

INFORMATION FOR SPONSORING PRIEST

As the sponsoring priest of an individual entering into vocational discernment, you will be the first official contact the inquirer will have. Please familiarize yourself with the ministry discernment process in the Diocese of Louisiana, noting that there are two distinct periods of time involved. The first is the Inquiry period in which a person, in concert with the Church, discerns his/her call. The second is the Ordination Process, which begins with the granting of postulancy to the individual. (See Appendix I) It is important to maintain uniformity of process across all the churches in the diocese to ensure that expectations are clear and that all individuals are treated equally.

Your role as a sponsoring priest is twofold: to help the inquirer explore and discern their specific vocational call, and to be a pastoral presence to the inquirer as that individual moves through discernment. Please remember that honest reflection with the individual about the ministry which seems most appropriate to him/her is a crucial component of this early stage of discernment. If you have questions or doubts, please contact the Canon to the Ordinary to discuss the situation.

The inquirer should begin by preparing for the sponsoring priest a brief biography concentrating especially upon spiritual development, key life moments, and ministries in the church. The sponsoring priest should then explore the following areas with an inquirer:

- Vocation and Spirituality
- Leadership Skills and Ability
- Personal Background Information
- Physical and Mental Health
- Financial Health
- Family

Parker Palmer's Let Your Life Speak is a useful resource in vocation and spirituality. A basic background check should be performed through www.praesadium.com. And a financial assessment tool (see Appendix III) will help the inquirer get a close look at their financial situation. The Values and Competencies for Clergy document (Appendix II) should serve as the metric against which your conversations with the inquirer are based. Clearly, no one individual will possess all the qualities that are listed in the document, most particularly at this stage because so many of the competencies are acquired, but the inquirer should exemplify the capability and willingness to grow into many of the characteristics listed.

If, after these discussions, the sponsoring priest believes in good conscience that the inquirer may indeed be called into holy orders, and possesses the traits that lead toward effective ministry, the inquirer will make an appointment to visit with the Bishop. The Bishop will decide whether the individual may continue with discernment. If so, the next step is the establishment of a discernment committee, which will be trained and carry out its work with the inquirer over a period that takes as long as it takes, but is typically at least six months. Finally, the sponsoring priest and the discernment committee both

report to the Bishop, who then will determine whether the inquirer may continue into the ordination process. If the sponsoring priest cannot in good conscience recommend that the inquirer proceed in the process, the sponsoring priest should be prepared to assist the inquirer in discerning what ministries in the church the inquirer might indeed be called into.

Thank you for your service to the church. If any part of the role of the sponsoring priest, or any potentially difficult conversations with the inquirer, seem especially daunting, please remember that we are here to assist.