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How to talk to the Vocation Director

If you wanted to be a journalist, it would make sense to talk to someone who works at a newspaper. If you wanted to be a chef, it would make sense to talk to someone who works at a restaurant.

Just so, if you feel an attraction to the priesthood, sooner or later you have to talk to a priest about it — especially because priesthood is far more than a career.

You probably already know that a big part of a priest's life is to counsel his parishioners. He gets calls every day from people who need a spiritual perspective. And so if you are thinking about the possibility of priesthood, you should never feel nervous about calling your parish priest. In a very real way, that's what he's there for!



In a similar way, the diocese's Vocation Director is also available to talk with you and answer questions about the priesthood. Often, though, men are nervous about making contact. It feels like a big step, especially if you've never told a soul about your interest.

Well, truth be told, it's not as big a step as you may imagine, and there's absolutely no reason to feel nervous about it. Here are a few things to remember when making that call or sending that first e-mail.

First, the Vocation Director will not try to convince you to become a priest. You don't suddenly become a "hot lead" when you make contact, receiving daily calls and emails. While it's their job to send

men to seminary, Vocation Directors only want to send men who are truly called by God. Pressuring men into priesthood is inevitably disastrous. Instead, the Vocation Director can help you to work through your attraction to priesthood to see if it is a genuine call from Christ.

Second, be assured that the Vocation Director has talked to both better and worse candidates than you, so don't get all hung up on your unworthiness. If you feel God may be knocking on the door of your heart, you must open up to see if He's really calling. Don't worry that you're not perfect. Nobody is, priests included.

Third, eventually (though certainly not on the first call) you really do have to tell the Vocation Director your imperfections. Even the big stuff. He's got to be able to get to know you, warts and all, to make a determination if you should advance toward seminary. But don't let that make you uneasy. He's a priest, after all—and besides, wouldn't you rather get everything out in the open? Moreover, sometimes problems can be worked out more easily than you may think.

Fourth, you can call the Vocation Director even if you don't have a burning, get-me-to-seminary-immediately desire for the priesthood. You can be 15 years old, a sophomore in high school, and simply want a few answers to your questions. In fact, if you're a young guy, it's a good idea to contact the Vocation Director, simply to introduce yourself: "Hi Father, this is Justin. I just wanted to let you know I'm praying about the priesthood. Do you have any pointers for me?"

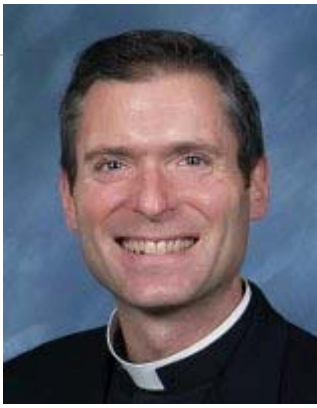
Lastly, it's Jesus Christ who calls men to priesthood—not you yourself, not the Vocation Director, not even the bishop. But Christ does call through the Church, which means eventually you have to approach the Vocation Director to discover if priesthood is your true vocation. But take heart—the Church loves you deeply and wants the best for you, so don't be afraid to make that call.

"If, in spite of your personal effort to follow Christ, you are sometimes weak and do not live in conformity to the law of love, to the commandments, do not be discouraged. Christ continues to wait for you. He, Jesus, is the Good Shepherd who searches for the lost sheep and who tenderly bears it on his shoulder. Christ is the friend who never lets you down."

- Pope John Paul II, Paraguay, 1988



Thank you for taking the time to consider your



vocation.

If you think God may be calling you to the serve Him in the ministry of the priesthood, please contact me.

May God bless you!

Fr. Luke Ballman
Vocation Director

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