



## Priesthood, Consecrated Life and Celibacy

If you were to ask most teenage boys what keeps them from considering the priesthood, the answer would be “I like girls.” They operate, in part, under the presumption that those who enter the priesthood are not attracted to anyone but God. Many girls make a similar presumption regarding the consecrated religious life.

Although these are obviously misconceptions, there is a fundamental truth in them: God stamped into every human heart the desire for profound union and life-giving love. Indeed, all men and women are called to a form of “spousal” vocation; and all men are called to be fathers and all women to be mothers in some way. These longings are most often fulfilled through the Sacrament of Marriage. However, they are also fulfilled through a life offered to God in consecrated celibacy.

### Everyone is Called to “Marriage”

When a priest is ordained, he personifies Christ’s marriage to His bride the Church. When a woman enters the consecrated life, she is espoused to Christ Himself. These expressions of the celibate vocation are reminders that Heaven will be an eternal wedding celebrated between God and His bride, the Church. It is true that a celibate life offered to God is an exceptional calling; but those who are celibate do not reject their sexuality. Rather, they elevate their yearnings for loving union beyond the physical, directing those yearnings toward God. They show us the ultimate significance and highest fulfillment of spousal love, by entering into an unbreakable covenant with God.

Both the married person and the celibate person must integrate and exercise a certain mastery over their desires. It is only when people have achieved a serene and integrated mastery over their sexuality that they are capable of making a gift of themselves. This gift can be given to a spouse, or it can be offered to God through celibacy. In either vocation, the fruit of such mastery is a peace, joy and fulfillment that can endure even amid the difficulties that are part of every person’s life.

### Finding Your Vocation

Anyone who loves and trusts God should be open to His will for their lives. Jesus knows each one of us intimately. He knows the vocation to which He calls us is the one that will make us happiest and most fulfilled. Young people need to learn how to hear – to discern – God’s calling in their lives. This process of discernment is vital, and it requires quiet times of prayer, as well as family support.

### Your Parental Privilege

Since you want what is best for your teen, how can you help them discern God’s path for them? It helps to consider five ways that youth tend to complicate hearing God’s voice. See the *Parent’s Guide*, p. 82.

### Questions to engage with your son/daughter

1. Do you believe God has a specific plan for your life? If so, what do you think it could be?
2. Why are silence and prayer so important? Do you sometimes sense God’s guidance during prayer?

Adapted from *YOU. Life, Love and the Theology of the Body. Parent’s Guide*, Ascension Press, 2016.