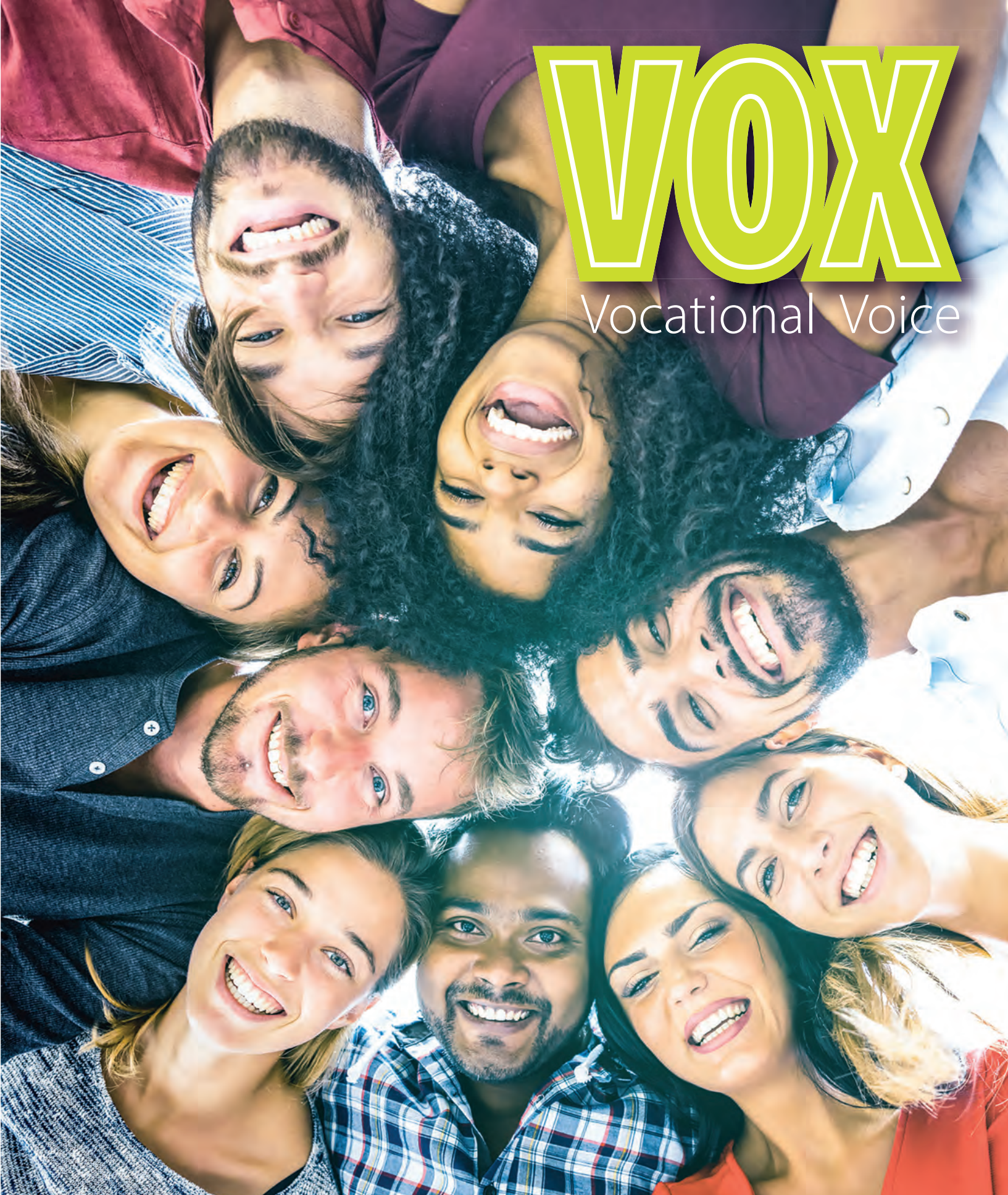




VOX

Vocational Voice

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Welcome to Vox, our Newsletter for Young People!

Calling Young Adult Seekers

The pandemic has changed all our lives. We are living through very challenging times. Many people have suffered so much. It is a time for all of us to be there for each other and to reach out to those most in need, in whatever way we can.

Facing the future, many young people are now asking deeper questions about life and its meaning.

A young woman asked me recently why did so many Religious men and women go on the missions. Did those missionaries make a difference to people's lives? She was studying to be a doctor. Is there such a thing as a call within a call?

In our post-Covid world, I am inviting such seekers to look afresh at the Religious Life of Sisters, Brothers and Priests. It has so much to offer our world today in terms of combatting the viruses of poverty, injustice, loneliness and lack of meaning. And for those called to it, Religious Life can offer a wonderful life of happiness and fulfilment!

Read on to discover the stories of four women and men who are responding to God's call as Religious today. They are from different cultures, ages and backgrounds. They are engaged in different work and ministries. Yet they are united in their passion to serve people and to make a difference in life.

Could this be your call? We, in Vocations Ireland, are here to help you explore and find out more. Why not give us a call today?

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 Vox is a newsletter for young adults, published by Vocations Ireland

Pope Francis speaks to Young People in Message for World Day of Prayer for Vocations

25 April 2021

This is the Year of St. Joseph. In his message for Vocation Sunday, Pope Francis encourages young people to have great dreams and not to be afraid!.

Joseph, the Dreamer

Everyone dreams of finding fulfilment in life. We rightly nurture great hopes, lofty aspirations that ephemeral goals – like success, money and entertainment – cannot satisfy. If we were to ask people to express in one word their life's dream, it would not be difficult to imagine the answer: "to be loved". It is love that gives meaning to life, because it reveals life's mystery. Indeed, we only have life if we give it; we truly possess it only if we generously give it away. Saint Joseph has much to tell us in this regard, because, through the dreams that God inspired in him, he made of his life a gift.

Do not be afraid!

The first words that Saint Joseph heard in a dream were an invitation not to be afraid, because God remains ever faithful to his promises: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid" (Mt 1:20). Do not be afraid: these words the Lord also addresses to you, dear sister, and to you, dear brother, whenever you feel that, even amid uncertainty and hesitation, you can no longer delay your desire to give your life to him. He repeats these words when, perhaps amid trials and misunderstandings, you seek to follow his will every day, wherever you find yourself. They are words you will hear anew, at every step of your vocation, as you return to your first love. They are a refrain accompanying all those who – like Saint Joseph – say yes to God with their lives, through their fidelity each day.

**Blessed are those who dream dreams and are happy
to pay the price to make them come true!**



**"Vocation to
Religious Life
is a gift"**

100

1921 - 2021

Great Joy as Sr. John Celebrates 100!



In the Bon Secours Convent Cork, we had a very special celebration on March 4th as Sr John Chrysostom Duggan celebrated her 100th Birthday! Being in remarkably good health, up and about each day, independent and active in all Community activities, she is the first person to celebrate this momentous birthday in our Convent in living memory.

Celebration

Celebrations began on the evening of March 3rd – decorations were hung, special birthday flower arrangements and numerous birthday cards received from far and near were set out. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we could not receive visitors on the day. Many visitors called to the Convent door leaving greetings and gifts for Sr John.

Connecting on Zoom!

A highlight of the day for Sr John was her zoom call with her two siblings, Sr Isobel, a Dominican Sister living in Galway and Sr Agnes, a Sister of Nevers, living in the UK. The joy and happiness expressed by all three Duggan sisters was great to see and we hope that they can meet in person sometime soon once restrictions are relaxed. After a delicious lunch, Sr John joined a zoom call with Sisters from across Communities in Ireland and Great Britain. Sr Eileen, unable to be physically present on the day, led the good wishes as Sisters shared their memories of Sr John.

Gratitude

Sisters expressed their gratitude and thanks for her wonderful ministry and commitment as a Sister of Bon Secours. Many had been mentored by Sr John in their formation and nurse training. Special guest, Sr Rosie, Congregation Leader, joined the call to greet and congratulate Sr John on her special day.

From Clare to Cork

Sr John was born in the middle of a family of 7 siblings. She thought of entering religious life during her time being educated by the Sisters of Mercy in Clare. She prayed a lot about it and then spoke to her confessor who was a Franciscan priest in Ennis. After some time he referred her to the Sisters of Bon Secours in Cork as she told him she was interested in entering a nursing Congregation. Her wish was to help sick people and the terminally ill.

Sr John enjoyed her day, expressing her gratitude to God, her family and the Bon Secours Sisters, for all the blessings she has received throughout her life, bringing her to this wonderful day. Her advice to anyone interested in religious life today is to remember that a vocation to religious life is a gift. It needs to be nourished with a life of prayer and good works. It needs a person to have qualities such as commitment, availability, stamina, good health. One has to be willing to live simply and enjoy the wonderful gift of life.

The call to more...

by Sr. Orla Treacy

A journey taken

St Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits has a phrase from his Spiritual Exercises, its known as "the Magis", literally meaning More. I am not exactly sure what St Ignatius meant by it but it has helped me in my life, at least it has helped me to put a word on the journey that I have taken and the direction I want to continue travelling.

I went to Secondary School with the Loreto Sisters, and was impressed by their spirit, humour, dedication and depth. I saw something more in them and I wanted it. I didn't know exactly what the more was but I knew I was missing something. I had the desire to follow them, to join their way of life but then again it was a crazy idea, at least that's what everyone told me. To be a Sister, Nun, Brother, Priest is definitely not a usual life choice but this seemed to be my call to More.

A desire for God

After finishing school, the desire to discover the More increased. I realised this More was actually a desire for God, for prayer and for contemplation. I still didn't know what to do, I decided to study

Sr. Orla Treacy is an Irish Loreto sister who runs a boarding school in war torn South Sudan. She works for the education and empowerment of young women. Orla was educated in Presentation Convent Tralee, Co. Kerry, then Loretto Convent in Bray completing her Leaving Cert in 1991. She went to Mater Dei Institute of Education, Dublin, and became a teacher. She taught in Presentation Brothers College Cork, Loreto Letterkenny, St Muredach's Ballina and Loreto Crumlin. At the age of 24 Orla decided to join the Loretto Sisters. She was professed in 2005. In 2017 she was awarded The Hugh O'Flaherty International Humanitarian Award by the Mayor of Killarney for her pioneering work in South Sudan. In 2019, Orla was awarded an International Women of Courage Award. Her call to Religious Life has led to a very radical mission and life of service.



theology, learn all I could about God and hopefully that would satisfy my thirst. It didn't! I finished college, travelled, worked, socialised, enjoyed life, but I was still longing for More, for God.

A new way of life

After years of exploration and experimentation I finally decided to test Religious Life. I had no idea if I had a vocation, or what that even meant but I just knew I wasn't settled. I had tried so many other things and nothing satisfied me. Now I was going to try Religious Life. And that is when I came slowly to recognise the desire for More in my life.

Happiness

I have been very happy in this path, I know it's not the usual way, but I feel so content, rested and connected, I can definitely recommend it. My search for More, for more of God, for more of life, continues in my Religious Life. I now work in South Sudan and have experienced new awareness of God and of my need for God. While my outward day is busy and active my inward desire for God continues to grow.

How about you?

St Augustine talks of the restless heart, for me I like to think of it as a growing heart constantly seeking More from life, from God, from prayer....

If you think you are interested in exploring what is the More is in your own life, why not try Religious Life. Yes, you will be considered half- crazy but it's a wonderful journey and I definitely recommend it!

www.loreto.ie

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A journey taken
The call to more...
How about you?
A new way of life
Happiness
A desire for God

Italian born Giacomo Gelardi completed a PhD in organic chemistry and was working in York, England, when he came in contact with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY



A restless heart looking for God

Br Giacomo Gelardi writes about the path that led him to become an MSC missionary.



"My vocation began in my heart - with a hole in my heart."

"I grew up blessed in a blessed family. When I was 16, my parents decided to split up. It was the most painful moment in my life. That hole in my heart grew deeper, and my thirst for love became bigger. I started looking for things and people to fill it. However, no matter how hard I looked, nobody and not a thing in the world was able to fill the void.

One day, when I was 20, sitting on the steps outside San Francesco's Church in Urbino, Italy, with the person I loved most in life, I saw a group of young friars walking down the street. They looked so full of joy that I said, 'I think it would be cool to be a friar'. She looked at me bewildered, asking, 'Are you serious?'

Yes, I was serious. Now, I know it was God trying to tell me something, but I, very proudly, ignored God, and myself too. I kept going my way - religious life was too scary. Pleasure, money, and success were all a lot more appealing. Why on earth would I leave them?

I became a chemist with a satisfying job in research in Verona, Italy, where I lived with my girlfriend. I remember sitting at Mass one day, hearing Christ saying, 'If you feed the hungry, if you welcome

the stranger, if you clothe the naked, if you visit the sick and those in prison, you will do it to me' (cf. Mt 25:31-41). 'Well', I thought, 'I am not doing this.' I felt I had to do something, but I was not ready to let go of my life yet.

A few years later, I lost my dream job and moved to York, England. I did a PhD in organic chemistry, but I knew this was not my path anymore. I knew it was not filling my heart. One day, sitting at Mass, I heard Christ inviting me to action again. The word 'healing' resonated within me. If I followed God's way and served him, I might be healed as well... I could not ignore the Lord anymore. At this time, I had no attachments and no job, so I really was free to choose.

Could I really serve the poor and needy?

I found a job as a support worker for disabled people. It was tough, but I loved it. With time, prayer and reflection I realised that I truly was serving Christ himself. It was then that I started feeling my heart gradually filling up with love, day after day.

The most difficult bit of the discerning process was making the first step. After some searching, I found the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Their joyful way of living the religious life, and their message that God is Love, appealed to me. It seemed the best way to answer that voice - to love God by bringing his love to all, especially the poor and marginalised, and to let him heal me. So, I asked to be one of them and now here I am.

Looking back, starting from a wounded heart, I could only go to the Sacred Heart. Now I know the Sacred Heart is the only place I needed to go to heal my heart and to quench the thirst for love."

www.mscmissions.ie

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What are YOU looking for?

WONDERING
WHAT GOD IS CALLING
YOU TO DO WITH
YOUR LIFE?

Samuel is a group for young adults (18-35) open to listen to the Word of God and putting it into action in their lives.

Speak Lord, your servant is listening
(1 Samuel 3:10)

A safe space to explore life options with fellow seekers.

Read on to find out more about Samuel Groups'...



Young people of faith today live in a very secular world. We all need friends and we all need support.

The main aim of a 'Samuel Group' is to help the participants listen to God's word and let God's call shape decisions about life choices. Those who take part in a group aim to leave with a clearer view of God's call for their life. They will also grow in their understanding of what it is to make decisions as a Christian.

They will make new friends and have great fun along the way!

The name 'Samuel' comes from the story of the call of Samuel in the Bible. Samuel says to God: "Speak, Lord – your servant is listening".

A famous Italian Bishop, Cardinal Martini of Milan began Samuel Groups in Italy in 1989. Each year for the following decade he brought together about 200 young people in his diocese for monthly meetings on Sunday afternoons. In recent years, several Samuel groups have begun in the UK and Ireland.

'Samuel Groups' are aimed at single young adults 18-35 who want to make concrete decisions about their life. These decisions could be around relationships, career, college, religious life, priesthood, marriage or maybe about spending time as a volunteer or a missionary.

The group meets once a month for 6 – 9 months. Each participant in the group also has an individual monthly meeting with a spiritual companion. This person helps them in their spiritual journey and discusses any questions they may have.

Each Samuel Group meeting starts with Lectio Divina. This is a form of prayer based on scripture and reflection on a passage from the Bible. The group then listens to a talk on an aspect of faith, for example – discernment, spiritual accompaniment, different types of prayer or different life paths and vocations.

Samuel Groups provide an encouraging space of friendship and support for those searching for something deeper in life. If you think this is something that would help you in making life choices, you can find out more on the Vocations Ireland website

<https://vocationsireland.com/programmes/#samuelgroups>



Simon Fernandes made first profession of vows as a Presentation Brother in 2019. He is now a student at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. Simon was born and grew up in Pakistan, a country where Christians are a tiny minority. Here Simon shares his vocation story. Simon is seen here at his First Profession Day at Mount St. Joseph, Cork, with his mother Zehra, brother, Sean and cousin, Fiona.

Simon's Story: A Journey in Faith, an Adventure in Hope

The Faith of My Grandmother

I feel like I have always had a desire to be of service to my fellow human beings and to God. Therefore, I would like to claim that my vocation story began since I was a young boy at the age of 5. I have memories of my Grandma taking me for evening Mass. She would go to Church hours before Mass began. She wanted to pray the Rosary with the other women, while I played with the children. I would come into the Church and sit down on the kneelers during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, before the Mass. I recall being reverent, even as a young child. At home, we said the Rosary almost daily and some night prayers.

To this day, I still remember those prayers by heart.

Inspiring Lives

As I grew older and started hanging out with my friends and extended family I always clung to the Rosary as my basic prayer and said it almost daily. As I grew into my teens, I was part of the Altar Servers and Lectors. I always wanted to help and serve, in any way I could. I was much influenced by the lives of the Brothers and Sisters that I daily met at Mass but never understood this as a calling to join the Religious Life. It was their kindness and the generosity of their lives, along with their good works which inspired me.

Pre-Medical Studies

As I still was unsure what direction to take in life, I pursued my education in the field of pre-medical studies. Then I began to think about Religious Life. However, it took me two years to discern if that was really what I wanted to do with my life. So, during that time I worked as a trainee Dialysis Technician and lived the normal young adult life.

Even though I saw the medical profession as a great way of service, I felt a strong urge to commit myself to something deeper and more spiritual. Then I was introduced to the Presentation Brothers. I sensed, almost from the beginning, that this is the missionary kind of journey I would like to travel.

God at work in my Life

During my initial formation I have really experienced and understood God's love for me in a unique way. This has helped me to respond to God's call and to give my life in the service of my sisters and brothers. I feel that God, has always been at work in my life leading me from one experience to another. I have a special devotion to Mary, and this is a strong feature of the spirituality of the Presentation Brothers. My journey in the Presentation Way of Life has truly been a journey in faith and an adventure in hope. I still have a long way to go in my formation and much to learn. However, I believe God is with me every step of the way.

Consider the Challenge of Religious Life

The happiness of the Brothers I have met has impressed me, their prayer and community life, along with the Presentation charism for forming Christ in the young. I would encourage any young man or woman, who is searching for a deeper meaning and challenge to consider Religious Life! Our suffering world needs the witness of true brothers and sisters.

Calling Young Musicians

Do you have a love for music?
Does music help you to pray?

Do you enjoy sharing your music with others?

If so, take a look at what Vocations Ireland are offering.

Visit the music website

www.vocation-music-award.com

Vocation Music Award



SONG WRITING COMPETITION

Calling all young adults
aged 18-35 to participate
in a songwriting/
composition competition
on the theme of vocation.

KEY DATES:

31st July 2021 Final date for submission of songs

22nd August 2021 Professional judging

11th September 2021 winners announced in a Live Stream



VOCATION
MUSIC AWARD

For further information
Web: www.vocation-music-award.com
Facebook: <https://bit.ly/2Ywe60S>

YOU CAN ALSO SUPPORT US BY
SPREADING THE WORD - PRAYER - FINANCIAL AID

Are you up to the Challenge?

Be in with a
chance
to win one
of the
exciting prizes
on offer.

€2,000

€1,000 and

€500

in cash!

*Recording
opportunities!*

*Musical
equipment!*

*Promoting
your own
music!*



Who are Vocations Ireland?

We are an umbrella organisation for all the religious congregations in Ireland.

Our aim is to

- Build a culture of vocation that contributes to a Global vocation to Religious Life
- Promote the calls to specific vocations, including sisters, brothers, missionaries, contemplatives and priests.
- We offer information on other vocations and can direct you to where you can find more information on Diocesan Priesthood, marriage, lay ministry.

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