



Knights of Columbus

Vocations

Handbook



Faith in Action

Faith

Vocations Handbook

A Handbook for Vocations Chairmen,
Vocations Committees, and
All Brother Knights

*Please do all you can to encourage
priestly and religious vocations*



Vocations Message

A vocation is a fruit that ripens in a well cultivated field of mutual love that becomes mutual service, in the context of an authentic ecclesial life. No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love. Did not Jesus say: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35)?

Let us dispose our hearts therefore to being “good soil,” by listening, receiving and living out the word, and thus bearing fruit. The more we unite ourselves to Jesus through prayer, sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the sacraments celebrated and lived in the Church and in fraternity, the more there will grow in us the joy of cooperating with God in the service of the Kingdom of mercy and truth, of justice and peace. And the harvest will be plentiful, proportionate to the grace we have meekly welcomed into our lives.

Pope Francis
World Day of Prayer for Vocations
May 11, 2014

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About Vocations

Every Catholic has a vocation. In fact, as a member of the Church, every Catholic participates in the reality of “vocation” in three distinct but related senses.

First, there is the common Christian vocation that comes in Baptism. This can be expressed in various ways, but in general terms it means loving and serving God and neighbor and helping to carry on the mission of the Church.

Vocation also refers to a “state in life” or a way of being Christian – priesthood, religious life, marriage, and so forth. States in life are the special, lifelong settings in which people live the baptismal vocation.

Finally, there is personal vocation. The personal vocation of each one of us takes shape in the unique combination of talents, personal characteristics, relationships and life circumstances – including both our common Christian vocation and our state in life – that point to the special role God wants us to play in his redemptive plan. Membership in the Knights of Columbus is part of the personal vocation of many Catholic men.

When people speak of “vocation,” they usually mean vocation in the second sense – state in life. Most Christians are called by God to the married state, and some are called to the state of single laypersons living in the world. But Jesus also chooses certain men to act in his Person through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments; they are called to be priests. Others are called to the clerical state as permanent deacons. And still others, both women and men, are called to what is known as consecrated life – a way of life marked by the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience – whose most familiar expression is religious life.

The Knights of Columbus cherishes and celebrates all forms of vocation as gifts of God. But because of the Church’s urgent need for priests and consecrated religious women and men, the Order’s vocations program gives special priority to promoting these vocations. Vocations of all kinds arise and are nurtured within

families. This “family” dimension of vocations makes lay involvement particularly important.

Let’s look briefly at the “state in life” vocations of priesthood and religious life on which the vocations program is focused.

Priesthood

Jesus called his first disciples at the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mk 1:16-20) and later said to them: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (Jn 15:16). Christ, the Head of the Church and Lord of all creation, continues his salvific work in our own time. The ministerial priesthood is a privileged share in his work.

As the life of Christ was consecrated to the authentic proclamation of the loving will of his Father, so too the life of priests should be consecrated, in the name of Christ, to the same proclamation. The priest is called to assist the bishop in his threefold responsibility of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling. The priest must be a teacher of the Word, a minister of the sacraments, and a pastor of his flock. Pope John Paul II reminded us: “Without priests the Church would not be able to live that fundamental obedience which is at the very heart of her existence and her mission” (Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 1).

In his 2007 *World Day of Prayer for Vocations* address, Pope Benedict XVI further taught: “The People of God, organically structured under the guidance of its Pastors, lives the mystery of communion with God and with each other, especially when it gathers for the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the source of that ecclesial unity for which Jesus prayed on the eve of his passion: ‘Father...that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (Jn 17:21). This intense communion favors the growth of generous vocations at the service of the Church: the heart of the believer, filled with divine love, is moved to dedicate itself wholly to the cause of the Kingdom.”

Religious Life

Jesus also chooses certain men and women to be signs of his love while imitating his own way of living by embracing the consecrated life, whose most familiar expression is the religious life.

Consecrated life is a special Christian lifestyle—a special way of holiness—marked by publicly professing or promising the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, and living them as a sign of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. Consecrated life has several forms including religious institutes, secular institutes, hermits and consecrated virgins.

For most Catholics, the religious institute is the form of consecrated life that is most familiar. In addition to the elements common to all consecrated life, religious life requires that those who have professed the evangelical counsels live the common life, sharing all they possess and engaging in the common apostolic works of their religious community. The Church recognizes many religious institutes, commonly called religious orders, congregations or societies. A religious man may be a monk, friar, or brother, and may or may not be ordained as a priest. A religious woman may be a cloistered nun or an active sister.

The Knights of Columbus and Vocations

Founded by a parish priest, the Knights of Columbus has always been a strong defender of the priesthood and religious life and a generous supporter of seminarians and religious in formation. As the largest Catholic fraternal organization in the world, the Order seeks to assist the Church with financial and moral assistance for this purpose. In light of the needs of the Church in our day, the Order has intensified its promotional programs in recent years. In fact, since 1981, we have donated more than \$100 million to seminarians and religious postulants and novices through our RSVP program.

As Knights get more involved in vocations efforts, they find new meaning in their own vocations as Catholic laymen and members of the Order. They also learn more about the importance of teamwork, for the best vocations programs are those planned and carried out by a team.

The vocations chairman is a leader. His job is to call others together, inspire them to share prayers, ideas and plans, and then reach out beyond the group. The model is Jesus' work with the Apostles. Successful groups need not be large, but they must be committed.

Just as priestly and religious vocations are vocations within the Church and at the service of the Church, so the Knights of Columbus vocations program operates within the Church and at her service. **Locally, programs should be integrated as much as possible with existing parish and diocesan efforts.** For instance, in an ideal situation a Knights of Columbus council will take an active part, or even play a leadership role, in a parish or diocesan vocations program.

Objectives: Awareness, Climate, Motivation

In general, a vocations program will have three objectives: awareness, "climate," and motivation.

1. *Awareness*: The aim is to explain the meaning of different vocations, underline the Church's urgent need, and encourage people – young people in particular – to hear what God is asking of them.
2. *Climate*: This means being aware – and working to make others aware – of the social, cultural, and religious spirit of the times and how it impacts – for good and for ill – people's readiness to heed and answer God's call.
3. *Motivation*: The intent is to move people to respond positively to God's call by entering seminaries, postulancies, and novitiates, if this is what God is asking of them, and to persevere in the program of formation for the priesthood or religious life after having done so.

Structure and Meetings

The chairman of either a state or local vocations committee should convene committee meetings at least four times a year. The chaplain should be present if possible. Meetings should follow a standard Knights of Columbus committee meeting format. While dates and times are up to the chairman and his committee members, it is important to schedule meetings so that work can begin early in the fraternal year.

Topics for meetings include at least the following:

State Meetings

1. Proper and complete implementation of the Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP) (see p.13);
2. Possible financial aid to seminarians, postulants, or novices within the state's jurisdiction;
3. Possible aid to overseas seminarians, postulants, or novices as well as seminaries, postulancies, or novitiates;
4. Organized prayer to promote vocations;
5. The annual observance of Vocations Awareness Week;

6. Promoting Knights of Columbus vocational efforts through the media; and
7. Establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with local bishops.

Local Meetings

1. Proper and complete implementation of RSVP;
2. Vocations awareness days at Catholic elementary, secondary schools or colleges;
3. Sponsorship of poster or essay contests in Catholic elementary and secondary schools;
4. Organized prayer to promote vocations, especially Holy Hours;
5. Organization of Vocations Letter Initiative;
6. Effective distribution of Knights of Columbus and Catholic Information Service vocations materials in parishes, Catholic schools, and retreat houses;
7. Promoting Knights of Columbus vocations efforts through local media;
8. Effective publicity to encourage attendance at vocations events; and
9. Establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with the local pastor and other priests.

In the case of both state and local meetings, keeping accurate minutes will be of great help to future chairmen and committee members.

Responsibilities of the State Vocations Chairman

The primary responsibility of the state vocations chairman is to ensure the proper and complete implementation of RSVP. He should contact the vocations director or directors of the diocese or dioceses in his jurisdiction and develop a good working

relationship. (To find out who they are, and their addresses and phone numbers, consult *The Official Catholic Directory*, also sometimes called the “Kenedy Directory.” Most parishes have a copy.) **In particular, the chairman should make sure that every seminarian, postulant and novice in his jurisdiction is included in RSVP.**

Beyond that fundamental responsibility, the state chairman may also contact the vocations directors of religious communities, the rectors of seminaries, and directors of houses of formation within his jurisdiction. (Again, consult *The Official Catholic Directory*.) Once RSVP is properly organized and functioning, the state chairman, in cooperation with the vocations committee and the state officers, should look into the possibility of helping dioceses or religious institutes with other programs to promote priestly and religious vocations.

The state vocations chairman is responsible for conducting the committee meetings required to develop and carry out state-level vocations efforts. He should motivate his fellow officers, especially concerning implementation of RSVP. In this regard, the state deputy may choose to call upon his district deputies to assist the vocations chairman.

State vocations chairmen will find it helpful to read the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II called *I Will Give You Shepherds (Pastores Dabo Vobis)*. In this document, published in 1992 and available at most Catholic bookstores or online, the Holy Father speaks of the significance of the priestly vocation and of how lay people can assist in promoting and supporting vocations to the priesthood. Additionally, each year the Holy Father issues a message on the World Day of Prayer for Vocations (late February/early March). This message can help to situate the work of the vocations chairmen in the Holy Father’s larger vision for vocations in the universal Church.

Responsibilities of the Council/Assembly Vocations Chairman

The primary responsibility of the council or assembly vocations chairman is to ensure the proper and complete implementation of the RSVP program at the local level. He should work with the state vocations chairman to ensure that every seminarian sponsored by the diocese or dioceses, and every religious novice or postulant in his jurisdiction is included in RSVP.

When it is certain that every diocesan seminarian and religious novice or postulant is covered, the local chairman may also contact the vocations directors of religious orders or the rectors and directors of seminaries and houses of formation within his jurisdiction. (*The Official Catholic Directory* will tell you who they are; see above.) Once the RSVP program is properly organized and operating, the council or assembly vocations chairman, in cooperation with the vocations committee and the local officers, should look into ways of assisting parishes, seminaries, houses of formation, monasteries, and/or other religious institutes with programs to promote priestly and religious vocations.

The chairman is responsible for conducting the committee meetings needed to develop and carry out his council's or assembly's vocations efforts. He must motivate his brother Knights to promote priestly and religious vocations, with particular emphasis on RSVP. In this regard, the chairman may seek the help of his district deputy. Upon completing his term, he should share what he has learned with the incoming vocations chairman. Like state chairmen, local chairmen will also benefit from reading Pope John Paul's *I Will Give You Shepherds*, as well as the yearly papal *Day of Prayer for Vocations* messages (see above).

Programs and Resources

Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP)

The Knights of Columbus has long supported vocations to the priesthood and religious life, particularly through the Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP). Through this program, your council “adopts” one or more seminarians, religious postulants or novices, providing them with financial assistance and moral support. It’s a way for your council to invest in the future of our Church.

To have your council participate in RSVP, your committee chairman should:

- Review RSVP guidelines and eligibility requirements.
- Locate one or more candidates to support. If you need help, contact your pastor or diocesan vocations director.
- After a candidate’s name and address is secured, set up a council planning meeting to determine:
 - The amount of money to be raised.
 - How the relationship will be managed.
 - The presentation of the check.
- When presenting money to an RSVP candidate, notify the diocesan vocations director.
- Take photos and send them to your local and diocesan newspapers, and Columbia magazine. Be sure that caption information is complete and each individual’s name is spelled correctly.
- RSVP assistance also involves prayer and moral support:
 - Make at least one personal visit to each sponsored seminarian and religious postulant or novice.
 - Encourage members and their families to keep each seminarian and religious postulant or novice in their prayers.

- Send communications throughout the year – e.g., birthday, Christmas and Easter greetings.
- Invite them to all council activities.
- Include them in mailing of newsletter or other communications.
- Invite them to make a presentation to the council, parish, and/or parish youth group on what it means to prepare for priesthood or religious life.
- Arrange for them to host a group of young people from the council or parish at their seminary, monastery, convent, house of formation or other religious institution to meet other seminarians, postulants or novices.
- Make sure to offer congratulations and support to any seminarians you support when they are ordained deacons and priests, and to any religious postulants or novices you support when they profess their vows.

Refund for participating in RSVP

Councils involved in RSVP may qualify for a refund from the Supreme Council headquarters. For every \$500 donated, a council or assembly may receive \$100 (for a maximum refund of \$400 per individual). Councils and assemblies in the Philippines and Mexico receive the equivalent in local currency of \$50 for every \$250 donated.

Use the following guidelines to help ensure eligibility for the rebate.

1. Persons eligible to receive RSVP funds include:

- Seminarians who have been accepted by a diocese and are currently in their propaedeutic year.
- Seminarians attending major seminaries in preparation for priestly ordination.
- Seminarians in their “pastoral” year.
- Seminarians who are in college.

- Seminarians who belong to a religious institute and are currently in formation for the priesthood (religious seminarians often are called “Brother” even though they will eventually be ordained as priests).
- Men and women who are postulants or novices in religious orders or religious communities.

Those eligible for assistance include foreign seminarians studying in the United States or Canada, U.S. or Canadian seminarians studying overseas, seminarians from your home diocese currently attending seminaries in another diocese, state or country and seminarians from other states or dioceses attending a seminary located in your jurisdiction.

2. Persons NOT eligible for RSVP funds include:

- Priests or religious seeking assistance for continuing education.
- Religious brothers not studying for the priesthood.
- Candidates for the permanent diaconate.

3. Funds donated to each individual must be vocation-related and amount to at least \$500 per individual.

4. The funds must be given directly to an individual and NOT to an institution or fund.

5. The funds must be paid with a check[s] drawn on the council’s account.

To receive the rebate, your council will need to:

1. Complete and submit the RSVP Refund and Plaque Report Form (#2863). This form needs to be accompanied by all supporting documentation, which includes canceled checks and evidence of moral support provided to the seminarian, postulant or novice.
2. For the most up-to-date information pertaining to the eligibility for the rebate and program requirements for RSVP, please visit kofc.org/rsvp.

Vocations Letter Initiative

One great way to provide moral support for vocations is through a Vocations Letter Initiative. Councils can contact their local Catholic schools and youth religious education programs to arrange for students to write letters of support to seminarians or men and women religious postulants and novices. These letters are often very touching and can inspire and encourage them as they continue their formation. Some priests who received these letters while in formation have kept them and continue to read them years later. Here are the steps to run this initiative:

Use the following guidelines to help ensure eligibility for the rebate.

1. Contact your local Catholic school or youth religious education program to see if they'd like to organize the initiative. Diocesan safe environment guidelines must be followed. Permission from parents/guardians must be granted before a child can participate.
2. Obtain a list of seminarians and religious postulants and novices in your diocese. These can be obtained by reaching out to your diocese's vocations office. Provide their names to the staff of the school or religious education program. The vocations office can also determine whether the letters should be sent directly to the recipients or whether they should be sent through the vocations office.
3. The school or religious education program should then coordinate the letter-writing. The letters can include words of encouragement, well wishes and prayers from the student or child. The letters can be handwritten or typed and may include colorful drawings. Letters should only include the first name of the student or child and no contact information for the student or child should be included.
4. Arrange for the letters to be sent by the participating group or council. The council can provide funding for the stamps, envelopes and stationary to defray the cost of the initiative. Any reply mail from the seminarian, postulant or novice must be provided to the staff of the school or religious education program for review, not to students directly. Reply mail can then be provided to parents or guardians to share with their children.

5. Encourage annual letter-writing campaigns to ensure the initiative continues to support vocations.

Father Michael J. McGivney Vocations Scholarships

Bishop Thomas V. Daily Vocations Scholarships

Two vocations scholarship programs, Father Michael J. McGivney Vocations Scholarships (based on need) and Bishop Thomas V. Daily Vocations Scholarships (based on merit and academic excellence), provide scholarships to seminarians during their first four years of theological studies. Each grant of \$2,500 for tuition, room and board is renewable up to a maximum of four years upon evidence of continued enrollment and eligibility. The scholarship is not in effect during any year of pastoral internship.

For more information and to apply, visit kofc.org/scholarships.

International Support for Seminaries

In addition to providing scholarships to seminarians, the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council has established several funds for various pontifical colleges in Rome (North American College, Pontifical Canadian College, Pontifical Mexican College) and Belgium (American College, Louvain). The annual earnings from these funds are disbursed to the seminaries for their general use. Special funds for advanced studies for priests from the Philippines and Puerto Rico also provide earnings annually.

Many state councils give generous support to seminaries in their jurisdictions. With the cost of room, board, and tuition for a seminarian now many thousands of dollars annually, bishops warmly appreciate this help, and the Supreme Council strongly encourages it. The state deputy or vocations chairman, or both, should meet with seminary rectors to discuss ways of being of assistance.

Support for Diocesan Vocations Offices and Programs

Every diocese has a vocations office to promote vocations awareness and recruit candidates for the priesthood and religious life. Bishops appreciate monetary and other assistance to these offices. At the national level, the Supreme Council has contributed to the secretariat for vocations and priestly formation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to help support the U.S. bishops' national vocations promotion program. State and local vocations chairmen are encouraged to meet with directors of vocations offices in their dioceses to see how they can help.

Vocations Ads

The Order's magazine *Columbia* each month carries an advertisement on its back cover promoting priestly and religious vocations. These ads have generated great favorable response. Reading about a man or woman who has responded to the Lord's call can inspire someone else to do the same. The ads also help spread vocations awareness among Knights of Columbus members and others.

State or local councils and assemblies are welcome to copy *Columbia* and ads for nonprofit use in parish bulletins and flyers. For permission to reproduce an ad or ads in a professional advertising campaign (newspapers, billboards, etc.), contact columbia@kofc.org

If there is a seminarian or member of a religious institute that you would like to recommend for inclusion in one of these advertisements, write to the Director, as above.

Holy Hour for Vocations

Many state and local councils sponsor Holy Hours to pray for vocations. Their format can vary from parish to parish, but they usually include adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, recitation of the Rosary, Scripture readings, and other prayers.

Vocations chairmen are encouraged to contact pastors to see if they would like to conduct Holy Hours in their parishes. The vocations committee should cooperate as requested in helping to organize the event. In particular, the committee can generate publicity to stimulate attendance.

If it is not feasible to have a Holy Hour in a parish, perhaps Mass could be celebrated monthly for the intention of more priestly and religious vocations.

Vocations Awareness Days

An excellent way to heighten vocations awareness is by sponsoring Vocations Awareness Days at Catholic elementary and secondary schools, and colleges. Some state and local councils have had tremendous success with these events.

Usually they feature visual displays for students in an auditorium, gym or student union, with people from the diocesan vocations office and religious institutes on hand to answer questions. The event can be an all-day affair or can be held during hours of free time. Refreshments offered in a congenial setting can help attract students, especially collegians. Publicity is essential.

State and local vocations chairmen are encouraged to contact school officials about holding such events. Diocesan and religious institute vocations directors should be invited to participate, and the local bishop should be informed.

Poster and Essay Contests

Some councils have successfully sponsored essay and/or poster contests for students in Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Contestants prepare an original essay or original poster encouraging awareness of priestly and religious vocations. In doing so, their own vocations awareness increases. The judging should be carried out and the prizes awarded according to criteria established by the council or assembly.

Other Programs

Many state and local councils and individual Knights work for vocations in other unofficial ways. For instance, some members of the Order take a young priest out to dinner every month in order to give him fraternal support. Others pay for vocation-related public advertising such as billboards.

Councils and assemblies should be creative and take the initiative in promoting vocations. The use of media can be very helpful in this area. Naturally, whatever is done in the name of the Order must observe ecclesiastical norms and the policies of the Knights of Columbus.

Definitions and Clarifications

In working for vocations, you may find yourself using certain unfamiliar terms. Here is a quick rundown.

Diocesan seminarian. A diocesan seminarian is a man who has been accepted by a diocese to study for the priesthood. The first stage of priestly formation is the propaedeutic stage, where the seminarian will be prepared for later formation by receiving basic formation, particularly in the areas of human and spiritual formation, for one to two years. The seminarian then proceeds to the discipleship stage. During this stage, which lasts at least two years, the seminarian studies philosophy and continues to grow in his spiritual life. The third stage of formation is the configuration stage, which lasts four years. The seminarian conforms his life more fully to Christ during this stage and focuses on the study of theology. After the completion of the configuration stage, the seminarian is ordained to the diaconate, which then begins the final stage of formation, the vocational synthesis stage. This stage involves the newly ordained transitional deacon living in a parish or other pastoral environment and beginning his public ministry as a deacon. This stage allows him to gain experience as an ordained minister before taking on the full responsibilities of the priesthood. This stage lasts for at least six months before he is ordained a priest. (*Program of Priestly Formation* (sixth edition)).

Candidate. This term refers to a man or woman who has been formally accepted for admission into a seminary or religious life formation program. A candidate may receive RSVP funds at any stage in his formation.

Religious seminarian. Religious seminarians are consecrated men accepted into religious institutes or societies of apostolic life, commonly called religious orders or societies, to study for the ordained priesthood. Especially in long-established orders (e.g., Benedictines, Dominicans), they often are called brothers or student-brothers. These should not be confused with religious brothers who do not become priests. The program of preparation

includes a postulancy and novitiate. After completion of the novitiate, the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are taken for a period of at least three years, followed by profession of solemn or perpetual vows. Ordination as deacon comes anywhere from six to 18 months before priestly ordination. Brother-seminarians are then called “Rev. Brother.” How religious seminarians dress depends on the traditions of their institutes. Some wear the habit of their order while others wear clerical dress as diocesan seminarians do. Some institutes operate their own seminaries while others send men to seminaries of another order or a diocese. Religious order seminaries are sometimes called houses of study. All eligible religious seminarians can participate in all Knights of Columbus vocations programs.

Eastern Church seminarians. Catholic seminarians belonging to one of the Eastern Catholic traditions, *sui iuris*, (e.g., Armenian, Byzantine, Chaldean, Coptic, Maronite or Syrian) are in union with the Holy See, that is, the Pope. With the exception of the Maronite Church, each of the Eastern Catholic Churches has an Orthodox Church equivalent. Eastern Catholic seminarians, like their counterparts in the Latin (Roman) Church, are preparing for service as priests. In some Eastern Churches seminarians will marry and then be ordained for their Church in North America. There are some Eastern Churches in the United States that do not ordain married men at present, but this is a decision made by the bishops. Seminarians of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the USA are eligible for membership in the Knights of Columbus and are able to participate in all of the vocations programs. Men and women who are postulants or novices in an Eastern Church religious community are eligible to participate in RSVP, as those who are of the Latin Church. Those Eastern seminarians who belong to the *Orthodox* Churches are ineligible to participate in our vocations programs because they are not in communion with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. (You may also read the CIS booklet on Eastern Churches for more information.)

Nuns. Although this term is used popularly to apply to all religious women, in a strict sense it signifies a woman who belongs to a

cloistered (monastic and contemplative) community. Nuns begin religious life with a year of postulancy, followed by one or more years of novitiate. They take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and normally do not leave their cloister. Nuns are eligible for RSVP funds during postulancy and novitiate.

Religious Sisters. Sisters are consecrated women who have entered religious institutes or societies of apostolic life, commonly called religious orders, congregations or societies. They usually begin religious life with a year of postulancy, followed by one or two years of novitiate. They take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and engage in various active apostolates. They are eligible for RSVP funds during postulancy and novitiate.

Postulant. A postulant is a man or woman in the final stage of preparing to enter the novitiate of a religious institute. He or she lives with a religious community without taking vows and may or may not wear special garb. Depending on the institute involved, postulancy can last a few weeks or up to two years. Postulants are eligible for RSVP funds.

Novice. A novice is a man or woman at the stage of formal initiation into religious life, following postulancy. According to the law of the religious institute, the novitiate lasts one or two years. Novices very often adopt the garb of the religious institute and begin informal studies. They live according to the vows but do not profess vows until the novitiate is completed. Novices are eligible for RSVP. (The eligibility of women religious ends when the novitiate does, but male religious who are studying for the priesthood remain eligible.)

Permanent deacon candidates. The Knights of Columbus recognizes the invaluable services performed by permanent deacons and encourages Catholic men to consider the diaconate as a vocation. However, candidates for the permanent diaconate are not eligible for RSVP or for Father Michael J. McGivney Vocations Scholarships or for Bishop Thomas V. Daily Vocations Scholarships.

Policy Statement

As the largest Catholic lay organization in the world, the Knights of Columbus is happy to promote priestly and religious vocations. In carrying forward this work, a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities is essential. The Supreme Council is responsible only for national and/or international vocations programs of the Order. Vocations programs conducted by Knights of Columbus on the state or local levels are the responsibility of the state or local councils and/or assemblies. The Knights of Columbus does not accept responsibility for the vocations programs of dioceses or institutes of consecrated life. Its activities do not supplant or conflict with such programs but assist them. The Order evaluates requests for vocation-related funding in light of the Order's norms and procedures.

Catholic Information Service (CIS) Booklets about Vocations

Catholic Information Service offers information and devotional materials for distribution to Knights of Columbus members, their families, parishioners and community members.

For a complete list of materials, please visit kofc.org/cis



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