.

VOCATION DIRECTOR

Working for a **diocese or religious institute**, a vocation director promotes **diocesan priesthood and/or religious life** and accompanies **discerners** on their vocation journey. A vocation director typically has professional training to screen discerners and assess applicants for entrance to religious **formation**. If a person is considering a vocation, it is best to meet a vocation director on a regular basis for **discernment**.

VOW

A vow—solemn, public, or private—is a promise to God made freely and deliberately. A man and woman make a solemn **vow** to one another before God in the sacrament of Matrimony. A member of a religious community, a **priest, sister, nun, and brother** normally professes **vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience**. Some communities add a fourth **vow** or have other variations on these **vows**. Benedictines vow **stability, conversatio, and obedience**—because the Rule of Saint Benedict was written centuries before poverty, chastity, and obedience became standard vows for **religious life**.

W

WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Women religious refers to both nuns and sisters who as members of a **religious institute**, take vows of **poverty, chastity, and obedience**. There are over 500 institutes of women religious in the United States.

WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in **consecrated life**. This celebration is attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2. It is observed in parishes on the Sunday after February 2 in order to highlight that **consecrated life** is a gift to the whole church.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

The purpose of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations is to publicly celebrate vocations to **Holy Orders** and **religious life** in all its forms. Many parishes and **religious institutes** commemorate this day with prayer for vocations and vocation promotion events. It is celebrated on Good Shepherd Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Easter.



WORD SEARCH

R S P V S M D W E K T O O A N P S M Q R I L R E O
 H Z F D E I O T O N I B B O R E S Y B E R A E T R
 N E U E O S A N E V E B V O T I B A H H A N R A D
 M A R C T D P M K D E I F P R I E S T T N I I I I
 L I E M I A N E I Y C E R A M L Y G B O O D U C N
 M S S D I R I E R E S C H A S T I T Y R V R Q O A
 E O N S E T N L T S P C L P P O H S I B I A N S T
 C A N C I C N A I R A N I M E S E S O L T C I S I
 C L S A E O B O O F Y H M O N A S T I C I S M A O
 N I O P S I N V E T F O R M A T I O N S A B N U N
 D O O I L T I A R I R A M I N I S T R Y T L A O W
 B P C E S N E E R S U O I G I L E R Q B E E J T Y
 E C C A C T V R Q Y N O I T A C O V F R I A R Y S
 C Q Q E E O E I Y E N I L P M O C O N V E N T H L
 C A L L P D I R E E L I B U J R E C T O R Y P Y O

ABBEY
 AFFILIATE
 ASSOCIATE
 BISHOP
 BROTHER
 CALL
 CANDIDATE
 CARDINAL
 CELIBATE
 CHARISM
 CHASTITY
 CLOISTER
 COMPLINE
 CONVENT
 DEACON

DIOCESE
 DISCERNMENT
 FORMATION
 FRIARY
 HABIT
 HERMIT
 INQUIRER
 JUBILEE
 LAUDS
 MINISTRY
 MISSIONARY
 MONASTERY
 MONASTICISM
 MONK
 NOVICE
 NOVITIATE
 NUN

OBEDIENCE
 ORDINATION
 POPE
 POVERTY
 PRIEST
 PROFESSION
 PROVINCE
 RECTORY
 RELIGIOUS
 SEMINARIAN
 SISTER
 STABILITY
 VESPERS
 VOCATION
 VOW



NOTE TO CATECHISTS, YOUTH MINISTERS, OR FORMATORS:

Here are some creative, tried-and-true ways to involve students in learning the vocation terms included in this primer:

- Whisper a definition in someone's ear and ask them to whisper the same definition to the person sitting next to them. Continue to whisper this definition to approximately 12 people. The last person announces what he or she heard and tries to guess the correct vocabulary word.
- Invite everyone to select a partner to sit across from in a room. Write several vocabulary words on a card, one word per card. Ask one person to describe/define the word on their card without saying the actual word until their partner guesses it.
- Divide the words from the definitions, then match them up. Invite others to make crossword puzzles or word searches with the vocation vocabulary list (See sample word search on page 18.)
- Write down the word with the definition on a card. Give it to one person who must draw (or create a clay model of) the word for everyone to see until the group guesses the correct word.

Thank you for your commitment to promoting vocations. Understanding the concepts of Christian call and how to discern God's will is a great gift you are giving the next generation of Catholics.

And remember the value of invitation: Women and men are twice as likely to consider a vocation when encouraged by another person. Ensure the next generation of sisters, brothers, nuns and priests, and leaders in the church, but a simple invitation to consider roads less traveled.

Learn, discern, invite: our lives and our church will be the richer for it.

Vocations: Valued, Vibrant, and Vital!





NRVC
National Religious
Vocation Conference

5401 South Cornell Avenue, Suite
207
Chicago, Illinois 60615
773-363-5454
nrvc@nrvc.net | nrvc.net