

WASHINGTON—The Catholic Church celebrates National Vocation Awareness Week January 9-15, 2011. To encourage Catholics to foster vocations, Father David Toups, interim director of the Office of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) offers “Ten Things” Catholics can do to promote vocations to priesthood and religious life.

The first five steps on this list are directed toward all Catholics. The second five are specifically an invitation to younger Catholics to consider saying “yes” to a religious vocation. The list follows:

## **Ten Things That Promote Vocations**

### **By Father David Toups**

For all Catholics:

1. *Pray* for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. Jesus says in Matthew 9:38 “to beg the master of the harvest to send laborers into the vineyard.” If we want more priests, sisters and brothers, we all need to ask.
2. *Teach* young people how to pray. Pope Benedict XVI said that unless we teach our youth how to pray, they will never hear God calling them into a deeper relationship with Him and into the discipleship of the Church.
3. *Invite* active young adults and teens to consider a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life. A simple, sincere comment should not be underestimated. An easy way to do this can be remembered by four letters: ICNU. “John, I see in you (ICNU) the qualities that would make a good priest, and I want to encourage you to pray about it.” It is a non-invasive way to encourage *openness* to a religious vocation.
4. *Make it attractive*. Show the priesthood for what it truly is – a call to be a spiritual father to the whole family of faith. Similarly, the consecrated life for a young woman is a call to be united to Christ in a unique way, and to be a spiritual mother to those she encounters in her life and service. The challenge for priests and religious is to be joyful models of their vocations.
5. *Preach it, brother!* Vocations must be talked about regularly if a “vocation culture” is to take root in parishes and homes. This means, first and foremost, the people need to hear about vocations from priests through homilies, prayers of the faithful, and discussions in the classroom. Vocations kept out of sight are out of mind.

For those considering a vocation:

6. *Practice the faith*. We all need to be reminded that the whole point of our lives is to grow in a deep, intimate and loving relationship with God. This is the first step for any young person desiring to discern any call in life.
7. *Enter into the Silence*. Silence is key to sanity and wholeness. We can only “hear” the *voice* of God if we are quiet. Take out the ear buds of your iPhone, iPod, and iTunes and listen to God, the great I AM. Young people should try to spend 15 minutes of quiet prayer each day – this is where you can begin to receive clear direction in your lives.

8. *Be a good disciple.* Some bishops say, “We do not have a vocation crisis; we have a discipleship crisis.” Young people can become true followers of Jesus Christ by serving those around them. By discovering your call to discipleship, you also discover your particular call within the Church.
9. *Ask God.* Ask God what He wants for your life and know He only wants what is good for you. If, in fact, you are called to the priesthood or consecrated life, it will be the path to great joy and contentment.
10. In the immortal words of a famous sneaker manufacturer: *“Just do it!”* If you feel that God is inviting you to “try it out,” apply to the seminary or religious order. Remember, the seminary or convent is a place of discernment. You will not be ordained or asked to profess vows for many years, providing ample opportunity to explore the possibility of a call to priesthood or religious life.