



National Office  
for Vocation

*Helping people hear God's call*



# Our God-Given Purpose

*The National Vocations Framework*



*I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.* Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*

## Introduction

“Today the starting point for vocations ministry is a recognition that the Church, the assembly of those called, is by nature vocational. In baptism, every member of the Church has been called to holiness, to follow Christ through a life of faith, hope and charity. The whole Church is responsible for helping the individual to grow in discipleship to the point where he or she will ask, ‘What does the Lord want me to do with my life?’ In that way, the discernment of a particular vocation, whether it is to ordained ministry, consecrated life, married life or dedicated single life, will arise through the ministry of the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the National Vocations Framework is to offer the Catholic community in England and Wales a common language with which to express shared goals on the way to creating a stronger culture of vocation. Both the language and the goals are offered not imposed; local communities can be supported by choosing to work within this national framework.

## What is a vocation?

Pope St John Paul II reminded us that ‘Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.’<sup>2</sup> This innate vocation grows in the life of the Christian who ‘walks in the path of a living faith which arouses hope and works through charity.’<sup>3</sup> As they walk in this path, people hear God calling them into discipleship, a living relationship with the person of Christ, a call that has three dimensions:

- **The universal call to holiness**<sup>4</sup>: God the Father calls people to listen to his Son, to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and to live as disciples of Christ.<sup>5</sup>
- **The call to a way of life**: a Christian disciple expresses their faith, hope and love through living as a consecrated person, an ordained minister or a lay person, in the married or single state.<sup>6</sup>
- **The call to work**: God calls people to many different kinds of work, ranging from paid work to care of family members. Work on its own does not give meaning to life however; it is human beings who make work meaningful.<sup>7</sup> ‘Work constitutes one of the fundamental dimensions of a person’s earthly existence and of their vocation.’<sup>8</sup>

The distinctive way that a person integrates all three elements expresses the irreplaceable person God is calling them to be. By the grace of God, a Christian is enabled to live out this unique vocation. In the words of Blessed John Henry Newman ‘God has created me to do Him some definite service.’<sup>9</sup>

# A National Vocations Framework 2016 to 2019

To support Catholics as they live out their vocation and to enable them to help others to do the same,<sup>10</sup> the CBCEW offers these aims and objectives to the Church for the next three years. Those consulted in their formulation include clergy, religious and laity, in particular diocesan and religious vocations directors, university and school chaplains, those working with youth and with families. Reference is made throughout to *In Verbo Tuo: New Vocations for a New Europe*, the Final Document of the Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and to Consecrated Life in Europe held in Rome in 1997.

**1) DISCIPLESHIP is the foundation of all vocations so encouragement for all the baptised to live as disciples of Christ<sup>11</sup> will be developed in the local Church in the following ways:**

- a. Every vocation is appreciated and celebrated locally as essential to the Body of Christ.<sup>12</sup>
- b. Opportunities for people to grow in discipleship are available within the liturgy and outside it.<sup>13</sup>
- c. Through service, evangelisation and their witness of daily life, Catholics share their love and their faith with all people.<sup>14</sup>

**2) DISCUSSION: People are often reticent when it comes to speaking about vocation and in particular their own vocation.<sup>15</sup> To help them overcome this reticence, the following will be developed:**

- a. Within families there are conversations about the vocation of marriage and all other vocations. Parish communities encourage people to talk about their vocation and to see it as a continuous discovery of God's purpose in their lives.<sup>16</sup>
- b. The culture of vocation is central to the life and curriculum of Catholic schools and is integral to all forms of youth ministry, family ministry and catechesis.<sup>17</sup>
- c. Bishops, priests and deacons, together with consecrated men and women,<sup>18</sup> speak freely about how their vocation has grown and invite those they think suitable to consider a vocation to the priesthood, diaconate or consecrated life.<sup>19</sup> People pray for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life throughout the year, especially on the Fourth Sunday of Easter.<sup>20</sup>

**3) DISCOVERY: Those seeking to discover their God-given purpose in life often say 'There's no one to talk to.'<sup>21</sup> The culture of vocation needs to become a regular part of the Church's conversation.<sup>22</sup> As a contribution to this conversation, the following opportunities will be developed at the local level:**

- a. Individual vocational guidance and vocation discernment groups are available locally and advertised widely in parishes and chaplaincies.<sup>23</sup>
- b. Advice for those considering vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life is clearly available. Parishes actively support those approaching marriage and they nurture family life as a school of vocation.<sup>24</sup>
- c. Parishes and chaplaincies enable the many lay people who are single to recognise their vocation within the community.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*A Charter for Priestly Formation in England and Wales #28 (2015)*

<sup>2</sup>*Familiaris Consortio #11 Pope St John Paul II*

<sup>3</sup>*Lumen Gentium #41*

<sup>4</sup>cf. *Lumen Gentium* ch5

<sup>5</sup>'Lead a life worthy of your vocation' *Ephesians* 4:1

<sup>6</sup>cf. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* #43

<sup>7</sup>'It is always man who is *the purpose of the work*, whatever work it is that is done by man - even if the common scale of values rates it as the merest "service", as the most monotonous even the most alienating work.'

*Laborem Exercens* #6

<sup>8</sup>*ibid* #11 Pope St John Paul II

<sup>9</sup>*Meditations and Devotions: Hope in God-Creator*. Bl John Henry Newman

<sup>10</sup>'All, without distinction, are called to realise their own vocation and promote that of their neighbour.'

*In Verbo Tuo: New Vocations for a New Europe (IVT)* #8.

<sup>11</sup>'Every disciple is called to make visible the mission of Jesus' *IVT* #17b

<sup>12</sup>'In this community, every vocation is particular and is specified in a life project' *IVT* #17b

<sup>13</sup>'The individual feels himself continually called, and seeks again and again in every period of life a different task to fulfil, a specific way of being, of serving and of loving, a newness of life and mission to be carried out. In this sense, pastoral work for vocations is related to the *ongoing formation of the person*.' *IVT* #26e

<sup>14</sup>'Vocation is the very heart of the New Evangelisation' *IVT* #12a

<sup>15</sup>'We know how difficult this proclamation is nowadays and how easy is the temptation to discouragement when the effort seems useless.' *IVT* #6

<sup>16</sup>'The evaluation and the place of the laity is a sign of the times which has yet to be fully discovered. It is revealing itself as ever more fruitful.' *IVT* #13a

<sup>17</sup>'Every educator is a vocations promoter' *IVT* #26d

<sup>18</sup>'We turn to you priests and consecrated men and women, in the religious life and in secular institutes. You who have heard a particular call to follow the Lord in a life totally dedicated to him, you are also called, in a particular way, to give witness to the beauty of this *sequela*.' *IVT* #6

<sup>19</sup>'The reticence of some witnesses weakens the message. *In a Church which is totally vocational, all are vocations promoters*. Blessed are you, then, if you can express with your lives that to serve God is beautiful and fulfilling, and reveal that in Him, the Living one, is hidden the identity of every living person (cf *Col* 3, 3).' *IVT* #6

<sup>20</sup>'The hinge of the whole programme of vocations promotion is the *prayer demanded by the Saviour (Mt 9, 38)*. This extends not only to individuals but to the whole ecclesial community. We must pray unceasingly to the Lord of the harvest, that he will send workers to his Church in order to meet the needs of the new evangelization.' *IVT* #25e

<sup>21</sup>'Young Europeans live in this culture which is pluralist and ambivalent, "polytheist" and neutral. On the one hand, they are passionately searching for authenticity, affection, personal relationships, wider horizons, while on the other they are fundamentally alone, "wounded" by well-being, deluded by ideologies, confused by ethical disorientation.' *IVT* #11b

<sup>22</sup>'Therefore the task of pastoral theology and spiritual accompaniment is to help young people to question their lives so that, in the decisive dialogue with God, they can formulate the same question as Mary of Nazareth: "How is this possible?" (*Lk* 1, 34).' *IVT* #14

<sup>23</sup>'The Church's reflection and tradition show that, normally, vocational discernment happens in the course of precise communitarian journeys: liturgy and prayer, ecclesial communion, the service of charity, the experience of receiving the love of God and offering it in witness.' *IVT* #27

<sup>24</sup>'You parents are also the first natural vocational educators' *IVT* #5

<sup>25</sup>'The discernment and care of the Christian communities is extended to all vocations, whether to those already traditional in the Church or to the new gifts of the Spirit: religious consecration in the monastic life and apostolic life, the lay vocation...the various lay forms of association related to religious institutes.' *IVT* #22b

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