

Workshop Notes

Vocation – Sr Sonia



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

LEADER'S NOTES

This presentation lasts up to 30 minutes. **We recommend you deliver the whole workshop but feel free to use the slides and script as time and circumstances allow. To reduce time, omit extension tasks.**



SLIDE TWO

The 4th Sunday of Easter is known as Good Shepherd Sunday or Vocations Sunday. It is a day set aside by the Church throughout the world to encourage people to consider and pray for their own vocation and support others as they discover theirs.

But what does vocation mean?

Every word has an origin. The study of the origin of words is called etymology.

Vocation originates from the Latin words: [Click to reveal on screen](#)

Vox – meaning 'voice'

Vocare – meaning 'to call'

The Catholic Church understands vocation to be a person's entire life lived in response to God's voice, God's call.

Through the teachings of Jesus, we learn that God loves us so much that he always wants the best for us. Once we know that, we enter into a deeper relationship with God and grow in our desire to love and serve others.

As we are all unique individuals, God calls us to deliver this love in ways particular to our own talents, interests and motivations.



This is important as sometimes we link vocation with a job or profession we will 'do' as an adult. But vocation is far more than 'what we do'. It is closer to 'who we are' and it is not dependent on age or ability.

Extension task – For example, 'I am' a person who wants to help bring out the best in others. I may 'do' this through my role as the friend who always encourages, or as school team captain, or as reading mentor. What motivates us is not, for example, our ability to read well, but God's voice asking us to help others read well too. Over time, God's call to us to bring out the best in others may be fulfilled in different ways that also employ our talents.

Think about what motivates you? Is it making people happy? Is it helping others appreciate beauty? Is it baking cakes for people? Is it making a difference?

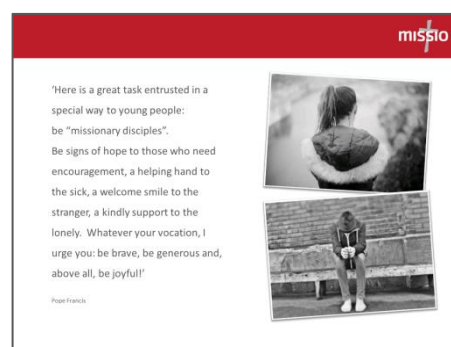
Consider, and perhaps talk about, the many ways your particular talents and interests enable you to respond to this call each day.

Slide image source - <http://maxpixel.freegreatpicture.com/static/photo/1x/Jesus-Merciful-Father-Good-Herdsman-1603691.jpg>

SLIDE THREE

That we are all unique and valuable in God's eyes, also means that our voice, i.e. our opinion, matters.

Pope Francis reminds us that we are all missionaries of God's love, and so we have a responsibility to speak up for those who struggle to be heard such as the poor, the marginalised and the lonely.



Extension task – Ask your students if they can think of others who struggle to be heard. Answers could include: those lacking political freedoms, the elderly, the homeless.

We are to build with **those who struggle to be heard** God's kingdom on earth; a world of justice, mercy, and peace. This was the example set by Jesus, and one God calls us all to follow.

Speaking up for others and speaking out to make our community or world better is never easy, whatever our age. But to do so as a young person, demands courage and commitment.

The Bible is full of occasions in which God calls on young people to take up this challenge (e.g. David against Goliath, Joseph in Egypt, Our Lady). The following reading is taken from the book of Jeremiah. It recounts the young Jeremiah's nervousness at being called by God to be the Lord's prophet, or spokesperson. Listen carefully to God's response.

Read Scripture – you could ask a pupil to do this. [Click twice to reveal text on screen in sequence](#)

The word of the Lord came to me, saying,
'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you;
And before you came out from your mother, I set you apart.'
I said, 'But Lord and Master I do not know how to speak, for I am too young.'

And the Lord said to me, 'Don't say "I am too young";
You are to go to all those to whom I send you,
And you are to speak to them as I direct you.
Do not be afraid before them, for I am with you to guide and protect.'

Jeremiah 1:4-8

SLIDE FOUR

Jeremiah lived in dangerous times. Many did not believe in God and ridiculed those who did. Unsurprisingly Jeremiah felt nervous. But he was strengthened by his faith and trusted in God's belief in him to speak out against the people's cruel practices.

Jeremiah went on to change the lives of many by staying close to God and following his call. As Pope Francis recently said: 'When God touches the heart of a young man or woman, they become capable of doing tremendous things.'

Today across the world there are young men and women, such as Jeremiah, who are called in a particular way to deliver God's love to others, often in dangerous situations and far from their homeland. They are called missionaries and are sent by God, just as Jeremiah was and as some of us may be.

Missio, the Pope's own charity for overseas mission, supports the training and work of thousands of missionaries who dedicate their lives to serving people living with poverty and injustice.

Through following the example of Jesus and encouraging others to do the same, missionaries strengthen individuals and communities. [**Click twice to reveal image of Sr Sonia and the Red Box, positioned by Malawi**](#)

This is Sr Sonia. She is a missionary sister in Lisanjala, a remote part of Malawi. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world.

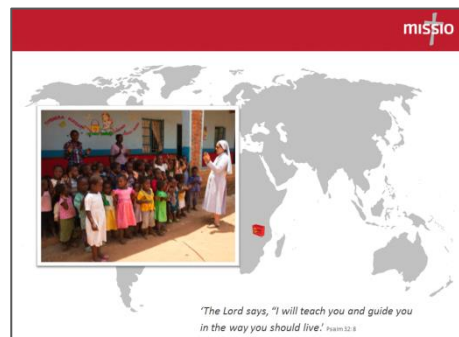
Sr Sonia is pictured here alongside pupils from the local primary school. She started a feeding program at the school to encourage children living in poverty to attend and to ensure the children there received a free daily meal, without which many would go hungry. Before the feeding program the school had 200 pupils. It now has over 700.



But the feeding program isn't the only thing Sr Sonia introduced. When she arrived in Lisanjala, she asked the people in the area what they needed. They told her a secondary school and a health clinic. With the help of the Catholic Church and Missio's supporters, Sr Sonia helped establish both.

SLIDE FIVE

Sr Sonia is originally from Paraguay, a country in South America. After university she lived and worked in Paraguay's capital city, at a busy radio station. She was happy there, surrounded by friends and family, but felt that something was missing. Sr Sonia believed God was calling her to live a different life. After reflecting carefully on her vocation she decided to become a religious sister.



At first Sr Sonia's family were not happy with her decision. Now they are pleased and proud of the difference she is making by sharing God's love with others. Her life in Malawi isn't easy. Imagine living in a place with no running water, no electricity, no transport, frequent food shortages, far from family and friends!

In spite of all these difficulties, the thing that drives Sr Sonia is her motivation to serve God's people, as Jesus did. When times are tough she turns to one of her favourite passages in the Bible for encouragement:

*The Lord says, "I will teach you
and guide you in the way you should live.
I will watch over you and be your guide.*

Psalm 32: 8

For Sr Sonia, the teaching and guidance referred to in this passage is found in Jesus example. Like him, she spends her life loving and serving others. As we have heard, she does this in practical ways, but also by helping people's faith to grow too.

Providing practical help like education and healthcare is vital, because God does not want people to suffer. But spiritual support is also important. All people need to know that God is close to them, loves them and has given them value beyond measure. This knowledge is especially important when life is difficult and unfair.

Extension task – Think of a time when you have gone through difficulties, maybe the loss of a family member or a personal disappointment. What helped you to get by? Was it support of friends, the safety of home? Was it perhaps belief in God and prayer?

SLIDE SIX

Earlier we heard a reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah, written around 2,600 years ago. We heard how God called the young Jeremiah to deliver his message to an unequal and at times unloving world.

All these years later there is still unfairness and unhappiness. God calls us, like Jeremiah, to challenge this through our prayers, words and actions.

Pope Francis reminded us of this when in a speech to people your age he said:

‘God is also calling you, he is looking at all the love you are able to offer. With your plans and with your courage, roads open up that lead to a better, fairer, less cruel world.’

In response to this call and remembering that our voice matters, let’s finish this assembly thinking of ways we can be missionaries of God’s love today.

The following suggestions are dependent on age. Please use accordingly.

Action one – Mindful that our words affect others, we can resolve to use those that build people up, rather than knock them down, especially on social media.

Action two (a) – If you are between the ages of 15-18, register your right to vote. Although in the UK people can’t cast a vote until they are 18, by joining the electoral register you’ve already expressed a desire to have a say in how your community and country is run. That means politicians will want to win your vote by appealing to the things you consider important, like university tuition fees, employment, homelessness or discrimination.

**For classroom resources to encourage young people to register to vote, visit www.bitetheballot.co.uk*

Action two (b) – Join Missio’s efforts to build God’s kingdom on earth by praying for our work and raising money to support projects (such as Sr Sonia’s feeding program) in impoverished and marginalised communities overseas. Maybe use your voice by organising a battle of the bands or spoken word fundraising event.

Action three – The best way to hear God’s call is to spend time alone with God in silent prayer and by pondering the word of God, especially the Gospel. God desires that all his children flourish. We can trust therefore that what God calls us to be will bring happiness to our lives and to the lives of others.

Conclude the assembly with a moment of silent reflection or with the prayer on the following slide. The prayer is adapted from ‘The Mission of My Life’ by Blessed John Henry Newman.



SLIDE SEVEN

Click to reveal the verses in sequence

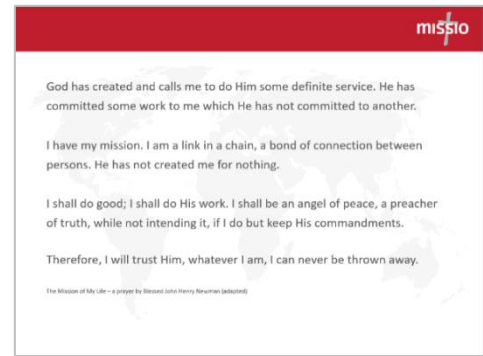
God has created and calls me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.

I have my mission. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for nothing.

I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments.

Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away.

Mission Together, the children's branch of Missio, produced a short film about Sr Sonia and her work. It is available to view via Missio's website: <https://www.missio.org.uk/films>



If you have any comments about this or any of our resources, or if you would like to invite Missio into your school to deliver a workshop or assembly, please email education2@missio.org.uk. Below is some feedback from recent school visits:

‘You taught us how to try to become missionaries ourselves, about what it means to be merciful and what we thought it meant to have peace. I think that we have learned how to try and live out what Jesus told us to do, “Love your neighbour as I have loved you.”’ —Year 8 pupil

‘We would like to thank Missio for your visit. It was great. Many of my GCSE pupils are now using Missio as an example of how Christians can fulfil their vocation.’ —RE Curriculum Leader

‘The talk delivered from Missio was very interesting. I learnt about the meaning of peace and its true meaning – to restore a bond. I enjoyed working together creating our own definition of peace.’ —Year 9 pupil

‘THANK YOU so much for today. The students and I were really inspired! The LSA in the class also said how brilliant you were and really enjoyed Period 1.’—Head of Religious Education