

The Serra Club of the Atchison Region has prepared the following TIPS FOR PARENTS, for you to include in your parish bulletin. The sequence of the TIPS is optional. Choose the ones you feel will most inspire your parishioners. Most of these tips were written by parents.

## **TIPS FOR PARENTS – *from parents!***

### **On How to Keep Alive the Idea of Priesthood and Religious Life**

#### **From the Atchison Region Serra Club**

##### **Introduction:**

TIPS FOR PARENTS is a gift of the Serra Club of the Atchison Region to all the parents in this region.

Serra attempts to keep alive the rich idea God has for priesthood and religious life. Priests and religious men and women bring their special gifts of spiritual fatherhood and spiritual motherhood to all the people they serve.

We live in an age of secularism, weakening faith, and a great decline in church membership, clergy and religious. God offers many invitations to young men and women to serve Him and His People, but all too often His invitation goes unheard, misunderstood and is not encouraged.

TIPS FOR PARENTS are short parish bulletin inserts which can help parents in their effort to keep God's plan for priests and religious alive in the hearts and imaginations of their children.

Priests and religious come from families strong in the Faith. The first, and most important, seminary and house of formation is the family.

## **THERE IS A GREAT SHORTAGE OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS TODAY**

From Serra Club members Bob and Betty Albers, parents of Abbot James Albers, OSB and Sr. Mary Elizabeth Albers, SOLT:

All parishes throughout our area (Brown, Atchison, Jefferson counties) used to have a pastor and many had an assistant pastor. Currently we have one priest serving several parishes with no assistants.

As one Serra Club member pointed out, if we do not receive more priestly vocations, who will baptize our children, marry our young couples and bury our dead?

Some of the reasons we may have a lack of priests may be smaller families, lack of religious teaching in schools, and less promotion of religious vocations in the family.

The Serra Club exists for this reason: to promote vocations from our own families.

***Learn how to become involved in supporting vocations in our region at [www.atchisonserra.org](http://www.atchisonserra.org).***

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## **ENCOURAGING VOCATIONS IN OUR HOMES**

From Serra Club members Rick and Terri Baker, parents of Fr. Simon Baker, OSB, Chaplain of Benedictine College:

- 1 Say night prayers together. Include prayers of thanks, praise, and petition.
- 2 Have a prayer station in the home where the children can light a candle in front of a statue of Jesus or Mary
- 3 Read about the saint of the day.
- 4 Check out great resources (CDs, gifts, videos) at Holy Heroes - <https://www.holyheroes.com/>
- 5 Encourage random acts of kindness.

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## TIPS TO PROMOTE VOCATIONS IN YOUR HOME

From Serra Club members John and Jeanne Rziha:

- Spend lots of quality time with your children.
- Pray daily and include a petition for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.
- Attend Eucharistic Adoration together as a family and pray for current and future priests and religious.

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## WHY WE NEED PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

From Dan and Lucy Schletzbaum:

Our priests and religious are role models. We look up to them for guidance, counseling and deepening our prayer life.

Priests are important because through them we are able to receive the sacraments of our Catholic faith given to us by Jesus Christ.

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## **WE MUST DO OUR PART IN SOLVING OUR SHORTAGE OF LOCAL PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS**

From Serra Club members Mark and Penni Reed:

Do you think that God is no longer calling our sons and daughters to priesthood and religious life, and that we must go half way around the world to find them?

In a modern American culture that shuns the idea of lifelong commitments and a purposeful dedication to one's faith, God is still calling our sons and daughters to religious life. But, in order for this to happen, we need to recognize the role our prayers play in God's plan. God can solve our shortage of local priests and religious for us. But that is not how God works. We must do our part. Not because God needs us, but because He wants give us a chance to demonstrate our dignity by being a part of his great work. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life are 99.9 percent God's grace and .1 percent our human effort. That .1 percent is actually an enormous effort on our part and that effort entails prayer. Blessed Hannibal DiFrancia once said, "Jesus teaches us that vocations in the Church do not come by chance, nor by themselves, nor can make them out of human effort alone. They come to us from the mercy of God. If we do not pray to obtain them, they will not be given us."

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## **ONE DETRIMENT TO FOSTERING VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD AND RELIGIOUS LIFE IS UNDUE NEGATIVE CRITICISM**

From Fr. Matthew Habiger OSB, Chaplain of Atchison Serra Region:

One detriment to fostering vocations to priesthood and religious life is undue negative criticism of priests and religious. Their life of total dedication to Jesus and the people of God, who make up His Church, is a very demanding one. Since priests and religious come from families like ours, we know that they share in our flawed humanity. But, following in the path of Jesus, they are making their best efforts to be faithful, and to "take care of my sheep."

We hold them accountable for their misdeeds, but we strongly encourage them to provide us with the services that only they can provide. Criticism must be fair. Support and encouragement must be genuine. In all things, Charity.

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## SOME SHOCKING STATISTICS

From Fr. Matthew Habiger OSB, Chaplain of the Serra Atchison Region:

Is there a great need for more good priests, pastors, spiritual leaders and moral guides? Because of the great shortage of these, consider the following statistics **between the years 1970 and 2018:**

Infant baptisms	1,089,154	615,119	<b>43.5% decrease</b>
Adult baptisms	84,534	39,660	<b>53.1% decrease</b>
Weddings	426,309	143,082	<b>66.4% decrease</b>
Ordinations	805	518	<b>35.7% decrease</b>
Number of Priests	59,192	36,580	<b>38.2% decrease</b>
Number of Sisters	160,931	44,117	<b>72.6% decrease</b>
% Attending Mass Weekly	52.9%	21.1%	<b>31.8% decrease</b>

Without good spiritual leadership and the Sacraments, we cannot expect these trends to change.

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## WE NEED TO KNOW ALL WE CAN ABOUT GOD, THE ANGELS AND THE SAINTS

From Serra Club members Sherry Lang and Elmer Fangman:

God wants all His children to go to Heaven so it is very important to know all you can about God, His angels, and His Saints. Young children need to be read to and to look at beautiful pictures on a daily basis on these subjects. Even grade school children love to listen to stories of the lives of the Saints who inspire us to think about doing God's will in our own lives. Two 8th graders could share reading the first and second readings at Sunday Mass, helping them in meeting other parishioners who can encourage them in their faith life.

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## TIPS FOR PARENTS TO FOSTER VOCATIONS

From Serra Club members Mark and Theresa Jirak:

- 1 Bring your children to Serra Club speakers routinely. They will hear INCREDIBLE vocation stories.
- 2 Pray the rosary as often as you can, when traveling or nightly.
- 3 End night time prayers with prayer intentions (you will learn what is on their minds).
- 4 Keep the schedule of Confession on the radar as a family – at least once a month.
- 5 We know a family who does an Adoration Hour together weekly as a family. That is a goal that we would love to carry out as a family, but have not done yet. But, strive for at least individual time before Jesus in the Tabernacle.

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## MORE TIPS FOR PARENTS TO FOSTER VOCATIONS

From Serra Club members Mark and Theresa Jirak:

- 1 Pray occasionally for each of your children – with them and also for them, to be open to and listen to God’s plan for their life – to discern if they have a vocation to the religious or priestly life. As a parent, help foster and encourage; be open to their call.
- 2 Work and Play and Pray together.
- 3 Attend Benedictine College Vocations Day on campus – interact with sisters, priests, brothers from religious orders / convents / monasteries / abbeys visiting from all parts of the USA.
- 4 Have your son or daughter attend a Quo Vadis (through the Diocesan Office) or retreat at a specific abbey or convent nearby – doesn’t need to be far away, but could be if they wish!
- 5 And most importantly, Daily Mass as a family when possible.

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**MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE ARE THE VOCATION FOR MOST YOUNG PEOPLE, BUT THESE HEAVILY DEPEND UPON GOOD SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP.**

From Serra Club members Dan and Marie Gorrell:

God calls most young people to marriage and family life. Just because it is the most common vocation does not mean it requires less spiritual leadership from parents for discernment. Pope Francis explains marriage is a “true and living icon” of the Trinity, which raises marriage to a high calling. Furthermore, marriage calls a husband and a wife to aid one another in the journey towards heaven, to be open to life, to raise any children they are given in the faith, and to build up the kingdom of God on earth—these are certainly not tasks for the faint of heart!

How can parents help their children discern and potentially prepare for marriage? Consider these tips:

- Talk with your children about how you discerned marriage and how you have grown deeper in your vocation since being married.
- Talk with your children about the sacramental and supernatural dimensions of marriage.
- Think about the images of marriage that your children are exposed to. Do they have images of stable marriages in their lives? TV, movies, books, and, sadly, many real-life marriages often depict marriage as a human institution that lacks a spiritual dimension and that can be broken. Help your children form an image of marriage as a God-given institution and a vocation.
- Talk to your children about the Theology of the Body based on what is appropriate for their age level.
- Most importantly, live a good example of marriage. Parents’ examples are their children’s most influential teachers.

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## **NURTURING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT'S SPIRITUAL LIFE**

From Serra Club members Matt and Megan Fassero:

- We need to give our students opportunities for silent contemplation time, away from the stresses of school and “unplugged” from the notifications from their cell phones. If we don’t, how will they hear our Lord’s voice calling them? Any time you can offer your child to attend Mass, pray as a family, or kneel in front of the tabernacle is a gift!
- Spend screen-free time together outdoors: camping, a bonfire, hiking, etc.
- Find and spend time with other families who are also striving for holiness. The example of other Catholic families can have a lifelong impact, and is invaluable!
- Include the priesthood and religious life when you talk to your student about the possibilities for their future. Don’t be afraid if your student is open to the idea of the priesthood or religious life, even if it’s not something you picture or hope for your child. God’s plan for your child is better than your plan for your child!
- Invite your parish priest into your home. Let him get to know your family, even with all of its faults and failings. Let your student see that priests and religious come from families like yours.
- Make sure to always include a faith-related gift for every occasion: in the Easter basket, in the Christmas stocking, on birthdays, etc. Find and celebrate the spiritual dimension of each of these special occasions!
- In addition to celebrating birthdays, celebrate your student’s Baptism anniversary. Show them that the spiritual life is more important than this earthly life.
- Focus equally as much on your child’s Catholic faith life as you do on their athletic and academic endeavors. Make as much effort to get your student to a Catholic camp or parish youth group as you do to get them to athletic practice and tournaments.

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