

HOW TO INVITE

There's a young man you've noticed around the parish. He's fairly devout, seems friendly, and has an obvious love for the Faith. "Perhaps he could be a priest someday," you think to yourself. But what should you do? Do you:

- A. Leave an anonymous note in the sacristy just before the Mass he usually serves.
- B. Choose a quiet moment to say, "Jacob, I've noticed your strong character and love for God. I think you should consider the seminary."
- C. Give a pamphlet to his Youth Minister, in the hope she may give it to him.
- D. After Mass, in front of all his friends, you point and wink at him, saying loudly, "Hey Johnny! You'd look good in black!"

YOUR WORDS MATTER

Mentioning the possibility of priesthood to a young man makes a difference. Surveys show that the majority of priests first considered a priestly vocation because the idea was planted by a priest, a friend, or a family member. But there's a right way and a wrong way to go about planting seeds.

Items A and C above are well-meaning, but too anonymous. The first instance—leaving a note—is so surreptitious as to make the possibility of priesthood seem hush-hush, almost not appropriate for normal conversation. It's healthier to be up front about the fact that

God calls everyone to a certain vocation, and that priesthood is among the options. Item C—giving a pamphlet through a third party—is a bit better, but not ideal.



Look for a moment when you can mention the possibility of priesthood in a sincere way. If you're close to the young man, your words can have a real impact. But even if you don't know him well, he'll never forget the compliment.

A PERSONAL APPROACH

As with so many things in life, the personal approach is best. And thus the biggest consideration is your relationship to the young man. If you're his pastor or his father, you are in a position of credibility, so your words can be very powerful. But even if you're relatively unknown to him—a person who just goes to the same Mass, say, or the parent of one of his friends—you can still make an impact. Let's consider a couple of difference scenarios.

THE SACRED MOMENT

If you're very close to the young man, look for a special moment. It doesn't have to be a dramatic, drawn-out conversation, but it should have an appropriate level of seriousness. Here is how Fr. Tom Richter describes just such a scene in *Lend Your Own Voice to Christ*:

"The father looks John in the eye and, with a voice filled with heartfelt care, says these simple words, 'Son, the qualities I admire in priests, I see in you. And I want you to know that I would be honored if God would choose one of my sons to be a priest.' He said nothing more than that; he did not need to. His father's words claimed the attention of John's heart and confirmed the thoughts in his mind."

It is a sacred moment, heart speaking to heart, in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Yes, item B is the best approach.



IT'S A COMPLIMENT

But let's say that you don't know the young man very well. It's after Mass, you've got your bulletin in hand, walking toward the parking lot, and he happens to cross paths with you on the sidewalk. There's not many others around. "Hi there," you say. "I'm Margaret. I've noticed that you and I go to this Mass frequently. I hope you don't think this is too forward, but I just wanted to let you know that you seem like a very faithful young man, and I bet you'd make a great priest if God called you."

Could a scenario like this one be a bit awkward? Yes, but much less so if you're friendly and kind, and don't push the issue. It's more like a compliment than anything else. The man may even blush for a moment, but this much is certain: he'll never forget it. And later on, the thought may take root and begin to grow.

Needless to say, "Hey Johnny—you'd look good in black" is not the right way to plant seeds. It makes light of an important issue, and isn't effective or appropriate. Instead, look for the sacred moment. At the right time, God can work powerfully through you, even in an ordinary scene like walking down the sidewalk.



THE NEED TO INVITE

“Without the priest, there is no Eucharist; without the Eucharist, there is no Church.” This saying points to the critical need for priests. But the truth is that the number of priests in the U.S. Church continues to decline while the Catholic population grows. Each year, more priests retire than are ordained. For this reason, it is vitally important for both clergy and laity to explicitly invite young men to consider whether Christ is calling them to the priesthood. The future of our Church depends on it.



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A SACRED MOMENT

How to speak with a young man about the priesthood



FROM THE HOLY FATHER

Pope Leo XIV prayed that young men would “discover the beauty, the joy and the need for such a vocation [priesthood]. What a wonderful life a priest has, meeting Jesus each day in such a unique way and bringing him to the world!”

– Pope Leo XIV speaks to altar servers from France during a meeting in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Aug. 25, 2025.