

Gifts that help to shape our lives.

TALKING:

Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil. Then ask the students to write a one-word answer to eight questions you will give them. Tell them that each answer should be the first word that comes to mind, and that they may not repeat any answer, regardless of the question. Ask first "Who are you?" They will probably write their names. Ask again, "Who are you?" This time they will likely answer boy, girl, friend, sister, brother, son, daughter, etc. Ask the same question 6 more times. Tell them that they can write any word that helps describe who they are. Soon they will begin to move from nouns to adjectives and give such answers as kind, generous, helpful, etc. If students get stuck in this process, they may need a little direction. This will force them to see themselves with a little more depth and possibly in new ways. When you are finished, ask volunteers to read 2 or 3 of their answers and see how many similarities and differences there are. Ask each student to keep their answers for later use in the lesson.

Point out to the students that they have just determined some of the things that make them who and what they are; things that contribute to the unique shape of their individual lives. Point out that they will one day choose a vocation based on the knowledge they have of their own unique qualities and personal characteristics. Some will find fulfillment as single people, some will be ordained as priests or deacons, some will be married people, some will be religious brothers or sisters. All of these vocation lifestyles will provide opportunities for happiness for those uniquely suited to live them. Remind them that they are still in the process of forming their lives, and that they can already reach out to others despite the fact that they will not select a vocation for many years. They can reach out to those who seem to need a friend, play fair in sports, study hard, and help out at home and in school. All of these things will contribute to the positive shape of their lives and prepare them for their future ministry. They can also look for role models, for people whose lives have been shaped in ways that they admire.

Tell students the stories of three religious men and women whose lives have been shaped in very strong and loving ways: Brother Tobias, Mother Teresa, and Father Flannagan.

Brother Tobias is a brother from California who went to Romania and while he was there, saw all the infants who had been abandoned because they were suffering from incurable illnesses. He was so moved by their suffering that he formed his own community to care for and love these children.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta is motivated by her dream that all people, before they die, will know and feel that they are loved. For this

reason she has dedicated her life to serving those people who are the poorest and the most abandoned in the world. Her order ministers to every type of suffering, by providing food, clothing, shelter and medical care for the poor, and homes for orphans. She calls for all of us to serve others with a happy heart because she knows we meet Jesus in every person we serve.

Father Flannagan is famous for his work with boys who had no place to call home and were headed for troubled lives. He established Boys Town as a home to give guidance and love to these boys. Many of these boys have gone on to live responsible and successful adult lives because someone cared enough to nurture their self-esteem and help them find their own gifts.

Close by suggesting to students that each of us can care for others in our own special way, and that in so doing, we form our lives into the shape that God intends for us to be. Point out that with God's help as adults, they each will be able to follow a vocation. Some will choose a lay vocation, married or single; others will be called to the religious life as sisters, brothers or priests and some will become diocesan priests or permanent deacons. These vocations will give them the opportunity to contribute their special talents to the Christian community. By following our call to vocation we fit ourselves into the pattern of God's creation.

DOING:

Give each student a piece of 8 1/2"x11" white paper and smaller pieces of various colors of construction paper (these could be scraps from other projects.) Instruct the students to take the smaller pieces of paper and cut them into various shapes and sizes making the total number of pieces equal to the number of students in the class. Tell them that when they finish, they will have the whole piece of white paper filled. (If there are twenty students, then each student should have twenty different pieces of construction paper of different shapes, colors and sizes.) They should glue these down. The design will be multi-colored representing the different personalities in the classroom. Have students each pick a shape to represent themselves and write their name on it and write one quality they listed when they identified their own qualities by answering the question "Who Am I?" Now ask each student to name a personal quality that they would be willing to share with the rest of the class. Everyone else will write that quality on one of the shapes. When you finish, each student should have a quality

written on each of the shapes on their paper. Place these finished puzzles of shapes in a prominent place in the room reminding students that each student has something to offer the rest of the class and that the gifts of all are needed to form a loving, stable, functioning community. And tell them that these are the gifts that will help them to shape their lives in a specific choice of a lay, religious or ordained vocation.

PRAYING:

Leader: Read aloud John 1:35-39

Leader: The first apostles responded to Jesus' invitation to "Come, and you will see." What they saw, of course, were many human needs, both physical and spiritual, crying out to be met. People like Brother Tobias, Mother Teresa, and Father Flannagan obviously have heard the Lord's invitation and have responded to it. Let us pray today that we too may be open to God's call to find the shape of our lives, our vocation, that will allow us to live happy and holy lives.

Leader: Lord, how can we live our lives caring and sharing with one another?

Response: Come, and you will see.

Leader: Lord, there are people alone and hurting. What can we do?

Response: Come, and you will see.

Leader: Lord, there are people homeless and hungry. How can we make a difference?

Response: Come, and you will see.

Leader: Most gracious and loving God, help us to be open to seeing the needs of those around us. Give us the courage and generosity to respond in a loving manner, and help us not to fear self-sacrifice. Grant us the wisdom truly to understand the shape of our own lives and the needs that only we can meet. Help us to choose wisely when we choose our vocation. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Brother. Amen.

SCRIPTURE SPOTLIGHT:

John 1:35-39 — Come, and you will see.