

## YEAR FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

# Cultivating Vocations

One of the most important roles in our family is playing the part of Santa Claus on Christmas morning. The responsibility of Santa Claus is to distribute gifts to the appropriate person listed on the gift. One of us distributes the gifts to the appropriate person and we take turns opening the present. Joy ensues as, within minutes, a pile of torn giftwrap forms in the center of the living room as we discover the special objects given to us.

This family practice is a lot like vocation ministry. St. Pope John Paul II said “the Church fulfills her mission when she guides every member of the faithful to discover and live his or her own vocation in freedom and to bring it to fulfillment in charity” ([\*Pastores Dabo Vobis\*](#), 40). God calls us to actively participate in the distribution, recognition and joy that come through helping all the baptized discover the particular gifts God has entrusted to them. As the U.S. Bishops point out, we are both *called* and *gifted* by God to bring our faith “to life in the hearts, minds, and spirits of” the millions of people in our families, parishes, schools and work places ([\*Called and Gifted\*](#), U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1995).

According to a recent article in [\*America Magazine\*](#), interviews with men and women entering religious life in 2014 underscore the importance of cultivating vocations at every level within the family, school and parish. Quite simply stated, faith-filled families, schools and parishes generate committed, effective disciples who engage in discernment on a regular basis. This calls for us to create and animate communities offering support, dialogue, retreats, and prayer for each individual’s gift and vocation. If we assume that God wants to give us an orchard, then it is important that we continue to cultivate vibrant discipleship in the home, in Catholic schools and parishes.

During the 2015 Year of Consecrated Life, we know that the Holy Spirit continues to call women and men to serve God’s mission in a variety of ways. We are right to ask God for more consecrated sisters, brothers and priests and we should continue to pray for more diocesan priests and deacons. Each of these vocations offers the body of Christ a unique and powerful witness of Christian discipleship. In addition, it is important to ask the Holy Spirit to help us discern our own vocation. We should be active explorers, discerning the ways we might use these unique gifts to foster a culture of discipleship and vocation in our personal lives, in our homes, schools, parishes and in all the places we find ourselves.

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