



St. Michael Catholic Church · Memphis, Tennessee

Our Mission is to provide information, prayerful support, and encouragement to generate interest in priesthood and other religious life pursuits, and to nurture the discernment process.

DISCERNER'S PACKET

What is *Discernment*?

Discernment is the process of discovery through which an individual learns how God calls him or her to love and serve Him through prayer, reflection, and discussion.

Steps of Discernment

1. Prayer/Sacraments

- Spend at least 10-15 minutes in prayer daily, and at regular times each day. Begin by praying the Morning and Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Visit your closest adoration chapel often and ask God to bring clarity to your vocation call.
- Lean on our Blessed Mother Mary, asking her for her powerful intercession. Consider consecrating yourself to Jesus through the Blessed Virgin Mary.

- Make sure to frequent the sacraments as you conform your heart to look more like Christ's. Everyone's circumstances are different but attend daily Mass if your schedule allows.
- Go to confession regularly (at least once per month).

Vocation Prayers

Prayer to Know One's Vocation

Lord, my God and my loving Father, You have made me to know You, to love You, to serve You, and thereby to find and to fulfill my deepest longings. I know that You are in all things, and that every path can lead me to You. But of them all, there is one especially by which You want me to come to You.

Since I will do what You want of me, I pray You send Your Holy Spirit to me: into my mind, to show me what You want of me; into my heart, to give me the determination to do it, and to do it with all my love, with all my mind, and with all of my strength right to the end. Jesus, I trust in you.

Vocation Prayer for Discernment

God, I know You love me and have great plans for me. But sometimes I am overwhelmed by the thought of my future. Show me how to walk forward one day at a time.

May I take heart while I search openly, learn about all the choices, listen to others for advice, and pay attention to my own feelings. By doing these things, may I hear Your call to a lifestyle and a career that will let me love as only I can, and let me serve others with the special gifts that You have given me. Amen.

2. Participate Fully in the Life of the Church

- If you are not already, register at a parish.
- Volunteer at your parish: Server, EMHC, Usher, Lector, Greeter, Youth Ministry Leader, or other ministry.
- Help serve the community by serving at a homeless shelter, visiting nursing homes, or helping other religious organizations.
- Invite your priest, a brother, nun, or sister to a family dinner to get to know more about their daily life.
- Contact a priest and ask to follow along during his hospital or nursing home visits.
- If you are a young adult or attend college, consider leading a Young Adult's group. Check out YoungAdultMinistryInABox.com

3. Research:

Books and other resources can help you fully discern God's will for your life.

Book References for Men and Women

- *Catholic Bible*
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- *Tuning into God's Call* (Fr. Andrew Carl Wisdom and Sister Christine Kiley)
- eBook: *How to Discern God's Will for Your Life* (Bishop Robert Barron)
- *God, Help Me: How to Grow in Prayer* (Jim Beckman)

- *Vocations Anonymous: A Handbook for Adults Discerning Priesthood and Religious Life* (Sr. Kathleen Bryant, RSC, D. Min.)
- *True North: A Roadmap for Discernment* (Joel Stepanek)
- *When God Asks for an Undivided Heart* (Andrew Apostoli, CFR)

Book References for Men

- *To Save a Thousand Souls: A Guide for Discerning a Vocation to Diocesan Priesthood* (Fr. Brett Brannen)
- *Is Jesus Calling You to Be a Catholic Priest?* (Reverend Thomas J. Richter)
- *Radical Surrender, Letters to Seminarians* (Fr. Michael Najim)

Book References for Women

- *Discerning Religious Life* (Sr. Clare Matthiass, CFR)
- *Called by God: Discernment and Preparation for Religious Life* (Rachael Marie Collins)
- *And Mary's Yes Continues; Religious Vocations in the New Millennium* (Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist)
- *"And You are Christ's" The Charism of Virginity and the Celibate Life* (Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M.)

Website Resources

Check out resources online that are specifically geared to helping you to find your way. Your diocesan office of vocation has resources on their own website, too: cdom.org/office-of-vocations.

- On Facebook, follow the page *Vocation Ministry*, then under groups, find the women's discernment group: The Veil or the men's discernment group: The Collar where you will receive support from hundreds of other men and women who are also on the road less traveled. Also here find the group Seedbed for parents of discerners or those who have already said "Yes" to religious life.
- Check out your Vocation Profile:
<https://Vocationnetwork.org/es/match>
 Whether you are interested in becoming a sister, brother, priest from a religious order, diocesan priest, or secular institute/consecrated life this quick online survey will consider where you are spiritually, your gifts and match you with a possible community or order with which you might have a match.
- USCCB recommendations for women as they discern:
<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discerning-women/prayer-and-discernment-resources>
- USCCB recommendations for men as they discern:
<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discerning-men/prayer-and-discernment-resources>
- vocationministry.com - Resources such as books and videos for both men and women.
- legionariesofchrist.org - The testimony of Discernment of Fr. Luke Rawicki, LC, and other discernment material.

- avila-institute.org - “Higher Calling” - A formal discernment program for seminarians and serious discerners.
- Fr. Brett Brannen’s engaging podcast:

*The Melchizedek
Project Podcast*



4. Speak to Your Pastor or Trusted Priest/Sister

Share with your pastor that you are discerning. Being your shepherd, he wants to know and support you as part of his flock. He may have vital advice and wants to pray for you as you discern more fully. Speak with someone you feel comfortable with. You need a supportive ear from someone who has discerned their vocation in a real way.

5. Find a Spiritual Director

Speak with your priest about finding a suitable spiritual director who can guide you through this process more deeply. Visit spiritualdirection.com for blogs, podcasts, videos and articles about finding, selecting, and initiating a spiritual direction relationship. You will also find a collection of articles about the process and expectations.

6. Contact Vocation Directors/Religious Orders

<https://cmswr.org/vocations-directory/>

https://vocationnetwork.org/en/directory/community_search

7. Participate in Diocesan Vocation Programs

Reach out to the Diocesan Vocation Director to see what programs are offered. Many dioceses offer summer camps for middle school students and retreats for high school students. Participate in any discernment groups and retreats on offer. If you are seriously discerning a call to the priesthood, most dioceses offer Come and See Weekends to stay at a seminary, as well as days to shadow a seminarian to see what their days are like.

8. Extended Stay with an Order

To fully know whether an order is right for you, consider attending a discernment retreat with them, perhaps for a weekend or even a week. Such a retreat is a good way to test your vocation. You can get to know the order, its charism, and find whether God may be calling you to its way of life. Many communities hold retreats for groups for just this purpose. Or you may be able to visit them as an individual.

9. Apply to Seminary/Religious Order

If you think you are on the path to a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life, contact your diocesan office of vocation cdom.org/office-of-vocations or other order to discuss your future. They want to help you along this journey to being what God wants you to be. They will walk with you through every step of the discernment and application process.

*Thank you for taking the time to discern your vocation.
God only wants your ultimate happiness, so make sure
to take the time to discover which vocation will bring you
that kind of joy. With the help of the Holy Spirit and
the Blessed Mother's powerful intercession, you will receive the
grace needed to continue this journey.*