

Clerics of St. Viator



Vocations Lesson Plan

“...prefer only the will of God...but be instruments of His work”

Fr. Louis Querbes, CSV

An Overview

This lesson plan will help you to provide a broad view of vocations and its expression in the lives of young people in Viatorian ministry sites. It answers many of the practical questions young people may be asking: What is a vocation? How do I learn to hear God’s voice in my life? Who is God calling me to be in my life? In what way can I live God’s call?

Rooted in the “Universal Call to Holiness” of all baptized Church members, this lesson plan intends to initiate links between an individual Viatorian and the young people in our parishes and schools. While it can be adapted to meet the needs of a particular setting, this lesson plan is intended to be used over a four-day period. It is suggested for use primarily for students in secondary school, though adapting the materials to match the maturity level of other ages is certainly encouraged.

The first two installments should be presented by the catechist/teacher in order to set the stage for the third installment. Three themes are developed in the first two installments:

- What the sacraments provide for all Catholic Christians
- What response Catholic Christians should make
- A variety of “Vocation Options” as expressions of response

The third instalment introduces a model for some of the Vocation Options previously introduced. Viatorians representing as many options as possible should be invited to be interviewed by small groups of students.

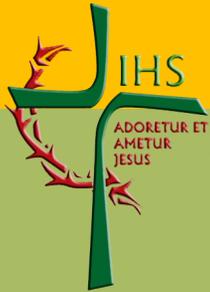
The fourth installment wraps up the unit by encouraging students to reflect on and share their observations in conversation with other students.

The aim of this unit is to offer young people an invitation to explore their own vocation through a personal relationship with an individual Viatorian. Catechists/teachers are encouraged to follow up and build on what emerges from these relationships throughout the class. Follow-up ideas are included in this packet for the catechist/teacher.

Drawing upon a variety of sources, an outline is included for catechists/teachers who may be unfamiliar with the basic themes of discernment and vocation. Catechists/teachers are encouraged to use whatever materials they find relevant and adapt these materials for their students. Additional materials (videos, print materials, etc.) could also be included and we encourage you to share these materials with the vocation office of the Clerics of St. Viator.

We invite you to offer constructive criticism relative to these materials with us. The content on offer has been used in a variety of parish and school settings and will be further enhanced through your efforts.

May Jesus be adored and loved!



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Getting Started: Sessions 1 & 2

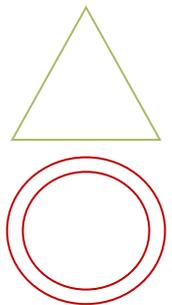
We are Called to Holiness

Our Sacramental Life

- **What are the seven sacraments?**
- **What does initiation mean?**
 - ⇒ A basic exposure to someone or something new
 - ⇒ A time of instruction or learning to become a member of a movement or group
 - ⇒ Often symbolized through a ceremony or ritual
 - ⇒ Desire to increase level of participation in a group or movement
- **What are the sacraments of initiation?**
 - ⇒ Baptism: We enter the Body of Christ, becoming members of the Church
 - ⇒ Eucharist: We partake the Blessed Sacrament, entering more fully in membership
 - ⇒ Confirmation: Through an infusion of the Holy Spirit, we complete our initiation as adults
- **What are the responsibilities and privileges of membership in the Church?**

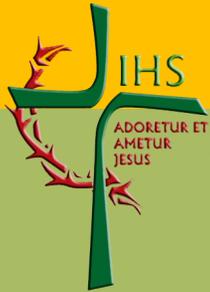
What and who is the Church?

- **Before the Second Vatican Council (prior to the mid-1960s)**
 - ⇒ The Church looks like a pyramid (Pope-priests-religious-laity)
 - ⇒ Implies that some are closer to God than others
- **After the Second Vatican Council (after the mid-1960s)**
 - ⇒ All fully initiated members share equally in the mission of the Church (responsibilities and privileges)



Vocation

- **The Universal Call to Holiness**
- **What does the Universal Call to Holiness imply?**
 - ⇒ Our faith begins and is nurtured through a personal encounter with God in Christ
 - ⇒ As Jesus' disciples, we share in the mission to bring about the Kingdom of God
 - by living in solidarity with others
 - by giving to others
 - by offering our lives in service for others
 - ⇒ Cultivating prayer life
 - individual prayer
 - community prayer



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We respond to God's Call...

- **Through Marriage**

- ⇒ Exchanging of sacred vows
- ⇒ Helping spouse to grow in holiness as Jesus' disciple
- ⇒ Ongoing involvement in ministry or service within the Church (lay ministry)
- ⇒ Connecting to a religious community as a lay associate
- ⇒ Creating a family unit where faith is encouraged and modeled

- **Through Priestly Orders**

- ⇒ Ordination
- ⇒ Overseeing the sacramental life of the parish
- ⇒ Offer pastoral guidance for parishioners in times of transition
- ⇒ There are two forms
 - Religious=vowed (Viatorian, Augustinians, Dominican, Jesuit)
 - Secular=Diocesan

- **Through Religious Life**

- ⇒ Making Vows (chastity, poverty, obedience)
- ⇒ Engaged in the ministerial life of the Church (education, health care, pastoral care)
- ⇒ Share resources while living in community
- ⇒ Ongoing prayer in community

- **Through Permanent Diaconate**

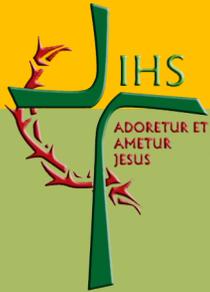
- ⇒ Ordination
- ⇒ Must be 35 years of age
- ⇒ Assist in parish sacramental life

- **Through Remaining Single Life**

- ⇒ Ongoing involvement in ministry or service within the Church (lay ministry)
- ⇒ Connecting to a religious community as a lay associate

Opportunities for All Baptized Catholics

- **Cultivating a prayer life (Individual and Communal)**
- **Participation in the sacraments (Eucharist and Reconciliation)**
- **Spiritual retreats**
- **Advocacy for social justice**
- **Scripture reading and reflection**



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Session 3: The Interviews

Personal Testimony

In the third session, students are invited to interview individuals who represent the various vocations presented in the previous sessions. The intention of these conversations is to gain insight into what led these people to their vocation, discover why they are who they are and the experiences they had in the journey of discerning their particular state of life.

The Director of Religious Education/department head, works with the vocation minister to invite a variety of people to participate. The number of those invited depends on the size of the student group. Ideally, one interviewee can engage three to five students in conversation. The interviews take place in an environment conducive to small-group discussion, with adequate seating for the students and the interviewee.

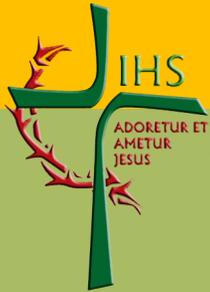
Students need to come prepared to ask particular questions and have adequate paper on hand to record the responses. Catechists/teachers might consider providing the students with several worksheets containing sample questions (attached page 8)

Effective Sample Questions:

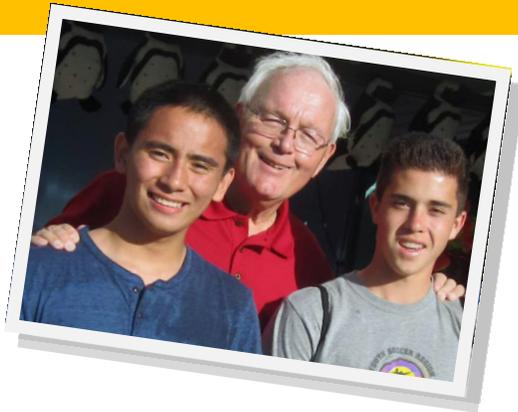
- What was your first sense that God was calling you to consider becoming a sister, brother, priest or lay associate?
- What experiences led you to consider responding to God's call?
- How old were you when you decided to respond to God's call?
- What role did your family and friends play in this process?
- What experiences confirmed your decision?
- If you could make this decision again, would you change anything about the process?
- What has been your experience of Church/community as a result of this decision?
- Have you ever regretted this decision?
- What sort of qualities are important for someone considering a life of service in the Church?

We suggest encouraging the students to ask additional questions in order to gain a better understanding of the interviewee.

Interviews should last a total of **15-20** minutes. This allows the students to interview at least three people in the course of the session. Remind the students to bring their written responses to class for the debriefing session.



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Session 4: Processing Experiences

Who Are These Individuals?

Using the completed worksheets from session 3, students offer oral presentations on the people they interviewed. Emphasis is placed on the process the person they interviewed went through in discerning their vocation and the manner in which they live their vocation. Such emphasis places attention on the person rather than the particular service they offer to the Church, who they are rather than what they do.

Options for Debriefing:

- Individual interviewees are discussed by all students who interviewed her/him.
- Individual students share their particular observations, inviting others to contribute their observations on the same person.
- Students are asked to report on the person they interviewed (duplicate responses will occur).

Following these presentations, or if the students seem nervous or unprepared, these questions might be employed by the catechists/teacher:

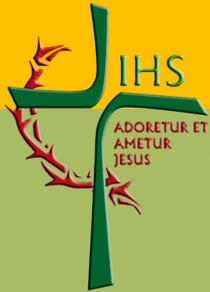
- What do you know about the person you interviewed?
- Was there anything about this person that struck you?
- If you could ask this person another question, what would you ask?

Debriefing as a Group:

Catechists/teachers are encouraged to help the students make links between the content of the interviews. These questions might be employed:

- Are there common themes that came out of these interviews? Explain.
- What can we do to be open to our vocation?
- What are the signs that God calls us to a particular vocation?
- What did you discover about how God guides us and helps us discern our vocation?

Some students may prefer to offer their responses in writing. Students should be encouraged to reflect on her/his life in comparison to those they interviewed. After reviewing these responses, the catechist/teacher is encouraged to share these responses with the class, respecting the anonymity of the contributor if appropriate.



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Additional Ideas for Follow-Up

Immediate Reflection

Invite the students to write a reflection on the vocational journeys of two or more of the people they interviewed. Have the students include a section of personal reflection, writing on their own experiences of discerning God's call in their lives. Keep this response in a sealed envelope with the student's name on the outside. After a few weeks, return the envelopes to each student, asking them to read their responses privately. Invite them to share a reflection to the class on what they learned about the words "discernment" and "vocation."

Linking Conversations

After the fourth session, you might consider asking questions to encourage the students to make connections with other themes offered in the class.

Questions to consider:

- What connections do you see between our prayer life and discerning our vocation?
- Are there connections between advocacy for social justice and discerning a life of service in the Church? Explain.
- Is the Church important in discerning your vocation? Why? Why not?
- In what ways does living a life of holiness relate to discerning God's call in your life?

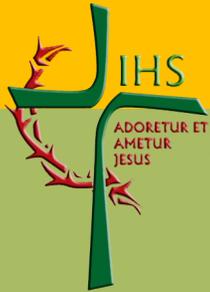
These responses could be offered in writing or as an oral presentation.

Continuing the Conversation

If you would like additional ideas for how to initiate a conversation on discernment and vocations with youth and young adults, please contact the vocation minister for the Clerics of St. Viator at vocations@viatorians.com. You might also contact the vocation office in your local diocese for resources on particular states of life, such as Diocesan Priesthood and the Permanent Diaconate.

A list of Internet and print resources is included on the next page.

We welcome your, ideas, suggestions and constructive criticism for future revisions of this publication. Contact us at vocations@viatorians.com.



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Continue the Conversation

Vocations in general- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has a variety of informative videos and links concerning all vocations: <http://www.foryourvocation.org>. See especially the section “Videos.” In 2009, Fr. Stephen Wang authored an excellent booklet entitled *How to Discover your Vocation: Marriage, Priesthood, Consecrated Life, Permanent Diaconate, Single Life*. Copies can be obtained at <http://www.ignatius-cts.com>.

Discernment- There are a number of organizations in the Church focusing on helping people discern their vocation. One such organization is Catholics on Call, which hosts a yearly discernment program for young people as well as an informative website: <http://www.catholicsoncall.org>.

Marriage- If you are thinking about getting advice and preparing for marriage, begin with a conversation with your parish priest. Additionally, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has a variety of informative videos and links concerning marriage: <http://www.foryourmarriage.org>. See especially the section “Videos.”

Priesthood- Information for Diocesan Priesthood can be found through your local diocesan website. Contact the Vocations Director in your home diocese or ask your local priest.

Consecrated Life- If you are considering consecrated life, contact any congregations or associations you have been attracted to through this informative website: <http://www.vocationnetwork.org>. If you are a male considering consecrated life as a Viatorian brother or priest, contact the Clerics of St. Viator at: <http://viatorians.com>.

Permanent Deacon- Information for the Permanent Diaconate can be found through your local diocesan website. If you are considering the Permanent Diaconate, please inform your parish priest as soon as possible.

Single Life— Information on the single vocation and single life can be found here: <http://www.pathsoflove.com>.

Additional Resources for Educators

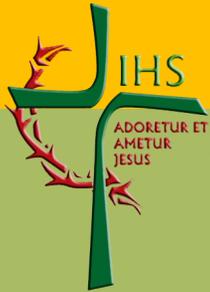
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Hahnenberg, Edward P. *Awaking Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 2010.

Neafsey, John. *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.

Ryan, Robin (ed.). *Catholics on Call: Discerning a Life of Service in the Church*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010.



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Interview Questions

- What was your first sense that God was calling you to consider becoming a sister, brother, priest or lay associate?
- What experiences led you to consider responding to God's call?
- How old were you when you decided to respond to God's call?
- What role did your family and friends play in this process?
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