



School Vocations Resources

Welcome to *OzVocations* – www.catholicozvocations.org.au - our national vocations website! We hope that these School Resource pages will provide much inspiration and practical assistance for primary and secondary teachers. We would always appreciate hearing from you, and would gratefully receive feedback, suggestions, ideas to be shared on-line with other teachers, and/or reports of activities, resources, programmes etc. that you have found helpful in your attempts to foster a 'culture of vocations' in your school or region.

Please email us on: office@catholicozvocations.org.au

Senior Secondary Lesson Ideas ...a 'Pot Pourri'

The following ideas and activities are offered by CVMA in the hope that they will supplement existing RE programmes and resources, and assist with reinforcing and further developing these basic concepts of *Vocations Awareness Education*, which, hopefully, the students have imbibed throughout their years of primary and junior secondary education:

- Through , Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, we are called and initiated into the Body of Christ.
- We need to accept and celebrate that, individually, we are unique and gifted, and that it is important to identify and develop our gifts and talents.
- As members of the Body of Christ, we are challenged to share our lives and gifts with one another, as Jesus did – in our family and the wider community.
- God calls us to a life of service, and we can respond in many ways, in various ministries on behalf of our community.
- There are a number of different vocational paths through which we can fulfil our Christian vocation: marriage, single life, religious life (as sister or brother) and ordained life (priest or deacon).
- As we grow older, hopefully, we will seriously consider each vocational choice, so that we will discover, and choose, the vocation that best suit our gifts and personalities – in order that we may experience and enjoy - and share - that 'fullness of life' promised by Jesus.

★ Into the future ...

Preparation for your teaching unit on Vocations/life choices:

Provide each student with a sheet entitled “*Into the Future*”, which asks them the following:

Imagine yourself in 20 years time ... The year is 2014 ... *Where will you be? ... What will you be doing? ... What vocational path will you have chosen? ... Who will you be with? ... What will be important to you – and why?*

Allow time for thinking, then writing. Invite them to be really honest, and assure them that what they write will not be identified in class - you will be the only one who reads what they have written. Collect and read the written sheets. Look for patterns, especially with regard to vocational lifestyle. Are they *all* going to be married or in a committed relationship?... All parents? ... Is there any awareness of other vocational options: Has anyone chosen to be single? ... Has anyone imagined him/herself as a priest, sister or brother?

Feed back to the students your insights from what they have written – use your conclusions as a springboard for input and discussion about vocational choices. How aware are they about options for their future? Emphasise that their *vocation* does not mean their *career*: their vocation is the lifestyle that will enable them to become their ‘best self’, and that should give them the energy to ‘do’ their career/job as best they can. An example that might illustrate this: Teachers: there are teachers who are married, single, sisters, priests, brothers. Their job (or ministry) is teaching. Their vocation (married, single, etc) ideally, gives them the energy, sense of well being ... fullness of life – to carry out their ministry to the best of their ability.

★ A Vocational Parable:

Once upon a time a man found an eagle’s egg, and placed it under a brooding hen. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chickens, and grew up to be just like them. It scratched the earth for worms and insects. It clucked and cackled, and, just like the chickens, it could thrash its wings and fly a little way into the air.

Years passed, and the eagle grew very old. One day, it saw a magnificent bird fly far above it in the cloudless sky. It floated with graceful majesty amongst the powerful wind currents, with scarcely a movement of its strong golden wings. Spellbound, the old eagle asked its neighbour: “What is that?” “Oh, that’s the eagle, the king of the birds”, was the response, “but don’t give it another thought. You and I are different from him. He belongs to the sky. We belong to the earth. We’re chooks!”

So, the backyard eagle-chicken-grown-old never gave it another thought. It lived and died a chicken — for that’s what it believed it was!

(Adapted from “The Golden Eagle” – Anthony de Mello sj, *Song of the Bird*)

★ A hypothetical:

Supposing you have made a decision to spend a lot of money in the near future: on some land ... a computer ... overseas travel ... a car ... a sound system.

Generate discussion around the following points:

- Would you race straight out and buy the first thing you see? Not likely! Why not?
- Money, for most of us, is a scarce, hard-earned commodity, and a big outlay is generally preceded by a lot of ‘homework’ on our part: We read up on our topic, we talk to those who are in the know, and we shop around for the best price.
- Uninformed ‘impulse spending’ generally leads to regret or dissatisfaction.

- Parallel to vocational choices: an uninformed vocational decision is, inevitably, a recipe for unhappiness and disillusionment, and perhaps remaining forever as a “back-yard eagle-chicken”.
- What value do we place upon our lives and our future happiness? If we would go to this trouble for mere material things [important though they may be!], are we also willing to do some ‘homework’ about our life and future, if we are to give our future life—our vocation—the serious consideration it deserves.

Input:

- Every person is born with a package of potential — gifts and talents that are given by God, for themselves and for others.
- If these are, firstly, discovered, and then, progressively nurtured and developed, we will be on the right track to developing a healthy self-esteem, and to reaching our fullest potential. We will also have the capacity to contribute as fully as possible to the life of our family and any group to which we might belong ... to really make a difference in our part of the world.
- Through our Baptism as Christians, every single one of us has a “vocation”.
- The word vocation comes from the Latin verb *vocare*, which means “to call”.
- Our vocation is to discover, develop and share our gifts and resources with others, as we work together to make a difference in our local and global communities.
- By our Baptism, we are called—invited by God—to become disciples of Jesus.
- Implicit in this call is freedom. An invitation always leaves a person free to say “yes” or “no”, and there should be no pressure, coercion or manipulation. We have the freedom to accept, or reject, God’s invitation
- Each person’s vocation actually has two distinct components:
 - Who God wants us to be and become (i.e. spirituality)
 - What God calls us to do—for God and for others (i.e. ministry)
- This call from God is not to a job, nor is it to a one-off event. Rather it is a call to a life-long process – that of becoming fully alive!
- Our Christian vocation is thus a call to a life commitment: to love, to grow into the best self you can be, and into union with God. We are our vocation!
- God, who called us at the time of our Baptism, continues to call us throughout our lives, and that on-going call is always an invitation to “choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:13) — in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. How do we do that?
- We should find life - in abundance - and thereby realise God’s dream that we ‘become our best self, if we find, and consciously choose, the vocational calling/path that is the best fit for each individual, given our personality, story, talents, etc.
- If we want to be happy, well-adjusted, productive, fulfilled adults, it is crucial that each one of us takes time to seriously consider all of the lifestyle options, and then to carefully choose our vocational path. Drifting is just not good enough ... we must be pro-active! We must do the ‘homework’!
- Our life is a gift that is meant to be treasured and generously shared, not squandered! We can choose to fly like the eagle, or remain a long-term “backyard eagle-chicken”!!

*** Where will YOU land?**

- Provide a copy of the ‘*Where Will You Land?*’ brochure for each student. (These are available from CVMA: Phone: 02 9550 6212; email: office@catholicozvocations.org.au \$15 per bundle of 50)
- Starting with the section headed: ‘*Did you know Jesus has a dream for YOU?*’, work through the brochure with the students, inviting their responses.
- Return to the section headed: ‘*Are you serious about your future?*’, encouraging students to follow through with the suggestions.

- Focus on the question: 'Which vocation is the best fit – for YOU?' and the caption CHOOSE LIFE, DON'T DRIFT! allow some quiet time for individual reflection.
- Pray the vocation prayer on the brochure with the students, and encourage them to pray this prayer regularly – for themselves and their classmates.

★ **The 'real thing' ...**

Invite a panel guest speakers (local adults) who have chosen different vocations: a married person/couple, a single person, a sister (nun) or (church) brother, a priest. Ask them: What is their vocation? ... How do they share their talents and their love with others? ... How does their vocation bring them happiness ... life? ... How does it help them to be their 'best self'? (Prepare the students before the visit ... encourage them to formulate their own questions for their guest/s)

★ **The Road Less Travelled – Religious & Ordained Life as viable options:**

Most people have a dream for the future. They may imagine how their could make a difference to others. Young people often dream of making the world a better place. Many begin this quest by looking for ways to become involved with others by linking up with others, and perhaps joining a group or organisation.

The vocations of priesthood and religious life are very real options for getting involved with life! Being a sister, brother or priest is an invitation to change the world through serving others, and responding to very real needs in our society.

In order to make informed choices about a vocation, it is important to know something about each vocational option. Finding out more about life as a religious brother, sister or priest (diocesan or religious order) will help young people to explore these options, and, ultimately, make a more informed choice about their future vocational path.

- Provide a copy of any, or all of the following articles for each student.
 - '*Vocations: How is God calling ME?*' – Fidelis Tracy CDP
 - '*A Good fit for You?: Life as a Priest, Sister of Brother*' – Cathy Bertrand SSND
 - '*Dare to Consider Religious Life & Priesthood*' – Cathy Bertrand SSND
 - '*Why Become a Priest, Sister of Brother Today?*' – Cathy Bertrand SSND

(These are available from CVMA: Phone: 02 9550 6212; email: office@catholicozvocations.org.au \$10 per bundle of 50)

Discussion: Devise a process through which you can get the best 'mileage' out of each article with the students – highlighting the different vocational options available to them.

- Invite an individual sister, priest or brother, or a panel comprising a priest, brother and sister to talk with the class about their vocation. Here are some *sample* questions the students might ask in order to develop a real sense of the person and his/her vocation. (The ideal would be for students to formulate their own questions.)
 - How long have you been a sister/brother/priest?
 - Do you take vows as sister/brother/priest? ... What are they? ... What if you change your mind?
 - Do you live in a community of sisters/brothers/priests? ... What's that like?
 - Is there a typical structure to your day? ... What is it?
 - What is your 'ministry'? ... What do you like about it?
 - What are some of the good things about your vocation as a sister/brother/priest?
 - Why did you become a sister/brother/priest?
 - How did you know what you wanted to be and do with your life?
 - How long does it take to become a sister/brother/priest? ... What's involved?

- What did your family and friends think about your choice to become a sister/brother/priest?
- Do you like being a sister/brother/priest? ... Why? ... What makes it worthwhile?
- How has your vocation made a difference in the lives of other people?
- Can you tell us about a time your vocation made a difference to someone else?
- Would you recommend your vocation to young people like us?

After the visit/interview, discuss with the students what they have learnt about this person's vocation ... Does this vocation appeal to them? ... Talk about whether some of them might have a vocation to become a sister/brother/priest.

★ Life Choices: written work ...

Ask the students to write, responding to the following questions:

- *Marriage:*
 - What factors would you consider most important in deciding whether or not to marry?
 - What factors would influence your choice of your life-partner?
 - If you were to choose to marriage: what would be the best part of being married? Why?
 - What would you find the hardest? Why?
 - Do YOU want to get married? Why? or Why not?
- *Single Life:*
 - What factors would you consider most important in deciding whether or not to choose the single vocation?
 - If you were to choose the single life: what would you like most about being single? Why?
 - What would you find the hardest? Why?
 - Do YOU want to get married? Why? or Why not?
- *Priesthood and Religious Life:*
 - What do you think are the reasons men and women choose to be priests, brothers and sisters today?
 - Can you explain why relatively few seem to do so?
 - What factors would you consider most important in deciding whether or not to choose the to be a brother, sister or priest, ?
 - If you were to choose to be a sister, priest or brother, what would you like most about your vocation? Why?
 - What would you find the hardest? Why?
 - Would YOU want to become a religious sister, brother or priest? Why would it be the right or wrong choice for you?

★ Build a Virtual Religious Congregation: Exploring Religious Life

- Explain the meaning of the word 'charism': it comes from the Latin root which means *gift*. A charism is a gift that a particular religious congregation brings to the life of the Church. All religious congregations have a different charism, because they were founded in different eras, by people in different parts of the world, who responded to different needs. A charism was thus shaped by the passion of their founder, and the needs of society at the time of their foundation. Many Australian Religious Congregations now have websites, and these can be found through visiting *OzVocations*, the national vocations website: www.catholicozvocations.org.au - and following the

links – from the homepages of the different congregations to their congregational websites. Challenge the students to discover for themselves the charism, story and mission of one order of sisters, brothers and priests.

- Invite students to form groups to create a ‘virtual’ religious congregation, based on what they see as the important needs of either/or our Australian society and culture or the needs of our ‘global village’. Allow time for research and working together. Groups need to decide:
 - Congregation’s name
 - What is its *charism*?
 - What social or spiritual need will it meet? i.e. What is its *mission*?
 - Where is this need most evident?
 - By what principles will the members order their life together? i.e. How will the *communities* be structured?
 - How will it meet that need? i.e. What is its *ministry*?
 - For what type of prayer will it be known?
 - What quote from the Bible best captures the charism of the congregation?
 - Design a *logo that* will best symbolise the congregation.
- Encourage a creative, spirited presentation by each group.
- Follow up with a discussion of the charism, mission and ministry of religious congregations connected with the local area if possible e.g. the local parish, deanery, diocese.

Inspired by: *Out on a Limb: Vocation Resources for Teens, pages 15-16*
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★ Vocation Pamphlets:

Have students work, either individually, or in small groups, to design a pamphlet or brochure that promotes one of the following vocations: marriage, single life, religious life, priesthood, diaconate. Make sure that all of the above are covered in your class group.

Invite students to present their creation to the class.

★ Sharing the insights ...

Have the students prepare a lesson for Year 7 or 8 students on one of the vocations you have been exploring (marriage, single life, priesthood, priest, sisters, brother, deacon). Demonstrate how this vocation would enable a person to best live out God’s call to fullness of life. Provide activities/worksheets that would enable the younger students to have a better understanding of that vocation.

★ National Vocations Awareness Week:

This is celebrated across Australia in early August of each year. It is geared to helping people, from the youngest child, to understand the nature of the Christian Vocation. Any of all of the above activities could be used during this week. Take and break open the meaning of the words *national ... vocations ... awareness ...*

Why do we have this for a whole week each year? How might your school really embrace NVAW?

Brainstorm with the students: what ‘vocations activities’ could they suggest that might enable the whole school to be really involved in NVAW?

★ **Prayer:**

Compose a class 'vocations prayer' – pray it regularly with the students (there are samples of prayers written by younger children on the Senior Primary and Junior Secondary pages of this *OzVocations* schools resource).

★ **'Vocation: Call to Fullness of Life' – a time of reflection**

- Ponder Jesus' words: *"I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10) This is Jesus' dream for every person.
- Listen to Jesus as he speaks these words especially to YOU! *"I have come that YOU (name) may have life, and have it abundantly."*
- Savour the experience of hearing his words spoken to YOU ... hear them over and over again.
- Recall the words of Mary in her Magnificat prayer: *"God who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is God's name!"* (Luke 1:49) Mary recognised and humbly acknowledged her gifts, and she knew that they had been given to her to share with those whose lives touched hers.
- Think again about your own gifts and talents ... the ones you've discovered yourself, the ones other people have helped you discover and develop ... Talk to Jesus about these gifts thank him for them ... for the gift that you are, and always will be for others.
- Revisit the vocational options, and reflect on these questions:
 - Do I have the particular gifts and talents and capacity for the commitment required to make a *marriage* really life-giving for myself and my partner?
 - Could the *single vocation* be the most life-giving option for me, and enable me to most fully develop my particular gifts and qualities?
 - Could my gifts and talents be most effectively developed and utilised through a *religious vocation*? ...What about becoming a *priest* or *religious sister* or *brother*?
- Invite students to talk to Jesus about your future:
 - Where might Jesus' dream be calling you?
 - Which vocation would enable you to grow as a person? ...To love most naturally and completely? ... To develop and use your gifts fully? ... To reach your fullest potential?
 - Which one of the vocational options appeals to you most at this moment?
 - Are you open to considering the one that might least appeal at this time?
 - Which of the vocational options will enable you to fly like an eagle, deeply knowing that you could never settle for being a "back-yard eagle-chicken"?
- Listen to what Jesus might be saying to you ... ask him for inspiration and guidance ... hear him encouraging you to "CHOOSE LIFE" – for yourself and others!
- Finish with a 'Vocation' song/hymn e.g.
 - My Plans for You (Monica Brown)
 - Called and Gifted (Carey Landry)
 - I Say 'Yes' My Lord (Donna Penna)
 - Here I am Lord (Dan Schutte)
 - City of God (Dan Schutte)
 - Prophets of Hope (Trisha Watts)
 - Together We'll Make a difference (Trisha Watts)
 - Summoned by Love (Trisha Watts) ... etc.

★ **Fired up with this topic? ... Wanting more ideas?**

For additional ideas, on the *OzVocations website*, www.catholicozvocations.org.au - revisit the Teacher Resources section – click on the *Junior-Middle Secondary* and *Internet Research Projects* pages. There are plenty more suggestions there on both!