

Is God calling you to Ministry in Schools?

Teaching is one of the greatest professional vocations we can undertake and many of us are teachers because we responded to God's call to work in schools with young people. But teaching is not the only vocation in schools. Have you considered the possibility of ordained ministry as a School Chaplain?

In the past, it was relatively difficult to enter full time ordained ministry from schools. One had to engage in the formal and informal discernment process in which vocation was tested before proceeding to three years full time preparation. For Queensland, this meant study at St Francis College in Milton. Few teachers could be without a salary for such an extended period; often these years of preparation are ones of juggling family commitments, part time work and full time study. It's not wonderful that few teachers stepped forward to consider full time ministry - or that there is a standing shortage of ordained priests who want to work as chaplains in our schools.



From January 2010, the Diocese of Brisbane is introducing a new pathway to school chaplaincy. For qualified teachers who have the personal qualities and maturity of faith to make a good chaplain, the Diocese is prepared to offer scholarship opportunities to allow these people to return to full time study. The salary offered is about that for a first year teacher; in return, the teacher works two days in ministry in a school with an experienced Chaplain. The remainder of the working week can be given to full time study. It will be possible over a three year period to complete the Charles Sturt Bachelor of Theology offered by St Francis College together with the preparatory

programs required by the diocese for men and women considering ordination to the priesthood. The scholarship continues through the three years of study. At the end of this time, candidates would be eligible for ordination as a deacon and one year later, ordination as a priest.

What you can do now to advance this process:

- Every vocation begins with prayer and reflection. Your commitment to ministry in schools should be accompanied by real engagement in the prayerful process of testing a vocation.
- Aspirants to the scholarship program must make application through the ASC for a place in the program. Of course applicants must also engage in the year long process of discernment which the Ministry Education Commission of the diocese conducts for men and women who feel called to ministry.
- Talk with your own Head about your sense of vocation. Does your Head share your sense that you have a future as a priest in a school?
- Talk with your own parish priest and chaplain about the same matter.



For more information on chaplaincy services and the scholarship program, contact Reverend Paul Bland at the ASC on (07) 3835 2289.

For more information on the process of discernment and training for the priesthood contact Dr Steven Ogden at the Ministry Education Commission (07) 3514 7400.

Some FAQs on the Chaplaincy Scholarships

Q: How long does it take to move from being a teacher in a school to a chaplain in a school?

A: *The process would normally take four years. The first year is a process of discernment in which you consider your vocation in a disciplined way with the assistance of clergy and lay people with experience in this area. You also begin study as an external student in this first year. From Year 2, you're in the school program.*

Q: To whom should I talk if I'm interested in the program?

A: *Talk to your principal, to your own priest or chaplain, of course - and to your family. This is a big commitment and one that will require their support if you are to see it through. You also need to begin conversation with the team at the Ministry Education Commission at Saint Francis College. The person there to contact is the Director, Dr Steven Ogden. Your initial contact should come from your school: this is very much about cooperation between the individual aspirant to ministry, their school and St Francis as the service provider.*

Q: What formal qualification do I finish with?

A: *At the end of the four year program, you have a Bachelor of Theology [BTh] from Charles Sturt University. If you want to do more study, CSU offers Masters and Doctoral programs in Theology which can be accessed through Saint Francis College in Brisbane.*

Q: Once I complete the program, do I have a choice about the school in which I work?

A: *Of course. But remember that the school which hosts you through your study has invested in you and would probably want to be included in your plans.*

Q: Once I have completed the program, am I any different from other priests in the diocese?

A: *No. You are a priest with all the opportunities and obligations that that office brings. You may choose at some time to work in parish ministry, for example, but the scholarship scheme is about meeting the emergent need in schools, not in parishes.*

Q: Once I am trained as a chaplain am I paid as a priest or a teacher?

A: *Local rules would apply. If you have been in a school as a teacher, you would probably be paid as a teacher after your ordination at a level to be negotiated with your school. At some time in the future, you may wish to seek promotion within schools and exercise your ministry in a leadership role within a school.*

Q: The program says I will work at my school in chaplaincy or RE programs for two days a week with the remainder of the time available for the study program. Could I do some supply teaching to increase my income?

A: *Every person's circumstances will be different. Some people will be able to manage this; others will not. Your own circumstances may change through the life of the program. The answer to this and many other questions like it is: see how it works and work around your basic commitments.*

Q: What are my obligations once the program is finished?

A: *The commitment you make at the beginning of the program is to work as a chaplain in an Anglican school for as many years as the financial assistance is given. If you complete the four year program, the expectation is that you would work as a chaplain for three years before making any change to this arrangement. There may be circumstances in which a change of location is appropriate but remember that your school community is a fundamental part of your preparation and vocation.*