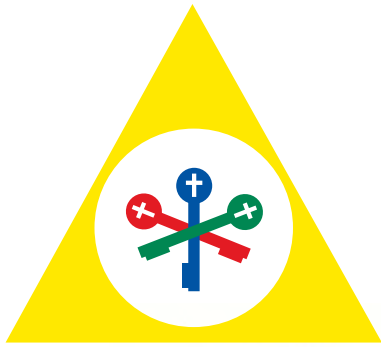


Vocation Awareness



BLACK AND INDIAN
MISSION OFFICE EST.1884



faith

service

ministry



BEST PRACTICES FOR VOCATION AWARENESS

among African American and Native American communities, schools, and parishes

(Adapted from the “Stir Into Flame Action Plan” of the National Black Catholic Congress, the Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)

My sincere gratitude to the Feasibility Committee on Vocations and Formation for their efforts in the production of this first draft of “Best Practices for Vocation Awareness.” It is my sincere hope that you will find help in developing vocation awareness as you explore differences in the cultural values, attitudes, perceptions of power, and communication dynamics of the African American and Native American people you serve. It is my prayer that ideas shared here from diverse people and sources will demonstrate intercultural awareness and address some challenges you face in promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life on reservations, in inner cities, and among urban Indians.

Thank you for your zeal for the mission of Jesus!



Rev. W. Carroll Paysse

Executive Director

Black and Indian Mission Office

DATES – Important Vocation Dates to Note

- **World Day of Prayer for Vocations** – April 21, 2013; May 11, 2014
- **World Day for Consecrated Life** – February 2, 2014
- **National Vocation Awareness Week** – November 2-9, 2014

VOCATION PLAN SUGGESTIONS

PARISH PRIESTS/RELIGIOUS SISTERS

I. School Ministry for parish priests

- a. Weekly spend time in the local Catholic elementary school.
 - i. Goal – every class a couple of times a month
- b. Teach the Confirmation/First Communion classes

- c. Play games with classes:
 - i. **Saint Hangman** – tell story of saint and guess who it is
 - ii. **Race to the Church** – Each team has a horse they are trying to get to the church. The horse can only go a mile if someone on the team answers a church history question correctly.
 - iii. **Bible Jeopardy** – make it up!
- d. **Walk the Church** – Every year take the second and eighth grade classes (separately) over to the church and walk them through the church explaining the different objects used at Mass and their use. Choose a couple of the boys and dress them up in the vestments of a priest celebrant, deacon, and priest presiding at Benediction.
- e. **Playground Time** – Play sports
- f. **Vocation Talks** – Every year do a class on vocations for the second, fifth, and eighth grades. Talk about what a vocation is, and how we all have a vocation. Be clear that being Catholic and Black or Indian is not a dichotomy. Explain more about religious life, and the different types of priests, brothers, and sisters who serve. Explain the timeless truth that *God does not call the qualified but He qualifies the called*. We enrich the Church with our cultural heritages. Emphasize how priesthood and religious life are not about perfection, but about striving toward holiness by serving God and His people.

2. Youth Group

- a. **Be on the Lookout:** Be active with youth group and spot young men and women for religious life.
- b. **Start Youth Ministry:** Recruit parents/other adults to start youth ministry.
- c. **Recruit:** Find young men/women to attend diocesan vocation events.
- d. **Talk on Vocations:** Speak on vocation discernment –we are all called by God.
- e. **Invite:** Come to daily Mass occasionally; take a weekly holy hour.
- f. **Theology of the Body Class:** Do with well-trained parents, once in a while.
- g. **Philosophy for college and high school youth:** Do with high school theology teacher during the summer.
- h. **Invite Priests/Religious to speak to youth:** Address a number of topics.
- i. **Take youth to Retreats:** Sponsor youth at various retreat opportunities.

3. Quo Vadis

- a. **Local parish vocations group:** Invite boys and dads who support vocations – Gather once a week at the rectory; start in the church with evening prayer and then we have dinner and discussion on a topic related to the vocation of the priesthood or discernment, or Christian manhood. Ask the dads to be a presence but to mostly stay in the background. Try to facilitate the discussion without dominating it. Occasionally have guest priest to come in and tell us about their vocation, or about how they live that vocation out. The boys can ask questions. Consider something similar for females.
- b. **Visit Seminaries:** Try to visit seminaries – have local seminarians to lead tours. Know the convents in your area. Work with local religious. Emphasize to them that seminary/postulancy

is not the place you go when you know you are called, but when you are around 50%-50%. This is where discernment continues.

4. **Spiritual Direction**

- a. **Provide Spiritual Direction:** Create a list of spiritual directors for young men and women. The primary purpose of spiritual direction is to help the person advance on the road to holiness, part of that is discernment of one's vocation.
- b. **Talk to parents:** With minors, talk to parents for their approval. Follow child protection policies of the diocese – have another adult/parent around, in the next office. Be patient before talking about religious vocation with them – review lives of saints, bible figures, etc.

5. **Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Junior Knights/Ladies of Peter Claver, etc.**

- a. **Attend Activities/Events:** Participate in events and activities of these groups – offer Mass, lead prayers, etc. – be a witness.

6. **Best Advertisement**

- a. **Be a happy and holy priest/introduce to happy holy religious:** People need to see us and get to know us.
- b. **Offer House Blessings:** Many people will then invite you to dinner.
- c. **Visit the homes of your students:** Learn their family situations.

ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

- **CATHOLIC** – Catholic means universal. We belong to a Church that is Catholic, so everyone is to be included. To be Catholic is much more than being American, Ugandan, Hispanic, or Vietnamese. To exclude anyone from our definition is not to be “catholic.” We can also use images to better understand the diversity within American—African American and Native American. Saint Paul uses the image of the human body, the Body of Christ. The whole is more than the individual parts.
- Other images:
 - Weaving different textures, grasses, colors in a basket or tapestry
 - Different paints, colors, brushes and strokes in a painting or on pottery
 - Different seasonings/ingredients that go into making a pot of soup or gumbo
 - Instruments, notes, rhythms in a piece of native music or jazz ensemble.
 - Ask for students' images.

Schools' Lucky 13

1. Have public recitation of your diocesan vocation prayer, or the prayer on the Black and Indian Vocation poster www.blackandindianmission.org/vocation-central/ at every school masses. Find ways to raise consciousness of adults as well as youth. Provide intercessory prayers for vocations for Prayer of the Faithful at Mass.
2. Provide Eucharistic adoration on certain days, asking for prayers for vocations from African American and Native American communities.
3. Have your students “adopt” Black and Indian seminarians and those in religious formation. Send greeting cards at the beginning of a new semester, holidays, exam times, birthdays, etc. Invite those “pen-pals” to come and speak to your older students.

4. Sponsor poster, coloring, or essay contests with vocation or culturally related themes; exhibit the results.
5. Encourage interviews of priests, sisters, brothers, and deacons for the school newspaper or parish bulletin, especially on how they discerned their call.
6. Assign students to visit www.blackandindianmission.org/vocation-central/. The Vocation tab has a variety of cultural and vocational information. Create a page on your parish/school website with similar vocation information or link to the Black and Indian Mission Office.
7. Before a regular meeting, have your ministry or group get together a little earlier to say a decade of the rosary for a specific priest, seminarian, postulant, novice, religious, or deacon.
8. Include Vocations Awareness lesson plans and programs at each grade level of religious education. Each grade can do a special project and the reports can be combined into a resource booklet. Adapt ideas to the age and interest of your students, found at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/educators-and-youth-leaders/lesson-plans/>.
9. Be creative in promoting the lives of saints in various ways and celebrate significant feasts, e.g. in the bulletin, on the bulletin board, on posters, in a bibliography, skits, plays, etc. See the Door of Faith section of the BIMO website at www.blackandindianmission.org/door-of-faith/. Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Saint Katharine Drexel, Father Augustus Tolton, Nicholas Black Elk, etc. have inspiring stories.
10. Take a group from your Black or Indian school to attend the ordination of a priest or deacon.
11. Arrange with a local convent for a “Come and See” with the opportunity of learn about the sisters’ lifestyle.
12. Sponsor a Mass and Breakfast with a vocation speaker for your students and/or parents and grandparents.
13. Ask 31 parishioners to volunteer to pray the rosary or attend mass on one of the 31 days of the month for vocations on behalf of your Black or Indian parish or school.

CAMPUS MINISTRY

A variety of ideas are available on the following website: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/educators-and-youth-leaders/university-and-young-adult-ministries/>

MENTORING

Black and Indian Buddy System/Mentoring in Formation

I. Purpose/Goal

- a. To partner Black Catholic religious men and women/ Catholic Indian men and women with Black and Indian young people in formation to be priests/religious in the Catholic Church
- b. To have Black/Indian Catholic religious presence in seminaries and formation houses
- c. To support the formation of candidates for priesthood and/or religious life

2. How it will be accomplished or promoted?

- a. Have monthly gatherings of Black/Indian and young men/women in formation
- b. Encourage visitations to seminaries and formation houses

- c. Support seminarians and religious in attending the Institute for Black Catholic Studies and the Tekakwitha Conference

3. Prioritization

- a. Provide healthy and supportive interaction between religious and candidates for priesthood and religious life
- b. Provide opportunities for interaction of formators with Black/Indian religious in the area.