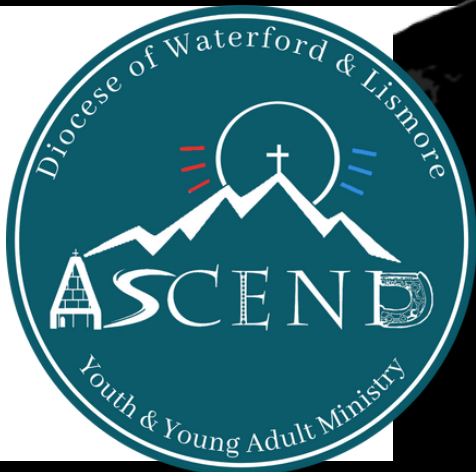




FROM FARM FIELD TO BATTLE FIELD

FR EMIL KAPAUN: SERVANT OF GOD

RESOURCE PACK FOR
POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS
/ YOUTH GROUPS



DIocese OF WATERFORD & LISMORE



This resource book is designed to celebrate the life of Fr Emil Kapaun, an astounding witness to faith and priesthood, even in the face of battle, and horrendous Prisoner of War camp conditions.

Feel free to use whatever elements of this resource you feel best suit the ability and age of the young people you teach / work with.

CROSSROADS: THE GOOD THIEF (1955)



FR KAPAUN: REAL LIFE CATHOLIC



SAINT IN THE FOXHOLE: HISTORY CHANNEL



LINKS TO JUNIOR CYCLE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1.5 explore the presence of religious themes in contemporary culture through an examination of art, music, literature or film
- 1.8 describe the role of prayer in the lives of people of faith
- 1.12 synthesise and consider the insights gained about how people express and live out their beliefs, religious or otherwise
- 2.8 present stories of individuals or groups in the history of two major world religions that have had a positive impact on the lives of people because of their commitment to living out their beliefs.
- 2.9 describe how the faith of a believer can change at different stages in life
- 3.1 examine different sources of values and ways in which the values of a person relate to their everyday choices, their relationships, and their responsibilities to others
- 3.2 reflect upon and discuss what it means to be moral, why people living in society need to be moral and what are the influences on and the sources of authority for a person's moral decision-making

JUNIOR CYCLE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - CBA 1: A PERSON OF COMMITMENT

During a period of three weeks, with support/guidance by the teacher, students will research and report on a person whose religious beliefs or worldview have had a positive impact on the world, past or present.

LINKS TO LEAVING CERTIFICATE NON-EXAM FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Section A: The Search for Meaning

Topic 1: Contemporary expressions of the search for meaning.

- The great questions concerning the goal and purpose of life, the meaning of good and evil and the experience of suffering.

Topic 3: The meaning of suffering and evil as understood by a religious perspective.

- Examples of people whose lives are influenced by their faith.
- The role of religious faith in Ireland today

Section D: Morality in Action

Topic 1: Becoming Moral

- Why be moral? Influences on moral principles: peers, family, media, culture, religion, etc.
- The role of religion in informing conscience?

Topic 2: Morality and Religious Belief:

- The Christian understanding of sin and reconciliation

Topic 3: Moral Dilemmas

- Examples of moral decision-making in action.
- The role of religion in moral decision-making.

Section E: God-Talk

Topic 1: My Image of God

- My image of God.
- Images of God in art/music/literature & contemporary culture.

Topic 3: God "in the bits'n'pieces of the everyday":

- Implications of images of God for life.
- Signs and rituals- special moments of God's presence.

Section G: Celebrating Faith

Topic 2: Prayer

- Exploring prayer as a need to communicate with God.
- Examples of prayer from different religious traditions.
- Sacred spaces

Topic 3: Meditation and Contemplation

- The human need for reflection in a busy world
- The use of sacred and inspirational texts in meditation

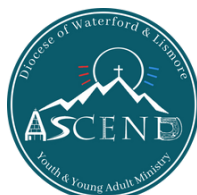
Section H: Story

Topic 1: Story

- Stories that carry meaning and have transformative power.

Topic 3: God's unfolding Story

- Where is God speaking today?
- All part of God's story?
- The student's story



RESOURCE PACK PRODUCED BY ASCEND: WATERFORD & LISMORE YOUTH MINISTRY

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Email: youthministry@waterfordlismore.ie

Disclaimer: Throughout this resource you will find links to external websites. Although we make every effort to ensure these links are accurate, up to date and relevant, Ascend Youth Ministry cannot take responsibility for pages maintained by external providers. If you come across any external links that don't work, we would be grateful if you could report them to us at youthministry@waterfordlismore.ie. While we strive to provide only links to useful and ethical websites, we have no control over the content and nature of these sites and the links to other websites do not imply a recommendation for all the content found on these sites.

CROSSROADS: THE GOOD THIEF (1955)



FR KAPAUN: REAL LIFE CATHOLIC



SAINT IN THE FOXHOLE: HISTORY CHANNEL



Index

"When I was ordained, I was determined to "spend myself" for God. I was determined to do that cheerfully, no matter in what circumstances I would be placed or how hard a life I would be asked to lead."

Fr Emil Kapaun, 1944 to his Bishop.

Page 1	Who was Fr Emil Kapaun?
Page 3	Quiz Time
Page 4	Crack the Code
Page 5	Cry of the Heart
Page 6	My Response
Page 7	Compare / Contrast War Chaplains
Page 8	Movie Poster
Page 9	Doodle Prayer
Page 10	Dear Fr Emil...
Page 11	Word Search
Page 12	What is a Vocation?
Page 13	Puzzle Solutions



"NO ONE HAS GREATER LOVE THAN THIS, TO LAY DOWN ONE'S LIFE FOR ONE'S FRIENDS." JOHN 15:13

SERVANT OF GOD - ARMY CHAPLAIN

FROM FARM FIELD TO BATTLE FIELD

Emil Joseph Kapaun, was born on April 20, 1916 in Pilsen, Kansas, USA and grew up on his parents' farm. Emil enjoyed the physical farmwork, and his skills with repairing farm implements stood to him in later life. Throughout his childhood and highschool years a desire to serve others as a priest grew in his heart, and Emil eventually was ordained a Roman Catholic priest. Following a number of years of parish life, Fr Emil enlisted in the US Army and became an army chaplain in India and Burma during World War II. Having served in World War II, Fr Emil could have retired to quiet parish life again, but he chose to serve as Chaplain again during the Korean war.



KOREAN WAR



Capt. Emil Kapaun (right), former chaplain with Headquarters Company, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, helps another soldier carry an exhausted Soldier off the battlefield early in the Korean War.

Sent to Korea in 1950, Fr Emil decided his place was with his men at the front where the fighting was. He would run from foxhole to foxhole, encouraging the men, praying with them, rescuing men from the thick of battle or administering Last Rites on the battlefield. When fighting died down, he would celebrate Mass in abandoned buildings, or the hood of his jeep. His "boys" loved this Kansas-farmer turned Catholic Chaplain because they knew he cared and was man of authenticity and service.

Fr Emil Kapaun celebrating Mass on the hood of his Jeep.



The war took a decisive turn when the Chinese military came to the aid of the Koreans sending 20,000 men as reinforcements. Fr Kapaun's unit was surrounded and the men fought hard to resist capture. He risked his life many times during this intense period of battle. When it became apparent there was no hope for them, Fr Kapaun had the option to escape, but he chose again to stay with his men as they were captured. The Chinese troops forced the American prisoners on a 60 mile death march to the prison camp. One wounded soldier, Herb Miller, was too injured to walk. Fr Kapaun carried him on his shoulders because he knew Miller would be shot if the captors saw the extent of his injuries.

PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

Conditions in Prison Camp No. 5 were horrendous. Men had scabies, scurvy, beriberi and pneumonia. Thousands died that winter in the sub-zero temperatures. Bodies piled up outside huts, frozen stiff in death. Starvation set in as they were given small handfuls of birdseed and millet each day, no more than 300 calories. In desperate times, men were driven to desperate thoughts and acts to survive, but Kapaun did all he could to keep them calm and keep hope alive. He showed a new level of ingenuity, stealing food to give to the men. He prayed to St Dismas, the Good Thief for his intercession before each secret raid into the countryside at night, sneaking past guards, scrounging for bits of wood, ears of corn, red peppers torn from frozen bushes, anything they could find. They stole from warehouses where guards stored food. Fr Kapaun boiled snow in pots he cleverly made from scraps of tin, using the skills he picked up repairing farm implements as a young boy, announcing "Hot Coffee" to the fellow prisoners, joking to keep their spirits up. When they were no longer able to clean themselves or their clothing, he cared for them like a mother. He even picked the lice off them. When the Chinese officers rolled out their propaganda sessions to brain wash the Americans to accept communism, Kapaun calmly told them they were wrong or made fun of their efforts to keep up the American morale. He was depised by the guards for this, as well as for his Catholic beliefs.

Dismas, the Good Thief





THE DEATH OF FR KAPAUN

In Easter of 1951, Fr. Kapaun held a prayer service, even though it was forbidden. He encouraged the men to keep going, and to believe that Jesus could and would bring joy out of their suffering, just like he rose from the dead after he suffered on the cross. The prisoners said this was one of the most poignant and inspiring events of their lives. Malnourished, freezing and caring for those who were seriously ill, Kapaun himself eventually developed pneumonia and a blood clot in his leg. The men tried to keep this a secret from the guards, and care for him as best they could, as they knew what would happen once the guards realised the truth. Kapaun would be taken to what the Chinese captors called "the Hospital," a mud shack where he would be left to die. When the guards came to take him, his men wanted to fight to keep him with them but Fr. Kapaun said that everything was okay, because he was going to heaven soon. One of them told the others, later, that he had heard the chaplain whispering: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they're doing."

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING."

Fr. Kapaun died on May 23rd, 1951 in the prison "hospital" because he was not given any medical care and could not feed himself. He was only 35 years old. He was buried in a shallow grave there, before his remains along with other American POWs were returned to American soil after the war.

It was another two years before the war ended and the remaining POW survivors were able to return home, but Fr Kapaun's example inspired them to keep going through the difficulties. When they finally got home, many of them told stories of Fr. Kapaun's bravery, and how he saved their lives. They said that things would have been a lot different without Fr. Kapaun there to care for them.

At the end of the war, surviving prisoners of war emerged from the camp with a 4-foot wooden crucifix they made in Kapaun's honour. The cross had actually been carved by a Jewish prisoner. The group spent months secretly collecting firewood, carving it, and using radio wire for a crown of thorns.

Pope John Paul II declared him a Servant of God in 1993 and he is a candidate for sainthood. He was posthumously awarded the U.S. military's highest decoration, the Congressional Medal of Honour, for his actions in the Korean War, as well as the Bronze Star, the Distinguished Service Cross and others. In fact, he is the most decorated military chaplain in US history.

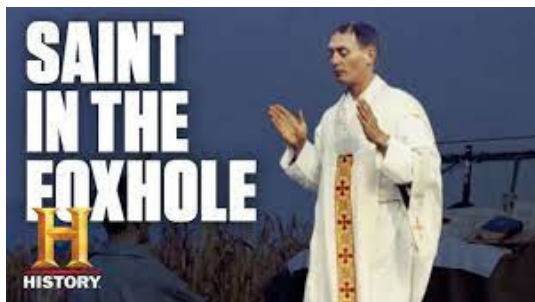


Crucifix carved in honour of Fr. Emil Kapaun.

TIME TO REFLECT:

- IF YOU COULD MEET FR KAPAUN, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO HIM?
- WHERE DO YOU THINK FR KAPAUN'S STRENGTH CAME FROM?
- WHY DID FR KAPAUN NOT TAKE THE OPTION TO ESCAPE HOME? DO YOU THINK HE WAS RIGHT TO STAY WITH THE POWS?
- WHAT INSPIRES YOU THE MOST ABOUT FR KAPAUN'S LIFE AND DEATH?

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES



- Research more heroic (and sometimes humorous!) details about Fr Kapaun's life and learn about his cause for canonisation on <https://catholicdioceseofwichita.org/father-kapaun/>



- Choose an episode from Fr Kapaun's life and dramatise it / mime in a small group.



- Research [Fr Vincent Capadanno](#) or the [Irish Jesuit Fr Willie Doyle](#) and compare and contrast their lives.



QUIZ TIME!

1. Where was Emil Kapaun born?

2. Where did Fr Emily pick up practical skills as a child / teenager?

3. What wars did he serve as US army chaplain in?

4. Where was Fr Emil sent in 1950?

5. Where did Fr Emil often say Mass?

6. Which country's troops came to the aid of the Korean army?

7. Who was Herb Miller?

8. What were conditions like for the POWs at camp?

9. Why did Fr Emil pray to St Dismas?

10. Name 2 ways Fr Emil cared for the prisoners in the camp?

11. Why did the guards despise Fr Emil so much?

12. What forbidden act did Fr Emil carry out in Easter of 1951?

13. What illness did Fr Emil finally succumb to?

14. What was "the Hospital" in the POW camp?

15. Why did Fr Emil not want the men to fight to keep him from being sent to "the Hospital"?

16. What age was Fr Emil when he died?

17. What did the prisoners carve in Fr Emil's honour?

18. What did they use for a crown of thorns?

19. What has the Catholic Church declared him?

20. What was he awarded posthumously by the US Military?



SERVANT OF GOD - ARMY CHAPLAIN

MY RESPONSE



- **WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE TO THE STORY OF FR EMIL KAPAUN?**
- **YOU COULD:**
 - **DESIGN AN ART PIECE**
 - **WRITE A SONG**
 - **COMPILE AN APPROPRIATE PLAYLIST**
 - **DESIGN A MEMORIAL WALL OR MONUMENT**
 - **WRITE A RESPONSE TO CAPTURE YOUR FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS ABOUT HIS LIFE AND DEATH.**
- **DRAFT YOUR IDEAS HERE:**



"This is the valour we honour today -- an American soldier who didn't fire a gun, but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all, a love for his brothers so pure that he was willing to die so that they might live."

Taken from the speech made by President Barack Obama when presenting Fr Emil Kapaun's Congressional Medal of Honour posthumously in 2013.

[Read the full speech here.](#)





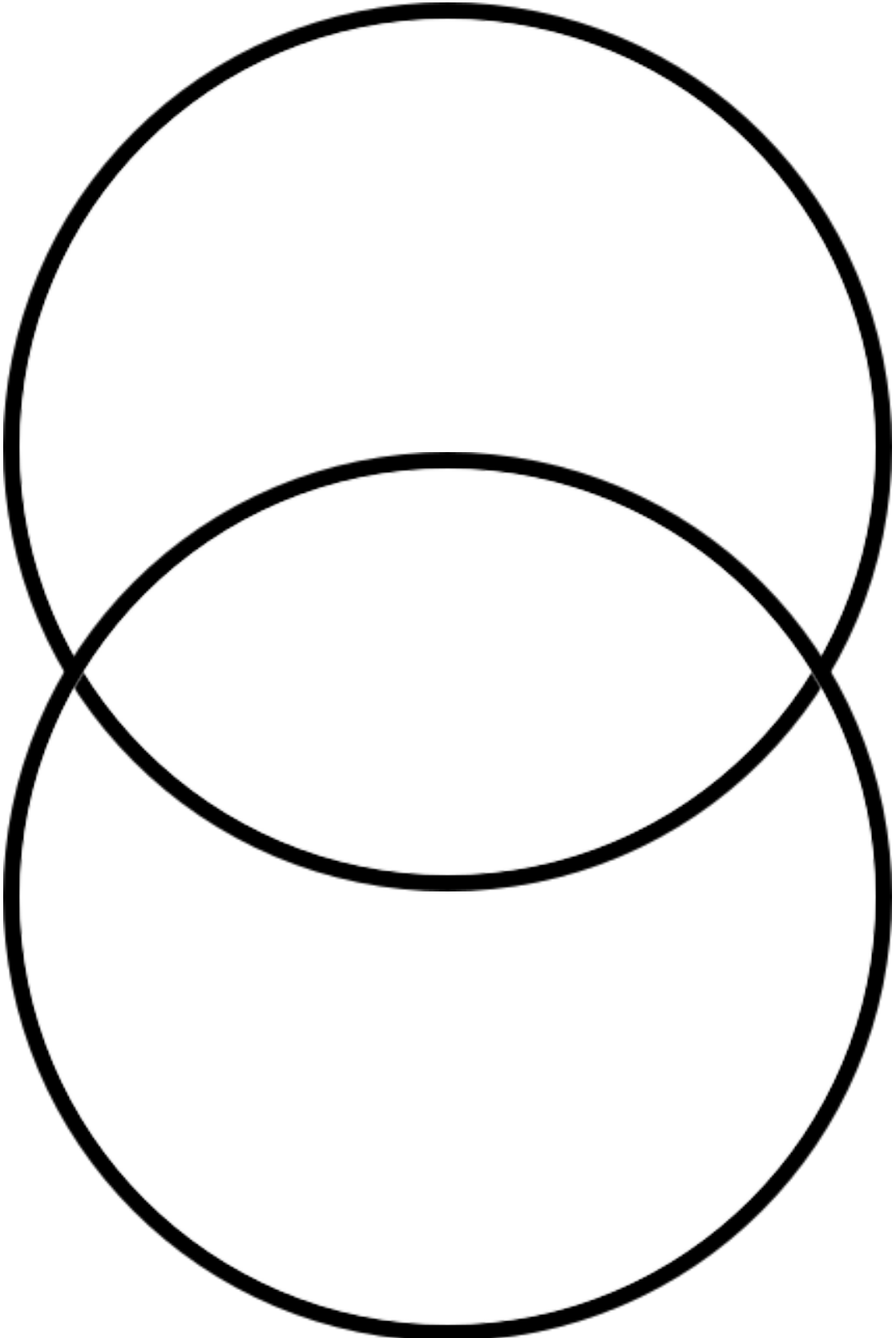
SERVANT OF GOD - ARMY CHAPLAIN

COMPARE/CONTRAST

FR KAPAUN



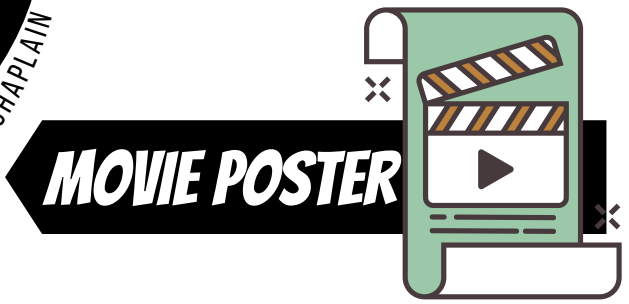
Research Fr. Vincent Capadanno
or the Irish Jesuit Fr. Willie Doyle



COMPARE THE CONTRAST THE LIFE OF FR EMIL KAPAUN WITH EITHER FR WILLIE DOYLE OR FR VINCENT CAPADANNO

USING THE FOLLOWING HEADINGS:

BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE / FAMILY SITUATION / VOCATION / WAR EXPERIENCES / PARTICULAR DEVOTIONS / DEATH / THEIR LEGACY TODAY



A short movie on the life of Fr Emil Kapaun was made in 1955, called "Crossroads: The Good Thief" ([click here to watch it on YouTube](#)).

IF YOU WERE TO DESIGN A POSTER FOR A NEW MOVIE BASED ON THE LIFE OF FR KAPAUN WHAT WOULD YOU INCLUDE ON IT AND WHY? CREATE YOUR POSTER IN THE SPACE BELOW. BE PREPARED TO EXPLAIN YOUR CHOICES.



DOODLE PRAYER



Allow yourself some space to sit and reflect.

You might prefer to play some music in the background, or just sit in silence.

Reflect on the quote from John 15:13, *“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”* and pray with it. Allow ideas, thoughts and images that come to you as you pray to form part of your doodle prayer. Maybe names will come to mind - people to pray for; or things in your life you feel you need to change; maybe situations you need to bring to God and ask for His help in will surface... Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your heart and your thoughts. This is a particular space you are creating for God in your life today. Speak, and listen.

*No one has greater love
than this, to lay down
one’s life for one’s friends*





WORD SEARCH

FIND ALL THE WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH FR EMIL KAPAUN IN THE WORD SEARCH

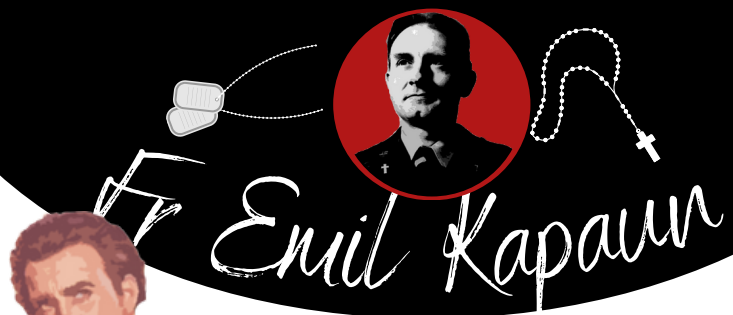
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- death march*
- decorated*
- Dismas*
- Easter*
- example*
- farmer*
- firewood*
- forgive*
- foxhole*
- frozen*
- guards*
- Herb Miller*
- "hot coffee"*
- India*
- inspired*
- intercession*
- Kansas*
- Korean War*
- Last Rites*
- malnourished*
- ordained*
- pneumonia*
- prayer service*
- priest*
- prisoner of war*
- propaganda*
- radio wire*
- scabies*
- scraps*
- scurvy*
- serve*
- shack*
- shallow grave*
- starvation*
- steal*
- survivors*
- "the Hospital"*
- US army*
- witness*
- World War Two*

QUICK FIRE QUIZ!

Choose at least ten of the words / phrases in the list above and work as a team to explain how they relate to Fr Emil and his life as quickly as you can. Who can explain the most words?





"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." - St Augustine -

DO YOU THINK ST AUGUSTINE MEANT BY THIS?



Christians believe that God has a unique plan for each person, a calling, specifically for each one of us. Another word for a calling is vocation. In the past, people only spoke about vocations when referring to priests or religious, like brothers or nuns. Now we understand that vocation is broader than that. You may have a calling to priesthood or religious life. Or you may be called to married life. You may be called to single life. Maybe you're called to be a doctor, or a teacher, or an engineer, or a salesperson, or an office worker.



God's ultimate plan for each one of us is that we become saints, that we are holy and fulfil His plan for us here on earth so we can enjoy eternal happiness with Him in Heaven. We achieve this by living out whatever calling God has for each of us, by offering up our lives for His greater glory. If you're called to be a teacher, be the best teacher you can be. If your vocation is to be a mom or dad, be the absolute best parent you can be! If your vocation right now is to be a student, be the best student you can be.



God calls some people to priesthood or religious life. This is an amazing life of service to others! The idea can be daunting at first, but remember, whatever God is calling us to, that is His plan for the **absolute maximum of our happiness!**

DO YOU THINK OF YOUR LIFE THIS WAY? WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE IF YOU DID?



From an early age, Fr Emil Kapaun felt a call in his heart to be a priest. There's no way he could have understood what that actually meant at the time or how it would really change his whole life, but he trusted in God, each step of the way, even following the call to serve in the Korean war when it was not a requirement for him. Fr Emil chose priesthood each day on the battlefield too, even refusing a chance to escape to stay and continue to minister to his fellow soldiers when capture was imminent.

Do you ever wonder what your personal mission is? You definitely have one! You don't need to figure it out all at once. But it's a good idea to keep it in mind.

Here are some tips to figuring it out:

1. *With every decision, just do the next good thing i.e. make good daily decisions.*
2. *Be open and honest about who you are (and ask God who He created you to be).*
3. *Discern your gifts and talents. For more ideas, **read this blog from LifeTeen!***

THOMAS MERTON VOCATION PRAYER



MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone.

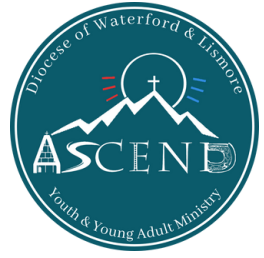
LISTEN TO NEWSBOYS: FISHERS OF MEN



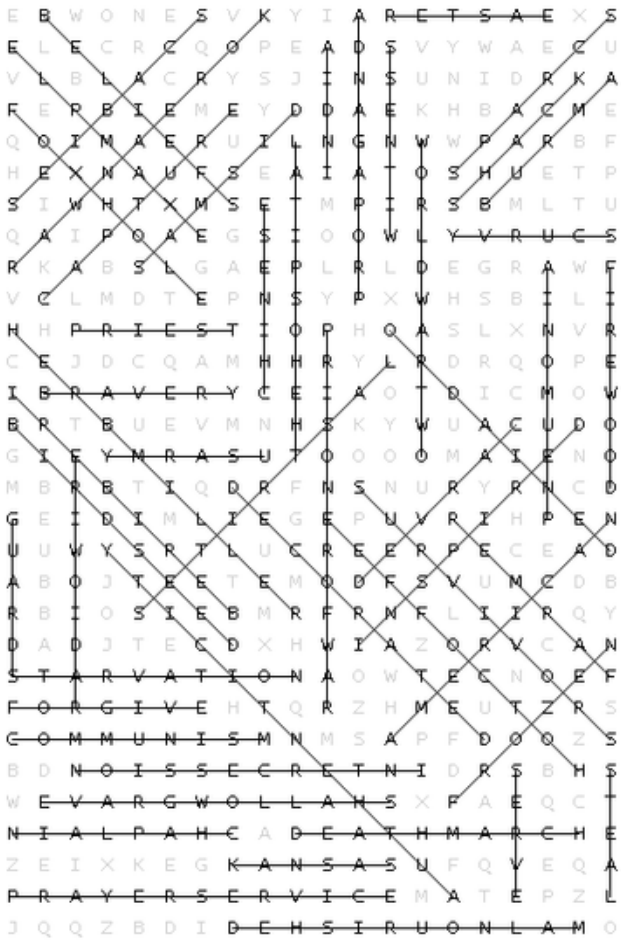


SOLUTIONS

SERVANT OF GOD - ARMY CHAPLAIN



WORD SEARCH SOLUTION



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- AOEKR

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