



The National Vocations Framework



Helping People
Discover Discipleship



Introduction



'My question for you is this: what kind of person would you really like to be?'

Pope Benedict XVI, Twickenham, 17th September 2010

In every generation, the Church's vocation is to help people answer this question by inviting them to hear the call of Christ. Christ calls people to enter into the life of the Church through baptism, to receive the Holy Spirit and to become the blessed peacemakers of the Beatitudes. For many people, the call of Christ involves an invitation to enter into a particular state of life such as marriage or the consecrated life. For some it also includes a call to particular work. Christ's call comes to people in many ways, most powerfully through the personal witness of the faithful whose lives provoke a response in those they meet. However, many people today find it difficult to listen to their deepest spiritual desires, so the Church also needs to offer a structured approach to vocation if the call of Christ is to be heard by more people.

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales wish 'to proclaim the universal call to holiness in Christ by promoting a culture of vocation.'¹ The National Vocations Framework is the practical expression of that aspiration and takes to a new level the culture of vocation that has been developing in recent years. The desired outcome is for more people to be actively discerning how to respond to the call of Christ by, for example, every deanery or equivalent area having at least one discernment group. This will naturally lead to more people responding to a particular call, including vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.



In essence, the Framework invites those who have been called to call others and in this way 'vocation lies at the heart of the new evangelisation.'²

This involves outreach to the unbaptised and the lapsed, as well as enabling those active in the Church to respond to their particular vocation. There are a variety of vocations through which the faithful may be sanctified, among them ordained ministry and consecrated life, marriage and single lay life. The word 'vocation' is sometimes used to refer exclusively to the priestly and religious states of life or to certain careers. The Framework not only values those particular vocations but also wishes to promote a universal process of discernment.

While the discernment and living out of vocation overlap, the Framework focuses on discernment just as the daily life of the Church focuses on living out vocation. The Framework provides all members of the Church with a series of specific objectives that help people to understand vocation, to communicate about vocation and to discern vocation. Supported by the prayers of the Church and with the intercession of Our Lady and the saints, may this Framework enable us all to ignite the culture of vocation in new ways.

1. Message for the Papal Visit Anniversary from the Bishops' Conference, 18th September 2011

2. Archbishop Fisichella, President, Pontifical Council for the New Evangelisation, Horn, Austria, April 2011



Aims and Objectives



The Framework outlines the key aims to be pursued over the next three years by the whole Church in England and Wales: understanding vocation, communicating vocation and discerning vocation. Within each aim, it then describes objectives that can be put into practice by parishes and dioceses, religious congregations and movements in their own way, between now and 2015. These aims and objectives are not exclusive or compulsory; they are designed to help those who wish to focus their efforts locally, knowing that they will receive support nationally and regionally. Some of that support is outlined in the action plans that constitute the last part of the Framework. With that support, it is hoped that Catholic communities throughout the country will devise their own action plans.

AIM ONE: UNDERSTANDING VOCATION: 'Everyone in the Church is called to holiness' ³

In order to deepen people's understanding of vocation, the Church wishes to:

- a) explain how the universal call to holiness is expressed through each person's vocation.
- b) help people to understand specific vocations, especially ordained ministry, consecrated life, marriage and dedicated forms of lay life.
- c) develop our understanding of how vocation lies at the heart of the new evangelization.

AIM TWO: COMMUNICATING VOCATION: 'The community, which is aware of being called, is aware that at the same time it must continually call' ⁴

In order to communicate vocation more effectively, the Church wishes to:

- d) enable Catholic communities to foster vocation in their own context through prayer and action
- e) help communities and individuals to have more confidence in proposing by word and example the particular vocations of consecrated life and ordained ministry.
- f) develop the ways in which we communicate about vocations

AIM THREE: DISCERNING VOCATION: 'we were made for love.' ⁵

In order to help more people discern their vocation, the Church wishes to:

- g) explain how the discernment of vocation is central to the life of the Church
- h) help people to set up discernment groups
- i) develop a network of spiritual guides for discernment

3. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church 39

4. New Vocations for a New Europe 19d by Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life 1997

5. Message of Pope Benedict to the Youth of Britain 2010