



Encouraging a Man Discerning Consecrated Life

A Practical Guide for Parishioners and Mentors

Introduction

When a man begins to wonder about consecrated life, the pull is often quieter than priesthood.

It may not come with thoughts of preaching or sacramental ministry. Instead, it may surface as:

- A longing for deeper prayer
- A desire for community
- A hunger for simplicity
- A draw toward hidden service
- A fascination with a particular religious charism

But alongside attraction often comes interior tension.

Your role is not to evaluate his suitability. Your role is to help him explore honestly, without fear or performance.

1. What Often Moves in a Man Discerning Consecrated Life

Men discerning consecrated life frequently experience interior questions like:

- “Will my life matter if it is hidden?”
- “Will I lose my identity?”
- “What does masculinity look like in religious life?”
- “Will I regret not pursuing career success?”
- “Am I giving something up or becoming something?”

Unlike priesthood, consecrated life may not carry visible authority. That can create deeper psychological wrestling.



Many men struggle with:

- Fear of insignificance
- Fear of invisibility
- Fear of losing autonomy
- Fear of lifelong obedience
- Fear of living without public recognition

These fears are not signs of weakness. They are human.

2. Conversations That Invite Depth

Instead of focusing immediately on vows, begin with identity.

You might ask:

- “What attracts you about this way of life?”
- “What feels freeing about it?”
- “What feels like a loss?”
- “What kind of man do you believe you are becoming?”
- “When do you feel most rooted in Christ?”

These questions allow him to explore who he is, not just what he might do.

3. Addressing Interior Struggles

Fear of Hiddenness

Consecrated life often means hidden service.

You might say: “Fruitfulness in the Church isn’t always visible. Some of the most powerful lives are lived quietly.”

Avoid: Romanticizing hiddenness or dismissing the desire to be seen.

Let him name the tension honestly.



Fear of Losing Individual Identity

Religious life involves community, obedience, and a shared mission.

You might say: “Healthy community doesn’t erase identity — it refines and anchors it.”

Avoid: Overpromising harmony or minimizing the difficulty of community life.

Questions of Masculinity

Some men wrestle with whether consecrated life aligns with strength or leadership.

You might say: “Strength in the Gospel is not dominance, but self-gift. Christ’s masculinity was expressed through surrender.”

Avoid: Turning the conversation into a theological lecture.

Keep it grounded in lived example.

Fear of Permanent Commitment

Vows feel absolute.

You might say: “Discernment begins with exploration. No one is asking you to promise your whole life tomorrow.”

Avoid: Framing vows as something he must emotionally feel ready for before speaking to a community.

4. What Not to Do

- Do not assume he is choosing the “lesser” path if not pursuing priesthood
- Do not compare consecrated life to career success
- Do not frame it as retreat from the world
- Do not joke about poverty or obedience

Protect the dignity of the vocation in your language.



5. Signs He May Be Ready for the Next Step

Encourage contact with a religious community when:

- The attraction persists over time
- He speaks positively about a specific charism
- He desires more structure in discernment
- He wants clarity about vows and formation

A gentle invitation might be: “Would you consider visiting the community that attracts you? Seeing it firsthand might bring clarity.”

Again, frame exploration as freedom.

6. How to Pray for Him

Pray that he:

- Grows in secure identity in Christ
- Discerns fruitfulness beyond visibility
- Trusts that obedience is not diminishment
- Receives peace about hiddenness

Consecrated life is often a call to deeper interior surrender. Your steady encouragement can help him see that surrender is not loss; it is transformation.