

Growing in Faith Together

“And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

(Ephesians 4:11–12)

+ Leader: Let us listen to a message from Saint Paul to the early Christian community at Ephesus, recognizing that his words are also meant for us and for all parish communities in the Church today.

Reader 1: A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians, and also to the parish(es) of (name parish or parishes to which you belong)

“I... urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:1–6)

The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reader 2: For our parish(es) and for members of every parish and diocese in the Church, that we may live in a

manner worthy of our call from Christ, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 3: For (name your diocese or archdiocese), that under the leadership of (name your bishop or archbishop), we may live with humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another through love, we pray to the Lord.

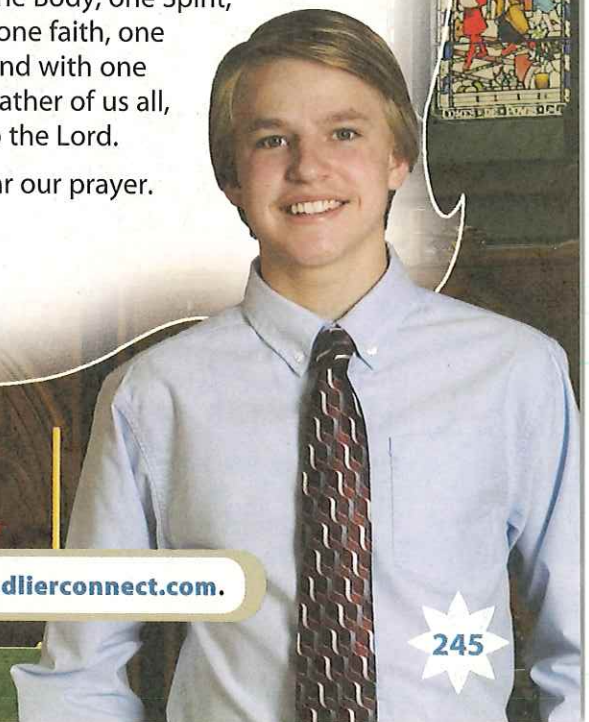
All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 4: For the Church in the United States, that we may strive to preserve our unity in the Holy Spirit and strengthen our bond of peace, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 5: For the Church throughout the world, that our unity may continue to grow, in one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, and with one God and Father of us all, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.
Amen.



The BIG Question:

Where am I going in life?

Discover some things you can do to give your life direction. First think about the person you hope to be at age twenty-five. Then complete the following contract with yourself, pledging to do things that might help you to become that person. Include things that you consider important to accomplish—for example, goals relating to education, a family, a career, athletics, health and well-being, and so on. Then sign and date your contract.

My Contract

I pledge to:

signature

date

Results:

If completing this contract was:

easy

somewhat challenging

difficult

you:

have thought a lot about your goals. Keep working toward them.

have given some thought to your goals. Start reflecting even more about your hopes for your future and how you can fulfill them.

may not have given your direction in life much thought. You don't need to have it all figured out yet. You can, however, start thinking about your future and some goals you want to reach.

With your group discuss where the contributions and help of other people aid you in accomplishing your goals for the future.

In this chapter

we learn that all authority and ministry in the Church come from Christ and that the Church shares a common vocation of holiness and evangelization. Through this chapter, we hope



to identify the various levels of authority and ministry in the Church



to grow in faith together with all members of the Church, using our gifts and talents to fulfill our own particular vocation



to respond to Christ by sharing his love and care with others each day.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

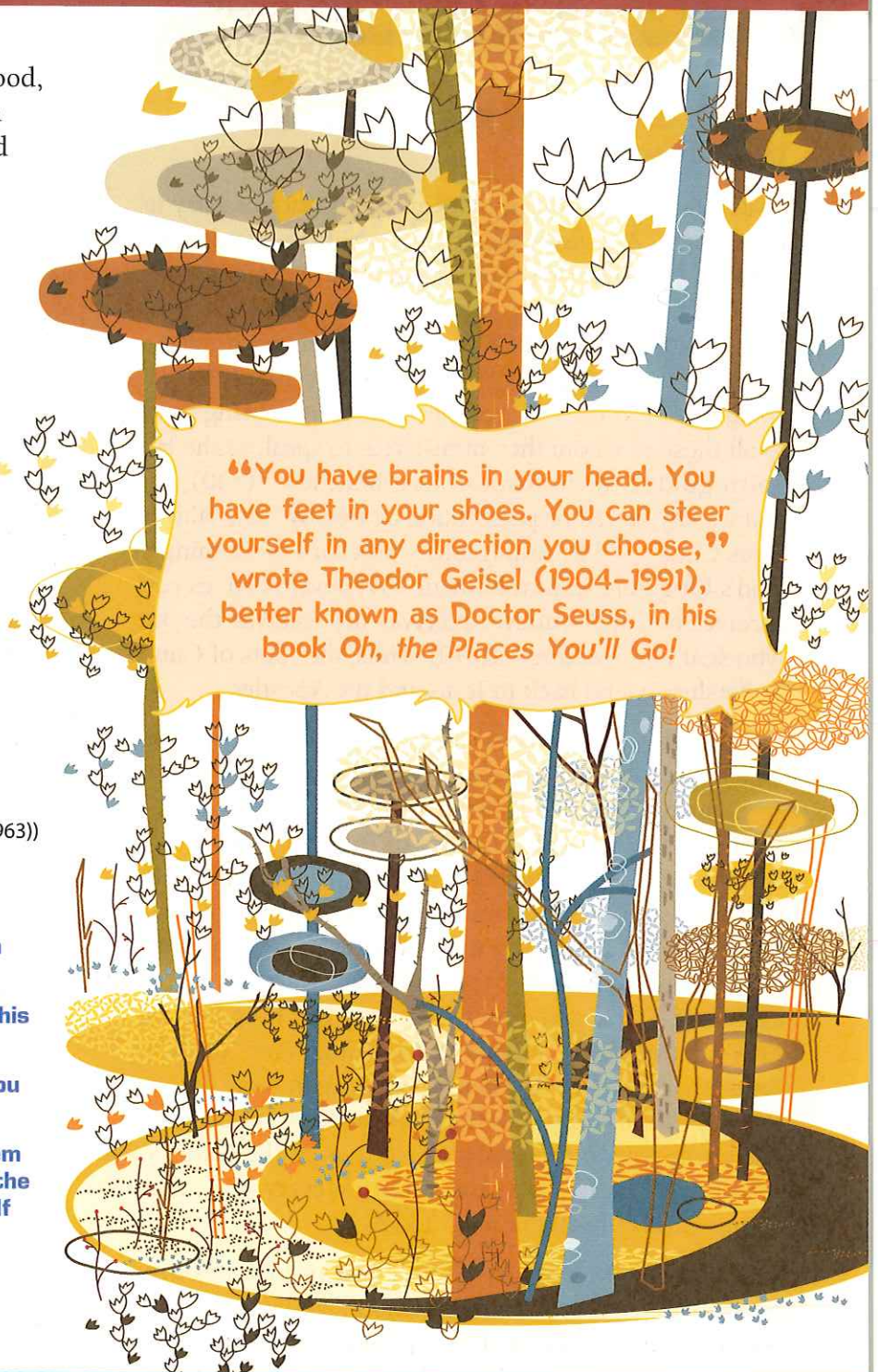
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

("The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost (1874–1963))

Activity Reread the poem silently.
Reflect on these questions. You may wish
to share your reflections with a partner.

1. What are some possible meanings of this poem for you personally?
2. How does this poem relate to where you might go in life?
3. Can you relate the meaning of this poem to the role that other people can play in the direction your life is headed? If so, how? If not, why not?



“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose,” wrote Theodor Geisel (1904–1991), better known as Doctor Seuss, in his book *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!*

What is a parish?

A parish is a community of believers, usually made up of Catholics from the same town or region. Every parish is part of a diocese, a local area of the Church that is led by a bishop. A pastor is the priest who leads the parish in worship, prayer, and teaching. His most important work is to lead the

parish in the celebration of the Eucharist. Other priests may work with the pastor and lead the parish in the celebration of the sacraments and in parish activities. A deacon, who has received the Sacrament of Holy Orders but is not a priest, may also serve the parish through works of charity and by preaching, baptizing, and assisting the priests. Some parishes may have a pastoral administrator, who can lead the

parish when there is no resident pastor. However, only priests are the celebrants of the Mass and responsible for the other sacraments at the parish.

How do the members of your parish work together to meet the needs of the parish and all within it?

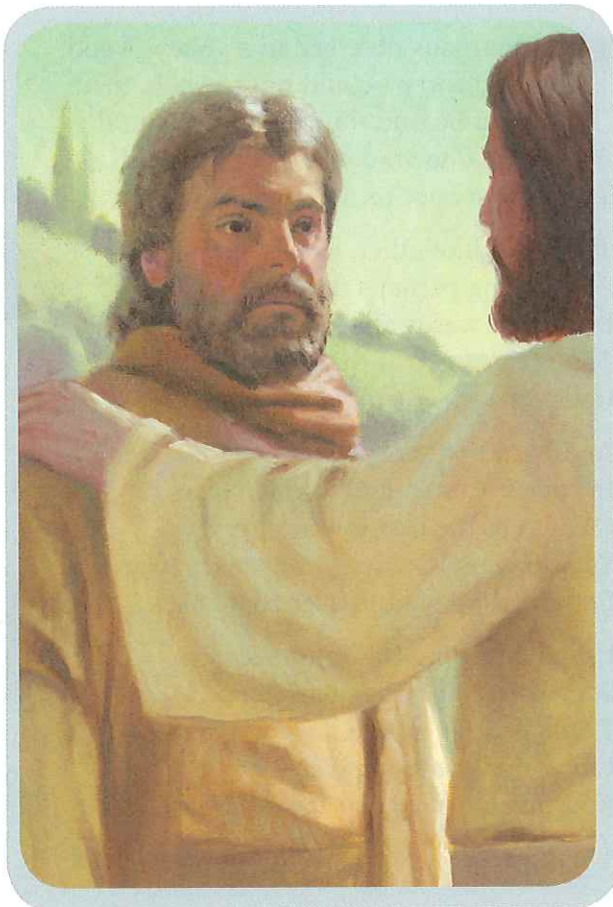
Jesus chose the Apostles to lead the Church.

Jesus Christ is the source of all authority and ministry in the Church. And Jesus shared his mission and authority with his Apostles. He sent them out after instructing them for their mission, saying, “As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons” (Matthew 10:7–8). The Apostles were sent to bring peace to all those to whom they ministered, to speak as the Holy Spirit guided them to speak (see Matthew 10:20), to endure any hatred or persecution caused by their faith in Jesus Christ, and to courageously proclaim the coming of God’s Kingdom. Jesus told them, “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me” (Matthew 10:40). Thus, the roots of Church leadership extend back to Jesus and the Apostles.

In Jesus’ life and ministry the Apostles recognized that God’s Kingdom was present. One day Simon Peter, speaking out for all of his fellow Apostles, said to Jesus, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). After this great expression of faith, which was revealed to Simon Peter by the Father, Jesus said, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:18–19). In giving Peter “the keys,” Jesus was giving him a place of authority in the Church. As the *Catechism* states, “Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it” (552).

Christ’s mission was shared by Peter and by all of the Apostles. They received their mission together, were united to one another, forming a single, permanent assembly that is known today as the College of Bishops. They were led by Peter, whose ministry continues today through the pope, the supreme Head of the Church in Rome. Together the Apostles were the foundation of the Church—with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone. They would work together, as would their successors, to teach, govern, and sanctify people in Jesus’ name.

Through the Apostles, God’s will would continue to be accomplished: Believers in Jesus Christ would gather around him as the Church to share in the divine life of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Activity Peter’s mission was to “keep the faith” and to strengthen others in it. Make a list of the ways that others help you to keep your faith in a world where this is sometimes difficult. Which of these can you use to help others in keeping their faith?

The pope and the bishops are the successors of the Apostles.

After the Ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles courageously followed God's plan for salvation. As leaders of the whole Church, they traveled to every part of the world they knew and established local communities of the Church. Once a local Church became established, the Apostles moved on. But they first selected local Church officers, or presbyters, whom they had ordained by the laying on of hands. Assisted by deacons, these local Church officers presided under the authority of the Apostles. Then, to ensure that the mission entrusted to them would continue after their death, the Apostles consecrated those who would succeed them in their ministry.

Eventually, the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter (priest), and deacon was established throughout the Church. The title of bishop was reserved for the successors of the Apostles, the title of presbyter was used for the other local officers, and the title of deacon was kept for those who assisted the bishops and presbyters. Even today, through the laying on of hands by a bishop in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we have the same threefold ministry. Bishops and priests exercise their degree, or order, of priestly participation, and deacons exercise their degree, or order, of service.

Bishops, the successors of the Apostles, teach, govern, and sanctify the members of the Church in the name of Christ. And they entrust this mission to those who succeed them as ordained bishops. They are the chief teachers of the Church and are charged with the sacred duty of handing on the complete and authentic teaching of Jesus Christ and the Church. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they are to transmit and make clear what has been revealed to us by God; they are entrusted by God to safeguard the **Deposit of Faith**, all the truth contained in Scripture and Tradition that Christ revealed and entrusted to the Apostles and thus to their successors, the bishops, and to the entire Church. This

Jesus told his Apostles,
“Whoever receives you receives me”
(Matthew 10:40).

work of the bishops is done as a service to the other members of the Church so that our faith rests on a strong and secure foundation.

The bishops are the chief authorities and pastors, or shepherds, in the Church. In each diocese the bishop directs the life of the Church. He is the visible sign of the Church's unity. He coordinates her

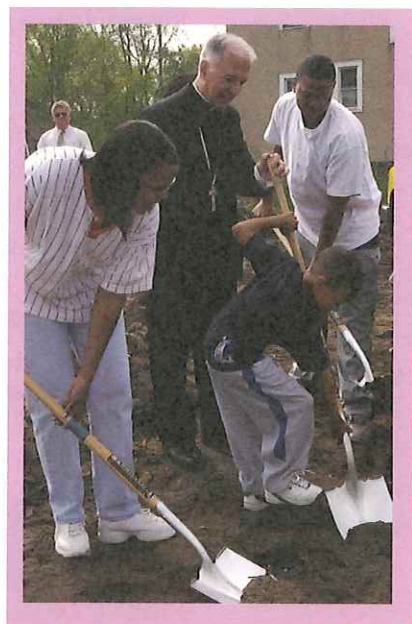
work, helps her to stay focused on her true mission of building God's Kingdom, and brings people of different backgrounds together in harmony. Like Christ the Good Shepherd, the bishops are to watch over all those under their care, especially those who are weak and oppressed or poor and in need. The Bishop of Rome—the pope—is the successor of the Apostle Peter and has the special responsibility of caring for the whole Church. With the pope as their head on earth, the bishops are called to lead and guide the Church.

A bishop receives the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. “The bishops . . . exercise their own authority for the good of their

own faithful, and indeed of the whole Church” (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 22). A bishop is the chief priest of the presbyters, whom he ordains and who are his co-workers. With them he sanctifies the Church through prayer and work, and through ministry of both the Word and the sacraments—especially the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which, in every parish and diocese, is “the center of the life of the particular Church” (CCC, 893).

Faith Word
Deposit of Faith

Activity With your group compose and pray a short prayer for our bishops, priests, and deacons.



Bishop Dale J. Melczek of Gary, Indiana, helps volunteers break ground for a Habitat for Humanity house.

Within the Church there are many ways of serving.

How can we serve in the Church?

As the People of God, the Church is a union of people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the direction of her leaders. As the Body of Christ worshipping together, the Church is more than an ordinary group of people; she is a people intimately united with Christ and with one another. We can say that the Church combines what is human and divine, what is earthly and heavenly, and what is found in time and in eternity.

All members of the Church share in the priesthood of the faithful and have a **common vocation**, our call from God to holiness and to evangelization. Yet, as the *Catechism* explains, "The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, 'each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ'" (1547). Thus, each member of the Church has unique gifts and talents and is called by God to fulfill a unique role in the Church—living out his or her common vocation through a particular vocation.

Faith Word

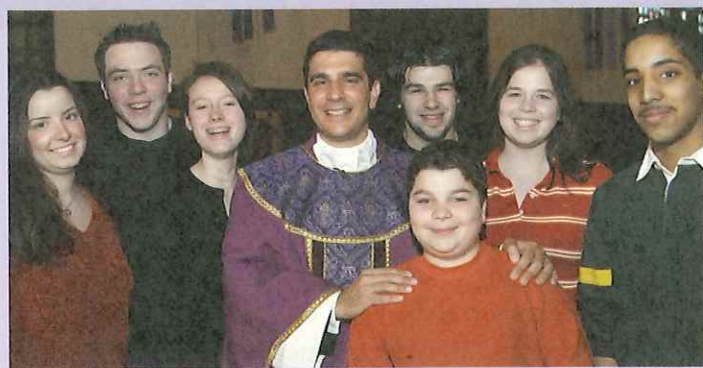
common vocation

We live out our common vocation in a particular way:

Laity: The laity are also called laypeople or the Christian faithful. They are the baptized members of the Church who share in the mission to bring the Good News of Christ to the world. All Catholics begin their lives as members of the laity. Most remain members of the laity for their entire lives, following God's call in the single life or in marriage.

Consecrated life: Some laity and some ordained ministers also live the consecrated life. They are men and women who profess, or promise God, that they will practice poverty, chastity through celibacy, and obedience to the Church and to their religious communities. Poverty, chastity, and obedience are called the evangelical counsels.

Ordained ministry: Some baptized Catholic men respond to God's call through this particular vocation. Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, they are consecrated to the ministerial priesthood as priests and bishops or to service in the Church as permanent deacons.



Together, the laity, ordained ministers, and those in the consecrated life make up the Church and have a part in her mission. No one group is more important or special than another. Each works to proclaim the Risen Christ and is able to do so in ways that others cannot. Each is also able to do for people what others cannot. Together they complete one another—united in Christ for the common good of everyone they meet. As Saint Paul wrote, "There are different forms of service but the same Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:5).

Activity Where do you think your call to holiness and evangelization will lead you? What particular vocation do you think you will live? Hold a "vocation day" to explore these questions together.

PEOPLE AT WORK

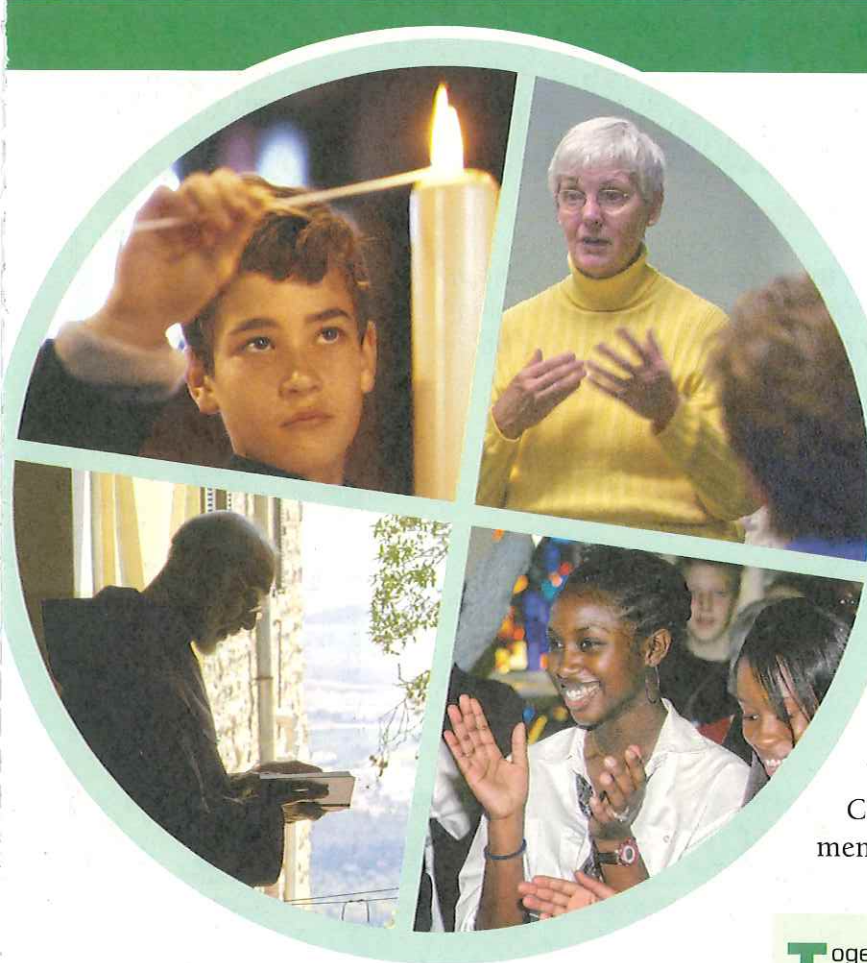
The value of work

Every member of the Church is important, as is the daily work that each member does. When we use the gifts and talents that God has given us, the work we do can honor God, our Creator.

Work is not always easy, of course. But when we consider the example of Jesus, whose work among the people brought about the salvation of humanity, we can realize that work builds upon our human dignity and enables us to contribute to the world in a spirit of loving service. As disciples of Christ, our work contributes to the salvation of the world.

On the other hand, we must always remember that "work is for man, not man for work" (CCC, 2428). Once in a while, people may need to consider whether work is overwhelming their lives and placing unfair demands on their relationships.

How does the work you do now contribute to the world? What can you do to enhance that contribution?



“There are different forms of service but the same Lord.”

(1 Corinthians 12:5)

apostolic succession, that is, the pope and other bishops, together with priests and deacons.

This is the Church that we experience in our local parishes and dioceses. This is the Church that we experience when we gather as an assembly around the Lord’s table to celebrate the Eucharist. This is the Church that receives from Christ our Savior “the fullness of the means of salvation” (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 3).

Together we are the members of the Body of Christ answering Jesus’ call to discipleship as members of his Church.

Within our parishes we continue Jesus’ mission.

The Catholic Church is the family of God and our family. We enter this family through the Sacrament of Baptism, becoming children of God. And in our parishes, our local faith communities, we live out our membership in the family of God. As members of the Church, like the members of any family, we are all different. Yet we share a common life through the Sacraments of Christian Initiation—as well as the other sacraments celebrated in our parishes. Within our parishes we are a community of believers:

- professing belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Risen Lord
- publicly affirming our belief in Christ through Baptism
- celebrating our faith through the Eucharist and other sacraments
- accepting the teachings of Christ that have come down from the time of the Apostles
- living the sacramental life and mission of the Church, under the leadership of those ordained in

Together all the members of the Church continue Jesus’ mission of sharing God’s life with all people. Here are just a few of the roles through which ordained ministers, lay ecclesial ministers, or the laity can do this within their parishes:

pastor, parish priest, director of religious education (or parish catechetical leader), Catholic school principal, deacon, religious sister and brother, pastoral administrator, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, catechist, lector, teacher, altar server, director of music, usher, and member of parish organizations.

As Christ’s disciples, each of us is called to bring the message of Christ everywhere. Each of us is called to live as Christ asked us to and to show forth his presence. And it is in our parish community that we, as Jesus’ disciples, first come to experience Christ and the Church in our liturgy and worship. In our parishes our faith in God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is guided and strengthened by the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Activity **Work together on, and then perform, a role-play that demonstrates the ways that, as disciples of Jesus, you might proclaim Christ’s message.**

Recognizing Our Faith

Recall the question at the beginning of this chapter: *Where am I going in life?* How have your thoughts on this question changed since beginning this chapter? In what ways can your personal goals for your life be connected to service in the Church?

Living Our Faith

Decide on one thing you can do today to be of service to your parish.

Saint Charles Lwanga

Charles Lwanga was born in the country of Uganda, in Africa, in 1865. He was athletic, strong, and compassionate. And he took his call to holiness and evangelization seriously, devoting his life to serving others and continuing Jesus' mission.

Partners in FAITH

Serving in the household of a ruthless tribal king, Charles witnessed abuse and brutality. But Charles, a leader among the workers in the royal household, protected others from abuse. He also was a catechist who taught about God's love and forgiveness. Evangelization was not popular with the king, however. He con-

demned prayer and the Catholic faith. Charles became a target of the king's wrath and was ordered to renounce his Catholic faith. Because Charles would not, he was sentenced to death. In 1887 Charles and twenty-one others serving in the royal household became martyrs for their faith. Charles was canonized in 1964 by Pope Paul VI. He is known as the patron saint of young African men. The Church remembers him and his fellow martyrs on June 3.

Think of one way to show that you take your call to holiness and evangelization seriously.



Putting Faith to Work

Talk about what you have learned in this chapter:



We identify the various levels of authority and ministry in the Church.



We grow in faith together with all members of the Church, using our gifts and talents to fulfill our own particular vocation.



We respond to Christ by sharing his love and care with others each day.

Decide on ways to live out what you have learned.



ENCOUNTERING GOD'S WORD



“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:19–20)



READ the quotation from Scripture.



REFLECT on the following:

“Making disciples of all nations” might sound like a daunting task. What are one or two practical things that you can do among your friends that might have the effect of leading them into discipleship to Christ?



SHARE your reflections with a partner.



DECIDE to do one of the practical things that you have thought of this week.

Complete the following.

- Each member of the Church can live out his or her common vocation through one of these particular vocations: _____, _____, or _____.
- The evangelical counsels are _____.
- _____, the Bishop of Rome, is the successor of Apostle Peter and has the special responsibility of caring for the whole Church.
- The Deposit of Faith is all the truth contained in Scripture and Tradition that Christ _____.

Short Answers

- Describe the roles of bishops, priests, and deacons. _____
- Who are those who live the consecrated life, and how do they follow God's call? _____
- Who are the laity, and how do they follow God's call? _____
- Describe and explain the ministry of the bishops of the Catholic Church. _____

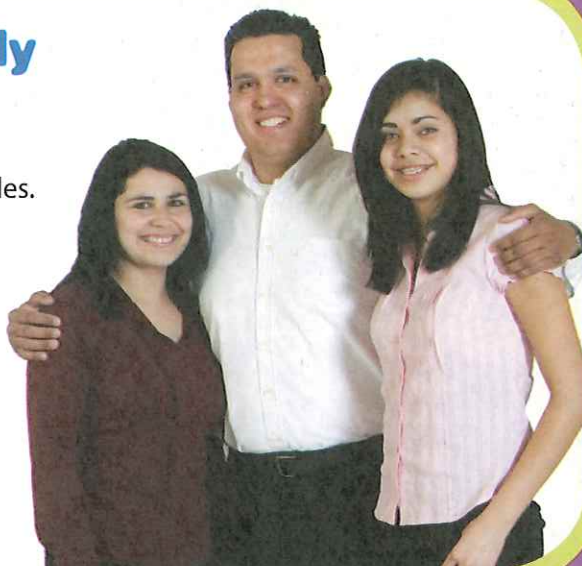
9–10. ESSAY: How can Catholics live out their common call to holiness and evangelization?

Sharing Faith with Your Family

Discuss the following with your family:

- Jesus chose the Apostles to lead the Church.
- The pope and the bishops are the successors of the Apostles.
- Within the Church there are many ways of serving.
- Within our parishes we continue Jesus' mission.

Interview some family members about the goals they had for their lives when they were your age. Ask them to describe how their lives today reflect these goals. Then together discuss ways your family can meet the goal of living out your common call to holiness and evangelization.



The Worship Connection

One dismissal you might hear at the end of Mass is, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." The next time you hear this, think of one way you can serve the Lord by sharing peace and love that very day.

More to Explore

Visit your parish or diocesan Web site and look for a listing or description of the various service opportunities available. Find one in which you can become involved.

Catholic Social Teaching Checklist

Theme of Catholic Social Teaching:

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

How it relates to Chapter 23: We can live out our call to holiness and evangelization by participating in service efforts within our families and communities, working for peace and justice, and sharing our Christian faith through what we do.

How can you do this?

☐ At home:

☐ At school/work:

☐ In the parish:

☐ In the community:

Check off each action after it has been completed.