

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

Vocation – A call to holiness
July 27, 2026

Every baptized person is called to become a saint.

Holiness is not reserved for priests, religious sisters, monks, or extraordinary people. Through Baptism, each of us has received the same invitation—to grow in friendship with Jesus Christ and become more like Him through the ordinary circumstances of daily life.

Scripture

Jesus often described the Kingdom of God through simple stories about ordinary people making ordinary choices.

Matthew 13:44-52

Jesus said to his disciples:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field,
which a person finds and hides again,
and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant
searching for fine pearls.

When he finds a pearl of great price,
he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea,
which collects fish of every kind.

When it is full they haul it ashore
and sit down to put what is good into buckets.

What is bad they throw away.

Thus it will be at the end of the age.

The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous
and throw them into the fiery furnace,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

"Do you understand all these things?"

They answered, "Yes."

And he replied,
"Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven
is like the head of a household
who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

The **Second Vatican Council (1962–1965)** was the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, convened by Pope St. John XXIII and continued under Pope St. Paul VI. Rather than changing the Church's essential beliefs, Vatican II sought to renew the Church and help it proclaim the Gospel more effectively in the modern world. Through sixteen major documents, the Council emphasized the universal call to holiness, the centrality of Sacred Scripture, the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy, the importance of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and the mission of every baptized Christian to share Christ's love in the world.

1 *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964)

- Explains the nature and mission of the Church.
- Introduces the **Universal Call to Holiness** (Chapter 5).
- Describes the Church as the People of God and the Body of Christ.
- Explains the roles of the laity, clergy, and religious.

2 *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 1965)

- Explains God's revelation through Scripture and Tradition.
- Encourages Catholics to read and pray with Sacred Scripture.
- Describes how the Church faithfully hands on God's Word.

3 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963)

- Although officially titled simply a "Constitution" rather than a "Dogmatic Constitution," it is one of the Council's four major constitutions.
- Called for the renewal of the liturgy.
- Encouraged the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful.
- Led to the liturgical reforms that followed the Council.

4 *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution, 1965)

- Reflects on the Church's relationship with the modern world.
- Addresses marriage and family life, culture, economics, politics, peace, and social justice.
- Begins with its famous opening:

Chapter V of *Lumen Gentium*, titled "**The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church**," teaches that every baptized Christian is called to become holy, regardless of age, vocation, or state in life. Holiness is not reserved for priests, religious, or canonized saints; it is the vocation of all God's people. This call is lived out by following Christ, participating in the sacraments, growing in faith, hope, and charity, and serving others with love in the ordinary circumstances of daily life. Whether one is married, single, ordained, or consecrated, each person is invited to seek the perfection of charity through God's grace. The chapter reminds us that holiness is not about extraordinary accomplishments but about faithfully responding to God's love each day, becoming more like Christ, and helping to build God's Kingdom in the world.

YOUR VOCATION – HOLINESS

Grace (Blue)

- Represents openness to God.
- You gain Grace through prayer, sacraments, charity, humility, forgiveness.
- You lose Grace when you deliberately reject God.

Peace (Green)

- Represents interior freedom.
- Stress, anger, greed, and resentment reduce Peace.
- Prayer and trust restore Peace.

Relationships (Orange)

- Represents your connection to others.
- Lying, selfishness, gossip, and pride damage relationships.
- Service and forgiveness build them.

Life Card (Blue)

Grace (Green)

Temptation (Orange)

Holiness is not primarily about extraordinary miracles or dramatic sacrifices.

It is about:

- Loving God with all your heart.
- Loving your neighbor as yourself.

- Participating in the Sacraments.
- Growing in virtue.
- Serving others with humility.
- Trusting God's grace every day.

Table discussion

- Which decision challenged me the most?
- When did I experience God's grace?
- Which virtue do I most want to grow in?
- Where is Christ inviting me to say "yes" this week?
- How has tonight changed my understanding of holiness?

Reflection

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You have called each of us to follow you—not only in extraordinary moments, but in the ordinary routines of everyday life.

Thank you for the gift of your grace, which strengthens us when we are weak, forgives us when we fall, and continually invites us to begin again.

Help us to become people of faith, hope, and charity.

Teach us to recognize you in our families, our workplaces, our neighbors, and especially in those who are poor, lonely, forgotten, or suffering.

May our lives become a reflection of your love so that, day by day, we may grow in holiness and help others discover your presence.

May Mary, Mother of the Church, and all the saints pray for us as we continue our journey toward the fullness of life in you.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964)

• **Universal Call to Holiness (Chapter 5).**

39. The Church, whose mystery is being set forth by this Sacred Synod, is believed to be indefectibly holy. Indeed Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as "uniquely holy," (1*) loved the Church as His bride, delivering Himself up for her. He did this that He might sanctify her.(214) He united her to Himself as His own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God's glory. Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification".(215) However, this holiness of the Church is unceasingly manifested, and must be manifested, in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful; it is expressed in many ways in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity, thus causing the edification of others; in a very special way this (holiness) appears in the practice of the counsels, customarily called "evangelical." This practice of the counsels, under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit, undertaken by many Christians, either privately or in a Church-approved condition or state of life, gives and must give in the world an outstanding witness and example of this same holiness.

40. The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and everyone of His disciples of every condition. He Himself stands as the author and consumator of this holiness of life: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect".(216)(2*) Indeed He sent the Holy Spirit upon all men that He might move them inwardly to love God with their whole heart and their whole soul, with all their mind and all their strength(217) and that they might love each other as Christ loves them.(218) The followers of Christ are called by God, not because of their works, but according to His own purpose and grace. They are justified in the Lord Jesus, because in the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy. Then too, by God's gift, they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received. They are warned by the Apostle to live "as becomes saints", (219) and to put on "as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience", (220) and to possess the fruit of the Spirit in holiness.(221) Since truly we all offend in many things (222) we all need God's mercies continually and we all must daily pray: "Forgive us our debts"(223)(3*)

Thus it is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity;(4*) by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society. In order that the faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength accordingly as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. They must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church history.

41. The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father and worship God the Father in spirit and in truth. These people follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ in order to be worthy of being sharers in His glory. Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.

In the first place, the shepherds of Christ's flock must holily and eagerly, humbly and courageously carry out their ministry, in imitation of the eternal high Priest, the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. They ought to fulfill this duty in such a way that it will be the principal means also of their own sanctification. Those chosen for the fullness of the priesthood are granted the ability of exercising the perfect duty of pastoral charity by the grace of the sacrament of Orders. This perfect duty of pastoral charity (5*) is exercised in every form of episcopal care and service, prayer, sacrifice and preaching. By this same sacramental grace, they are given the courage necessary to lay down their lives for their sheep, and the ability of promoting greater holiness in the Church by their daily example, having become a pattern for their flock.(224)

Priests, who resemble bishops to a certain degree in their participation of the sacrament of Orders, form the spiritual crown of the bishops.(6*) They participate in the grace of their office and they should grow daily in their love of God and their neighbor by the exercise of their office through Christ, the eternal and unique Mediator. They should preserve the bond of priestly communion, and they should abound in every spiritual good and thus present to all men a living witness to God.(7*) All this they should do in

emulation of those priests who often, down through the course of the centuries, left an outstanding example of the holiness of humble and hidden service. Their praise lives on in the Church of God. By their very office of praying and offering sacrifice for their own people and the entire people of God, they should rise to greater holiness. Keeping in mind what they are doing and imitating what they are handling,(8*) these priests, in their apostolic labors, rather than being ensnared by perils and hardships, should rather rise to greater holiness through these perils and hardships. They should ever nourish and strengthen their action from an abundance of contemplation, doing all this for the comfort of the entire Church of God. All priests, and especially those who are called "diocesan priests," due to the special title of their ordination, should keep continually before their minds the fact that their faithful loyalty toward and their generous cooperation with their bishop is of the greatest value in their growth in holiness.

Ministers of lesser rank are also sharers in the mission and grace of the Supreme Priest. In the first place among these ministers are deacons, who, in as much as they are dispensers of Christ's mysteries and servants of the Church,(9*) should keep themselves free from every vice and stand before men as personifications of goodness and friends of God.(225) Clerics, who are called by the Lord and are set aside as His portion in order to prepare themselves for the various ministerial offices under the watchful eye of spiritual shepherds, are bound to bring their hearts and minds into accord with this special election (which is theirs). They will accomplish this by their constancy in prayer, by their burning love, and by their unremitting recollection of whatever is true, just and of good repute. They will accomplish all this for the glory and honor of God. Besides these already named, there are also laymen, chosen of God and called by the bishop. These laymen spend themselves completely in apostolic labors, working the Lord's field with much success.(10*).

Furthermore, married couples and Christian parents should follow their own proper path (to holiness) by faithful love. They should sustain one another in grace throughout the entire length of their lives. They should imbue their offspring, lovingly welcomed as God's gift, with Christian doctrine and the evangelical virtues. In this manner, they offer all men the example of unwearying and generous love; in this way they build up the brotherhood of charity; in so doing, they stand as the witnesses and cooperators in the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church; by such lives, they are a sign and a participation in that very love, with which Christ loved His Bride and for which He delivered Himself up for her.(11*) A like example, but one given in a different way, is that offered by widows and single people, who are able to make great contributions toward holiness and apostolic endeavor in the Church. Finally, those who engage in labor—and frequently it is of a heavy nature—should better themselves by their human labors. They should be of aid to their fellow citizens. They should raise all of society, and even creation itself, to a better mode of existence. Indeed, they should imitate by their lively charity, in their joyous hope and by their voluntary sharing of each others' burdens, the very Christ who plied His hands with carpenter's tools and Who in union with His Father, is continually working for the salvation of all men. In this, then, their daily work they should climb to the heights of holiness and apostolic activity.

May all those who are weighed down with poverty, infirmity and sickness, as well as those who must bear various hardships or who suffer persecution for justice sake—may they all know they are united with the suffering Christ in a special way for the salvation of the world. The Lord called them blessed in His Gospel and they are those whom "the God of all graces, who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself, after we have suffered a little while, perfect, strengthen and establish".(226)

Finally all Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will. In this temporal service, they will manifest to all men the love with which God loved the world.

42. "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in Him".(227) But, God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us;(228) thus the first and most necessary gift is love, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of God. Indeed, in order that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul, each one of the faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace. These actions consist in the use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist, frequent participation in the sacred action of the Liturgy, application of oneself to prayer, self-abnegation, lively fraternal service and the constant exercise of all the virtues. For charity, as the bond of perfection and the fullness of the law,(229) rules over all the means of attaining holiness and gives life to these same means.(12*) It is charity which guides us to our final end. It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor which points out the true disciple of Christ.

Since Jesus, the Son of God, manifested His charity by laying down His life for us, so too no one has greater love than he who lays down his life for Christ and His brothers.(230) From the earliest times, then, some Christians have been called upon—and some will always be called upon—to give the supreme testimony of this love to all men, but especially to persecutors. The Church, then,

considers martyrdom as an exceptional gift and as the fullest proof of love. By martyrdom a disciple is transformed into an image of his Master by freely accepting death for the salvation of the world—as well as his conformity to Christ in the shedding of his blood. Though few are presented such an opportunity, nevertheless all must be prepared to confess Christ before men. They must be prepared to make this profession of faith even in the midst of persecutions, which will never be lacking to the Church, in following the way of the cross.

Likewise, the holiness of the Church is fostered in a special way by the observance of the counsels proposed in the Gospel by Our Lord to His disciples.(13*) An eminent position among these is held by virginity or the celibate state.(231) This is a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls,(232) whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, due to an undivided heart. (14*) This perfect continency, out of desire for the kingdom of heaven, has always been held in particular honor in the Church. The reason for this was and is that perfect continency for the love of God is an incentive to charity, and is certainly a particular source of spiritual fecundity in the world.

The Church continually keeps before it the warning of the Apostle which moved the faithful to charity, exhorting them to experience personally what Christ Jesus had known within Himself. This was the same Christ Jesus, who "emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave . . . becoming obedient to death", (233) and because of us "being rich, he became poor".(234) Because the disciples must always offer an imitation of and a testimony to the charity and humility of Christ, Mother Church rejoices at finding within her bosom men and women who very closely follow their Saviour who debased Himself to our comprehension. There are some who, in their freedom as sons of God, renounce their own wills and take upon themselves the state of poverty. Still further, some become subject of their own accord to another man, in the matter of perfection for love of God. This is beyond the measure of the commandments, but is done in order to become more fully like the obedient Christ.(15*)

Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive. Let all then have care that they guide aright their own deepest sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love. Let them heed the admonition of the Apostle to those who use this world; let them not come to terms with this world; for this world, as we see it, is passing away.(235)(16*)

214 Cf Eph. 5:25-26.

215 I Thess. 4.3; cf. Eph.1:4.

216 Mt. 5:48.

217 Cf. Mk. 12:30.

218 Cf. Jn. 13.34; 15:12.

219 Eph. 5:3.

220 Col . 3:12.

221 Cf. Gal. 5:22; Rom. 6:22.

222 Cf. Jas. 3:2.

223 1 Mt. 6:12.

224 Cf. 1 Pt. 5:3.

225 Cf. 1 Tim. 3:8-10 and 12-1

226 1 Pt. 5:10.

227 1 Jn. 4:16.

228 Cf. Rom. 5:5.

229 Cf. Col. 3:14; Rom. 13:10.

230 Cf. 1 Jn. 3:16; Jn. 15:13.

231 Cf 1 Cor. 7:32-34.

232 Cf Mt. 19:11; 1 Cor.7:7.

233 Phil. 2:7-8.

234 2 Cor. 8:9.

235 Cf 1. Cor. 7:31ff.

(1) Missale Romanum, Gloria in excelsis. Cfr. Lc. 1, 35; Mc. 1, 24, Lc. 4, 34; Io. 6, 69 (ho hagios tou theou); Act. 3, 14; 4, 27 et 30; Hebr. 7, 26, 1 Io. 2, 20; Apoc. 3, 7.

(2) Cfr. Origenes, Comm. Rom. 7, 7: PG 14, 1122 B. Ps.- Macarius, De Oratione, 11: PG 34, 861 AB. S. Thomas, Summa Theol. II-II, q. 184, a. 3.

(3) Cfr. S. Augustinus Retract. II, 18: PL 32, 637 s. Pius XII Litt. Encycl. Mystici Corporis, 29 iun. 1943: AAS 35 (1943) p. 225.

(4) Cfr. Pius XI, Litt. Encycl. Rerum omnium, 26 ian. 1923: AAS 15 (1923) p. 50 ct pp. 59-60. Litt. Encycl. Casti Connubii, 31 dec. 1930: AAS 22 (1930) p. 548. Pius XII, Const. Apost. Provida Mater, 2 febr. 1947: AAS 39 (1947) p. 117. Alloc. Annus sacer, 8 dec. 1950: AAS 43 (1951) pp. 27-28. Alloc. Nel darvi, 1 iul. 1956: AAS 48 (1956) p. 574 s.

(5) Cfr. S. Thomas, Summa Theol. II-II, q. 184, a. 5 et 6. De perf. vitae spir., c. 18. Origenes, In Is. Hom. 6, 1: PG 13, 239.

(6) Cfr. S. Ignatius M., Magn. 13, 1: ed. Funk, I, p. 241.

(7) Cfr. S. Pius X, Exhort. Haerent animo, 4 aug. 1908: ASS 41 (1908) p. 560 s. Cod. Iur. Can., can. 124. Pius XI, Litt. Encycl. Ad catholici sacerdotii, 20 dec. 1935: AAS 28 (1936) p. 22 s.

(8) Ordo consecrationis sacerdotalis, in Exhortatione initiali.

(9) Cfr. S. Ignatius M., Trall. 2, 3: cd. Funk, I, p. 244.

(10) Cfr. Pius XII, Alloc. Sous la maternelle protection, 9 dec. 1957: AAS 50 (1958) p. 36.

(11) Pius XI, Litt. Encycl. Casti Connubii, 31 dec. 1930. AAS 22 (1930) p. 548 s. Cfr. S. Io Chrysostomus, In Ephes. Hom. 20, 2: P. 62, 136 ss.

(12) Cfr. S. Augustinus, Enchir. 121, 32: PL 40 288. S. Thomas Summa Theol. II-II, q. 184, a. 1. Pius XII, Adhort. Apost. Menti nostrae, 23 sept. 1950: AAS 42 (1950) p. 660.

(13) De consiliis in genere, cfr. Origenes, Comm. Rom. X, 14: PG 14 1275 B. S. Augustinus, De S. Virginitate, 15, 15: PL 40, 403. S. Thomas, Summa Theol. I-II, q. 100, a. 2 C (in fine); II-II, q. 44, a. 4 ad 3

(14) De praestantia sacrae virginitatis, cfr. Tertullianus, Exhort. Cast. 10: PL 2, 925 C. S. Cyprianus, Hab. Virg. 3 et 22: PL 4, 443 B et 461 A. A. S. Athanasius (?), De Virg.: PG 28, 252 ss. S. Io. Chrysostomus, De Virg.: PG 48, 533 u.

(15) De spirituali paupertate et oboedientia testimonia praecepta S.Scripturae et Patrum afferuntur in Relatione pp. 152-153.

(16) De praxi effectiva consiliorum quae non omn