

# VOCATIONS HANDBOOK

WHEN A KNIGHT ACTS *selflessly*,  
he acts on behalf of the world.



**KNIGHTS  
OF COLUMBUS®**



# VOCATIONS HANDBOOK

A Handbook for Vocations Chairmen,

Vocations Committees, and

All Brother Knights

*PLEASE DO ALL YOU CAN TO ENCOURAGE*

*PRIESTLY AND RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS*

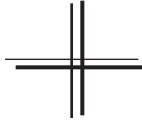
**KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS**

SUPREME COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS

1 COLUMBUS PLAZA

**NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06510-3326**

**[www.kofc.org/vocations](http://www.kofc.org/vocations)**



## Vocations Message

**A vocation is a fruit that ripens in a well cultivated field of mutual love that becomes mutual service, in the context of an authentic ecclesial life. No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love. Did not Jesus say: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35)?**

**Let us dispose our hearts therefore to being “good soil,” by listening, receiving and living out the word, and thus bearing fruit. The more we unite ourselves to Jesus through prayer, sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the sacraments celebrated and lived in the Church and in fraternity, the more there will grow in us the joy of cooperating with God in the service of the Kingdom of mercy and truth, of justice and peace. And the harvest will be plentiful, proportionate to the grace we have meekly welcomed into our lives.**

**Pope Francis  
World Day of Prayer for Vocations  
May 11, 2014**

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## ABOUT VOCATIONS

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Every Catholic has a vocation. In fact, as a member of the Church, every Catholic participates in the reality of “vocation” in three distinct but related senses.

First, there is the common Christian vocation that comes in Baptism. This can be expressed in various ways, but in general terms it means loving and serving God and neighbor and helping to carry on the mission of the Church.

Vocation also refers to a “state in life” or a way of being Christian – priesthood, religious life, marriage, and so forth. States in life are the special, lifelong settings in which people live the baptismal vocation.

Finally, there is personal vocation. The personal vocation of each one of us takes shape in the unique combination of talents, personal characteristics, relationships and life circumstances – including both our common Christian vocation and our state in life – that point to the special role God wants us to play in his redemptive plan. Membership in the Knights of Columbus is part of the personal vocation of many Catholic men.

When people speak of “vocation,” they usually mean vocation in the second sense – state in life. Most Christians are called by God to the married state, and some are called to the state of single laypersons living in the world. But Jesus also chooses certain men to act in his Person through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments; they are called to be priests. Others are called to the clerical state as permanent deacons. And still others, both women and men, are called to what is known as consecrated life – a way of life marked by the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience – whose most familiar expression is religious life.

The Knights of Columbus cherishes and celebrates all forms of vocation as gifts of God. But because of the Church's urgent need for priests and consecrated religious women and men, the Order's vocations program gives special priority to promoting these vocations. Vocations of all kinds arise and are nurtured within families. Thus the K of C vocations program is related not only to the Church Activities program but also to the Family Activities program. This "family" dimension of vocations makes lay involvement particularly important.

Let's look briefly at the "state in life" vocations of priesthood and religious life on which the vocations program is focused.

### ***Priesthood***

Jesus called his first disciples at the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mk 1:16-20) and later said to them: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (Jn 15:16). Christ, the Head of the Church and Lord of all creation, continues his salvific work in our own time. The ministerial priesthood is a privileged share in his work.

As the life of Christ was consecrated to the authentic proclamation of the loving will of his Father, so too the life of priests should be consecrated, in the name of Christ, to the same proclamation. The priest is called to assist the bishop in his threefold responsibility of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling. The priest must be a teacher of the Word, a minister of the sacraments, and a pastor of his flock. Pope John Paul II reminded us: "Without priests the Church would not be able to live that fundamental obedience which is at the very heart of her existence and her mission" (Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 1).

In his 2007 *World Day of Prayer for Vocations* address, Pope Benedict XVI further taught: "The People of God,



organically structured under the guidance of its Pastors, lives the mystery of communion with God and with each other, especially when it gathers for the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the source of that ecclesial unity for which Jesus prayed on the eve of his passion: ‘Father...that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (Jn 17:21.). This intense communion favors the growth of generous vocations at the service of the Church: the heart of the believer, filled with divine love, is moved to dedicate itself wholly to the cause of the Kingdom.”

### ***Religious Life***

Jesus also chooses certain men and women to be signs of his love while imitating his own way of living by embracing the consecrated life, whose most familiar expression is the religious life.

Consecrated life is a special Christian lifestyle—a special way of holiness—marked by publicly professing or promising the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, and living them as a sign of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. Consecrated life has several forms including religious institutes, secular institutes, hermits and consecrated virgins.

For most Catholics, the religious institute is the form of consecrated life that is most familiar. In addition to the elements common to all consecrated life, religious life requires that those who have professed the evangelical counsels live the common life, sharing all they possess and engaging in the common apostolic works of their religious community. The Church recognizes many religious institutes, commonly called religious orders, congregations or societies. A religious man may be a monk, friar, or brother, and may or may not be ordained as a priest. A religious woman may be a cloistered nun or an active sister.

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# THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS AND VOCATIONS

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Founded by a parish priest, the Knights of Columbus has always been a strong defender of the priesthood and religious life and a generous supporter of seminarians and religious in formation. As the largest Catholic fraternal organization in the world, the Order seeks to assist the Church with financial and moral assistance for this purpose. In light of the needs of the Church in our day, the Order has intensified its promotional programs in recent years.

As Knights get more involved in vocations efforts, they find new meaning in their own vocations as Catholic laymen and members of the Order. They also learn more about the importance of teamwork, for the best vocations programs are those planned and carried out by a team.

The vocations chairman is a leader. His job is to call others together, inspire them to share prayers, ideas and plans, and then reach out beyond the group. The model is Jesus' work with the Apostles. Successful groups need not be large, but they must be committed.

Just as priestly and religious vocations are vocations within the Church and at the service of the Church, so the Knights of Columbus vocations program operates within the Church and at her service. **Locally, programs should be integrated as much as possible with existing parish and diocesan efforts.** For instance, in an ideal situation a Knights of Columbus council will take an active part, or even play a leadership role, in a parish or diocesan vocations program.

## ***Objectives: Awareness, Climate, Motivation***

In general, a vocations program will have three objectives: awareness, “climate,” and motivation.

1. *Awareness:* The aim is to explain the meaning of different vocations, underline the Church’s urgent need, and encourage people – young people in particular – to hear what God is asking of them.
2. *Climate:* This means being aware – and working to make others aware – of the social, cultural, and religious spirit of the times and how it impacts – for good and for ill – people’s readiness to heed and answer God’s call.
3. *Motivation:* The intent is to move people to respond positively to God’s call by entering seminaries and novitiates, if this is what God is asking of them, and to persevere in the program of formation for the priesthood or religious life after having done so.

## ***Structure and Meetings***

The chairman of either a state or local vocations committee should convene committee meetings at least four times a year. The chaplain should be present if possible. Meetings should follow a standard Knights of Columbus committee meeting format. While dates and times are up to the chairman and his committee members, it is important to schedule meetings so that work can begin early in the fraternal year.

Topics for meetings include at least the following:

### ***State Meetings***

1. Proper and complete implementation of the Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP) (see p.13),
2. Possible financial aid to seminarians within the state’s jurisdiction,

3. Possible aid to overseas seminarians or seminaries,
4. Organized prayer to promote vocations,
5. The annual observance of Vocations Awareness Week,
6. Promoting Knights of Columbus vocational efforts through the media, and
7. Establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with local bishops.

### *Local Meetings*

1. Proper and complete implementation of RSVP;
2. Vocations awareness days at Catholic elementary, secondary schools or colleges;
3. Sponsorship of poster or essay contests in Catholic elementary and secondary schools;
4. Organized prayer to promote vocations, especially Holy Hours;
5. Effective distribution of Knights of Columbus and Catholic Information Service vocations materials in parishes, Catholic schools, and retreat houses;
6. Promoting Knights of Columbus vocations efforts through local media;
7. Effective publicity to encourage attendance at vocations events; and
8. Establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with the local pastor and other priests.

In the case of both state and local meetings, keeping accurate minutes will be of great help to future chairmen and committee members.

### ***Responsibilities of the State Vocations Chairman***

The primary responsibility of the state vocations chairman is to ensure the proper and complete implementation of RSVP.

He should contact the vocations director or directors of the diocese or dioceses in his jurisdiction and develop a good working relationship. (To find out who they are, and their addresses and phone numbers, consult *The Official Catholic Directory*, also sometimes called the “Kenedy Directory.” Most parishes have a copy.) **In particular, the chairman should make sure that every diocesan seminarian and religious novice in his jurisdiction is included in RSVP.**

Beyond that fundamental responsibility, the state chairman may also contact the vocations directors of religious communities, the rectors of seminaries, and directors of houses of formation within his jurisdiction. (Again, consult *The Official Catholic Directory*.) Once RSVP is properly organized and functioning, the state chairman, in cooperation with the vocations committee and the state officers, should look into the possibility of helping dioceses or religious institutes with other programs to promote priestly and religious vocations.

The state vocations chairman is responsible for conducting the committee meetings required to develop and carry out state-level vocations efforts. He should motivate his fellow officers, especially concerning implementation of RSVP. In this regard, the state deputy may choose to call upon his district deputies to assist the vocations chairman.

State vocations chairmen will find it helpful to read the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II called *I Will Give You Shepherds (Pastores Dabo Vobis)*. In this document, published in 1992 and available at most Catholic bookstores, the Holy Father speaks of the significance of the priestly vocation and of how lay people can assist in promoting and supporting vocations to the priesthood. Additionally, each year the Holy Father issues a message on the World Day of Prayer for Vocations (late February/early March). This message can help to situate the work of the vocations chairmen in the Holy Father’s larger vision for vocations in the universal Church.

## ***Responsibilities of the Council/Assembly/Circle Vocations Chairman***

The primary responsibility of the council, assembly, or circle vocations chairman is to ensure the proper and complete implementation of the RSVP program at the local level. He should work with the state vocations chairman to ensure that *every* seminarian sponsored by the diocese or dioceses, and *every* religious novice in his jurisdiction is included in RSVP.

When it is certain that every diocesan seminarian and religious novice is covered, the local chairman may also contact the vocations directors of religious orders or the rectors and directors of seminaries and houses of formation within his jurisdiction. (*The Official Catholic Directory* will tell you who they are: see above.) Once the RSVP program is properly organized and operating, the council, assembly, or circle vocations chairman, in cooperation with the vocations committee and the local officers, should look into ways of assisting parishes, seminaries, houses of formation, monasteries, and/or other religious institutes with programs to promote priestly and religious vocations.

The chairman is responsible for conducting the committee meetings needed to develop and carry out his council's, assembly's, or circle's vocations efforts. He must motivate his brother Knights to promote priestly and religious vocations, with particular emphasis on RSVP. In this regard, the chairman may seek the help of his district deputy. Upon completing his term, he should share what he has learned with the incoming vocations chairman. Like state chairmen, local chairmen will also benefit from reading Pope John Paul's *I Will Give You Shepherds*, as well as the yearly papal *Day of Prayer for Vocations* messages (see above).

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# PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

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## ***Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP)***

The Knights of Columbus has long supported vocations to the priesthood and religious life, particularly through the Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP). Through this Church Activities featured program, your council “adopts” one or more seminarians or postulants, providing them with financial assistance and moral support. It’s a way for your council to invest in the future of our Church.

To have your council participate in RSVP, your committee chairman should:

1. Contact your pastor or diocesan vocations director to identify one or more seminarians or postulants to support.
2. Create a plan for raising the money that will be donated.
3. Send letters or emails of introduction from the council, congratulating the seminarian or postulant on their decision to answer God’s call and explaining what your council is prepared to offer them.
4. Encourage members, council families and other parishioners to keep the seminarian[s] or postulant[s] in their prayers.
5. Make personal visits, if possible, to your adopted seminarian[s] or postulant[s].
6. Provide the seminarian[s] or postulant[s] with moral support through letters, emails and special occasion cards.

7. Invite the seminarian[s] or postulant[s] to your council to make a presentation on what it means to prepare for the priesthood or religious life.
8. Invite the seminarian[s] or postulant[s] to council social activities as a break from their studies.
9. Congratulate the seminarian[s] or postulant[s] upon ordination or profession of final vows.

### ***Refund for participating in RSVP***

Councils involved in RSVP may qualify for a refund from the Supreme Council headquarters. For every \$500 donated, a council or assembly may receive \$100 (for a maximum refund of \$400 per individual). Councils and assemblies in the Philippines and Mexico receive the equivalent in local currency of \$50 for every \$250 donated. Columbian Squires circles are also eligible for a refund of \$20 for each \$100 donated.

Use the following guidelines to help ensure eligibility for the rebate.

1. Persons eligible to receive RSVP funds include:
  - Seminarians who have been accepted by a diocese and are currently in their “spirituality” year.
  - Seminarians attending major seminaries in preparation for priestly ordination.
  - Seminarians in their “pastoral” year.
  - Seminarians attending college seminaries.
  - Seminarians who belong to a religious institute and are currently in formation for the priesthood.
  - Men and women who are postulants or novices in religious orders or religious communities.
2. Persons NOT eligible for RSVP funds include:



- Priests or religious seeking assistance for continuing education.
  - Religious brothers not currently studying for the priesthood.
  - Candidates for the permanent diaconate.
3. Funds donated to each individual must be vocation-related and amount to at least \$500 per individual.
  4. The funds must be given directly to an individual and NOT to an institution or fund.
  5. The funds must be paid with a check[s] drawn on the council's account.

To receive the rebate, your council will need to:

1. Complete and submit the RSVP Refund and Plaque Application (#2863). This form is found at [kofc.org/forms](http://kofc.org/forms) or in the Council Report Forms Booklet (#1436). This form needs to be accompanied by all supporting documentation, which includes canceled checks and evidence of moral support provided to the seminarian or postulant.
2. For the most up-to-date information pertaining to the eligibility for the rebate and program requirements for RSVP, please visit [kofc.org/rsvp](http://kofc.org/rsvp) or the Knights of Columbus Fraternal Training Portal.

### ***Columbian Award Requirements for RSVP***

When your council participates in RSVP and meets the minimum requirements for the program, it will be eligible to fulfill all four Church Activity requirements for the Columbian Award. To ensure that your council receives credit for all four Church Activity requirements, follow these guidelines:

1. Complete and submit the RSVP Refund and Plaque Application (#2863).

2. Complete and submit the Columbian Award Application (#SP-7) no later than June 30. Indicate your council's participation in RSVP under the Church Activities section.
3. Complete and submit your council's Service Program Personnel Report (#365).
4. Complete and submit the Annual Survey of Fraternal Activity (#1728) no later than Jan. 31.

***Father Michael J. McGivney Vocations Scholarships***  
***Bishop Thomas V. Daily Vocations Scholarships***

Two vocations scholarship programs, Father Michael J. McGivney Vocations Scholarships (based on need) and Bishop Thomas V. Daily Vocations Scholarships (based on merit and academic excellence), provide scholarships to seminarians during their first four years of theological studies. Each grant of \$2,500 for tuition, room and board is renewable up to a maximum of four years upon evidence of continued enrollment and eligibility. The scholarship is not in effect during any year of pastoral internship.

An applicant who has appropriate ecclesiastical approval, who has been accepted at a major seminary, and who is studying for a diocese or religious institute in the United States, its territories, or Canada is eligible. Preference is given (but is not limited) to applicants who are members of the Knights of Columbus or whose fathers are members.

For a Father Michael J. McGivney Vocations Scholarship, an applicant must provide information to establish financial need.

For a Bishop Thomas V. Daily Vocations Scholarship, an applicant must include a copy of his most recent transcript and two letters of recommendation.

Scholarship applications are mailed to rectors of major seminaries and diocesan vocations directors in February. The

completed application must be received at the Knights of Columbus by June 1 to be considered for a scholarship. Send completed applications to:

Department of Scholarships  
Knights of Columbus Supreme Council  
1 Columbus Plaza  
New Haven, CT 06510-3326

### ***International Support for Seminaries***

In addition to providing scholarships to seminarians, the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council has established several funds for various pontifical colleges in Rome (North American College, Pontifical Canadian College, Pontifical Mexican College) and Belgium (American College, Louvain). The annual earnings from these funds are disbursed to the seminaries for their general use. Special funds for advanced studies for priests from the Philippines and Puerto Rico also provide earnings annually.

Many state councils give generous support to seminaries in their jurisdictions. With the cost of room, board, and tuition for a seminarian now many thousands of dollars annually, bishops warmly appreciate this help, and the Supreme Council strongly encourages it. The state deputy or vocations chairman, or both, should meet with seminary rectors to discuss ways of being of assistance.

### ***Support for Diocesan Vocations Offices and Programs***

Every diocese has a vocations office to promote vocations awareness and recruit candidates for the priesthood and religious life. Bishops appreciate monetary and other assistance to these offices. At the national level, the Supreme Council has contributed to the secretariat for vocations and priestly formation of the United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops to help support the U.S. bishops' national vocations promotion program. State and local vocations chairmen are encouraged to meet with directors of vocations offices in their dioceses to see how they can help.

### ***Vocations Ads***

The Order's magazine *Columbia* each month carries an advertisement on its back cover promoting priestly and religious vocations. These ads have generated great favorable response. Reading about a man or woman who has responded to the Lord's call can inspire someone else to do the same. The ads also help spread vocations awareness among Knights of Columbus members and others.

State or local councils, assemblies, and circles are welcome to copy *Columbia* ads for nonprofit use in parish bulletins and flyers. For permission to reproduce an ad or ads in a professional advertising campaign (newspapers, billboards, etc.), write:

Director  
Catholic Information Service  
Knights of Columbus Supreme Council  
1 Columbus Plaza  
New Haven, CT 06510-3326

If there is a seminarian or member of a religious institute that you would like to recommend for inclusion in one of these advertisements, write to the Director, as above.

### ***Vocations Materials***

The Knights of Columbus offers attractive vocations posters suitable for use in schools, churches, retreat houses, and other places. One poster is directed to young people, with the theme of "Keep the Faith Alive" (#2959).

In addition, the Supreme Council office makes available vocations prayer cards, bookmarks, and booklets on several topics. Consult the Church Activity Supplies section of the *Supply Catalog* (#1264) for a complete listing of materials and item numbers. All vocations materials are available at no charge (in reasonable quantities) from the Supreme Council Supply Department. Please use Requisition Form #1 when placing orders.

Supply Department  
Knights of Columbus Supreme Council  
1 Columbus Plaza  
New Haven, CT 06510-3326  
Fax: 1-800-266-6340

### ***Vocations DVDs***

Five award-winning video productions are available to councils on one DVD – all ideal for use in councils, parishes or Catholic schools to promote vocations in the Church:

- *The Vocation to the Priesthood*

Highlighting the lives of priests who have experienced the wide range of events that are part of the ministry, this film is ideal for viewing by those contemplating a call to the priesthood.

- *The Vocation to Marriage*

In a warm and anecdotal format, this film presents the teaching of the Church regarding Christian marriage and family. It is ideal for couples preparing for marriage.

- *The Vocation to Religious Life for Women*

This film promotes religious life for women in a contemporary and attractive medium. It is an important and effective tool for women contemplating a call to religious life.

- *The Vocation to Religious Life for Men*

This film promotes stories from men who are called to follow Christ as religious brothers, offering their lives in service to the church and its people.

- *The Vocation to the Laity*

This film shows how charity, the first principle of the Order, serves as a basis for the Lay vocation.

The Department of Fraternal Services distributes all DVDs on a free-to-keep basis, except for a nominal shipping and handling fee charged to the account of your council or assembly. To order call (203) 752-4270.

### ***Holy Hour for Vocations***

Many state and local councils sponsor Holy Hours to pray for vocations. Their format can vary from parish to parish, but they usually include adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, recitation of the Rosary, Scripture readings, and other prayers.

Vocations chairmen are encouraged to contact pastors to see if they would like to conduct Holy Hours in their parishes. The vocations committee should cooperate as requested in helping to organize the event. In particular, the committee can generate publicity to stimulate attendance.

If it is not feasible to have a Holy Hour in a parish, perhaps Mass could be celebrated monthly for the intention of more priestly and religious vocations.

### ***Vocations Awareness Days***

An excellent way to heighten vocations awareness is by sponsoring Vocations Awareness Days at Catholic elementary and secondary schools, and colleges. Some state and local councils have had tremendous success with these events.

Usually they feature visual displays for students in an auditorium, gym or student union, with people from the diocesan vocations office and religious institutes on hand to answer questions. The event can be an all-day affair or can be held during hours of free time. Refreshments offered in a congenial setting can help attract students, especially collegians. Publicity is essential.

State and local vocations chairmen are encouraged to contact school officials about holding such events. Diocesan and religious institute vocations directors should be invited to participate, and the local bishop should be informed.

### ***Poster and Essay Contests***

Some councils have successfully sponsored essay and/or poster contests for students in Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Contestants prepare an original essay or original poster encouraging awareness of priestly and religious vocations. In doing so, their own vocations awareness increases. The judging should be carried out and the prizes awarded according to criteria established by the council, assembly or circle.

### ***Other Programs***

Many state and local councils and individual Knights work for vocations in other unofficial ways. For instance, some members of the Order take a young priest out to dinner every month in order to give him fraternal support. Others pay for vocation-related public advertising such as billboards.

Councils, assemblies and circles should be creative and take the initiative in promoting vocations. The use of media can be very helpful in this area. Naturally, whatever is done in the

name of the Order must observe ecclesiastical norms and the policies of the Knights of Columbus.



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# DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

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In working for vocations, you may find yourself using certain unfamiliar terms. Here is a quick rundown.

*Diocesan seminarian.* A diocesan seminarian is a man who has been accepted by a diocese to study for the priesthood. The studies usually include four years in college seminary (unless the candidate has already graduated from college, in which case he will enter the pre-Theology program), a “spirituality” year of spiritual formation, at least four years of study in a major seminary (also called a theologate), and a year of pastoral internship (parochial or other field work) prior to ordination. Anywhere from six months to 18 months before priestly ordination, the seminarian is ordained a deacon, and is then called “Rev. Mr.” Seminarians’ garb differs from diocese to diocese. Some wear secular clothing until the diaconate, while others wear clerical suits and cassocks from the start. All eligible diocesan seminarians can participate in all Knights of Columbus vocations programs.

*Candidate.* This term refers to a man or woman who has been formally accepted for admission into a seminary or novitiate program. A candidate may receive RSVP funds whether he is in college seminary, a pre-theology, or a major seminary.

*College seminarian.* A college seminarian (sometimes called “minor seminarian”) is a diocesan seminarian attending a four-year college or university under the auspices of his diocese. He may or may not live with other seminarians. He participates in a special program of studies to prepare him for theological studies at a major seminary. Some dioceses operate their own four-year college seminaries, while others send candidates to a local college or university. In some cases, men who are college graduates and have had philosophical training bypass this stage and start their seminary training at

the major seminary level. All college seminarians are eligible for RSVP funds.

*Major seminarian.* A major seminarian is a candidate engaged in formal theological studies for the priesthood. These studies come after the college level and usually are done at a “major seminary” or theologate. Some dioceses operate their own major seminaries while others send candidates to seminaries in other dioceses or abroad. All major seminarians are eligible for RSVP.

*Religious seminarian.* Religious seminarians are consecrated men accepted into religious institutes or societies of apostolic life, commonly called religious orders or societies, to study for the ordained priesthood. Especially in long-established orders (e.g., Benedictines, Dominicans), they often are called brothers or student-brothers. These should not be confused with religious brothers who do not become priests. The program of preparation includes a postulancy and novitiate. After completion of the novitiate, the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are taken for a period of at least three years, followed by profession of solemn or perpetual vows. Ordination as deacon comes anywhere from six to 18 months before priestly ordination. Brother-seminarians are then called “Rev. Brother.” How religious seminarians dress depends on the traditions of their institutes. Some wear the habit of their order while others wear clerical dress as diocesan seminarians do. Some institutes operate their own seminaries while others send men to seminaries of another order or a diocese. Religious order seminaries are sometimes called houses of study. All eligible religious seminarians can participate in all Knights of Columbus vocations programs.

*Eastern Church seminarians.* Catholic seminarians belonging to one of the Eastern Catholic traditions, *sui iuris*, (e.g., Armenian, Byzantine, Chaldean, Coptic, Maronite or Syrian) are in union with the Holy See, that is, the Pope. With

the exception of the Maronite Church, each of the Eastern Catholic Churches has an Orthodox Church equivalent. Eastern Catholic seminarians, like their counterparts in the Latin (Roman) Church, are preparing for service as priests. In some Eastern Churches seminarians will marry and then be ordained for their Church in North America. There are some Eastern Churches in the United States that do not ordain married men at present, but this is a decision made by the bishops. Seminarians of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the USA are eligible for membership in the Knights of Columbus and are able to participate in all of the vocations programs. Women who are postulants or novices in an Eastern Church religious community are eligible to participate in RSVP, as those who are of the Latin Church. Those Eastern seminarians who belong to the *Orthodox* Churches are ineligible for membership in the Knights of Columbus, and therefore are ineligible to participate in our vocations programs because they are not in communion with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. (You may also read the CIS booklet on Eastern Churches for more information.)

*Nuns.* Although this term is used popularly to apply to all religious women, in a strict sense it signifies a woman who belongs to a cloistered (monastic and contemplative) community. Nuns begin religious life with a year of postulancy, followed by one or more years of novitiate. They take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and normally do not leave their cloister. Nuns are eligible for RSVP funds during postulancy and novitiate.

*Religious Sisters.* Sisters are consecrated women who have entered religious institutes or societies of apostolic life, commonly called religious orders, congregations or societies. They usually begin religious life with a year of postulancy, followed by one or two years of novitiate. They take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and engage in various active

apostolates. They are eligible for RSVP funds during postulancy and novitiate.

*Postulant.* A postulant is a man or woman in the final stage of preparing to enter the novitiate of a religious institute. He or she lives with a religious community without taking vows and may or may not wear special garb. Depending on the institute involved, postulancy can last a few weeks or up to two years. Postulants are eligible for RSVP funds.

*Novice.* A novice is a man or woman at the stage of formal initiation into religious life, following postulancy. According to the law of the religious institute, the novitiate lasts one or two years. Novices very often adopt the garb of the religious institute and begin informal studies. They live according to the vows but do not profess vows until the novitiate is completed. Novices are eligible for RSVP. (The eligibility of women religious ends when the novitiate does, but male religious who are studying for the priesthood remain eligible.)

*Permanent deacon candidates.* The Knights of Columbus recognizes the invaluable services performed by permanent deacons and encourages Catholic men to consider the diaconate as a vocation. However, candidates for the permanent diaconate are not eligible for RSVP or for Father Michael J. McGivney Vocations Scholarships or for Bishop Thomas V. Daily Vocations Scholarships.

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# **POLICY STATEMENT**

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As the largest Catholic lay organization in the world, the Knights of Columbus is happy to promote priestly and religious vocations. In carrying forward this work, a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities is essential. The Supreme Council is responsible only for national and/or international vocations programs of the Order. Vocations programs conducted by Knights of Columbus on the state or local levels are the responsibility of the state or local councils, assemblies, and circles. The Knights of Columbus does not accept responsibility for the vocations programs of dioceses or institutes of consecrated life. Its activities do not supplant or conflict with such programs but assist them. The Order evaluates requests for vocation-related funding in light of the Order's norms and procedures.

**Catholic Information Service (CIS)  
Booklets about Vocations**

Catholic Information Service offers information and devotional materials for distribution to Knights of Columbus members, their families, parishioners and community members.

For a complete list of materials, please visit [knightsgear.com](http://knightsgear.com) and click Booklets.



After this fraternal year has ended,  
please pass this handbook along to your successor.