

# ALIVE IN CHRIST

GRADE 8

**The Church**

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**Our Sunday Visitor**

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# The Christian Faithful

## Let Us Pray

**Leader:** O Lord, you give us gifts to share. You call us to echo your Word and your love in the world. Help us to live the Gospel every day.

“Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light for my path.” **Psalm 119:105**

**All:** Holy God, be with all of those who serve the Church.

## Scripture

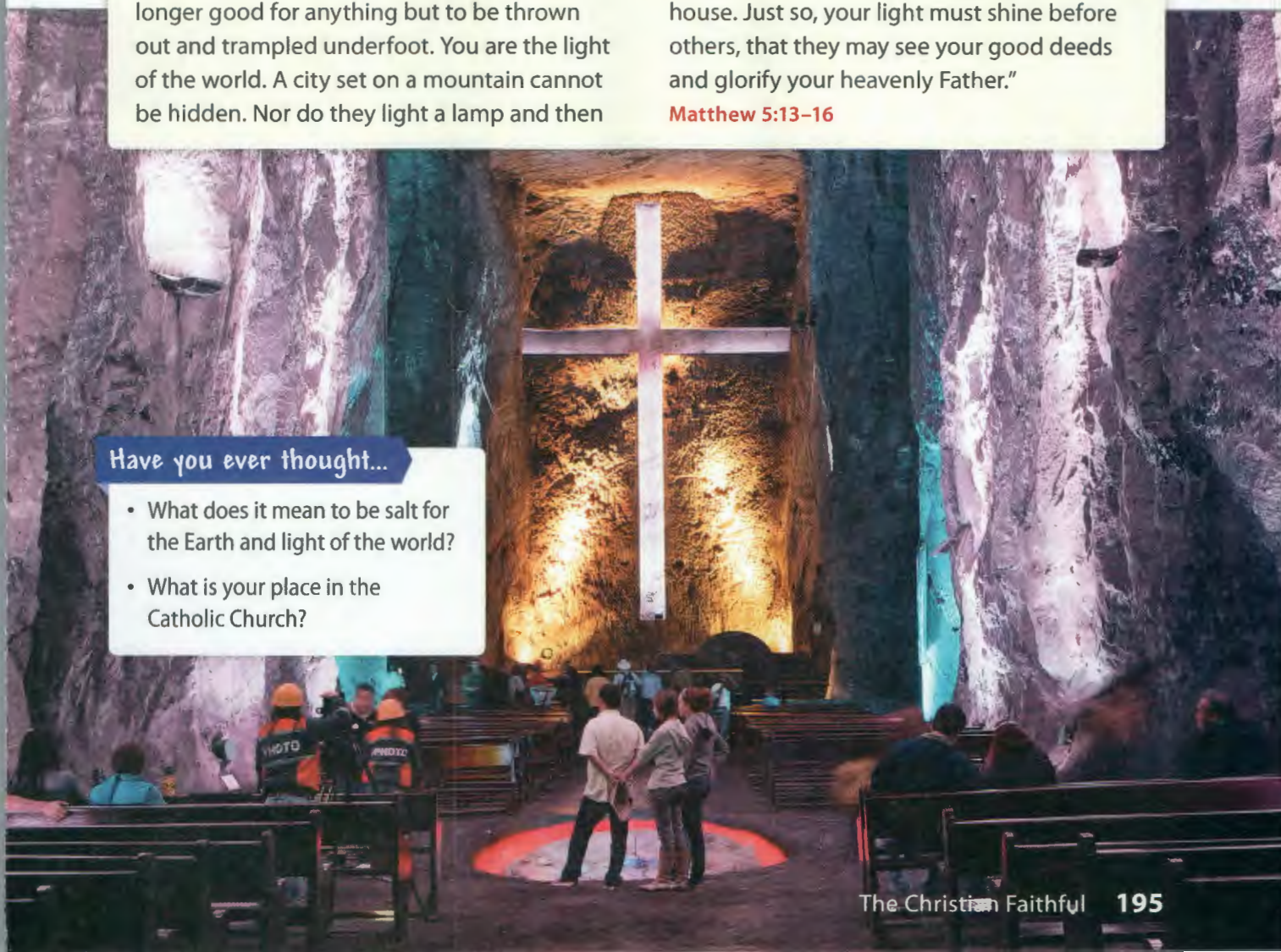
“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then

put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”

**Matthew 5:13–16**

### Have you ever thought...

- What does it mean to be salt for the Earth and light of the world?
- What is your place in the Catholic Church?



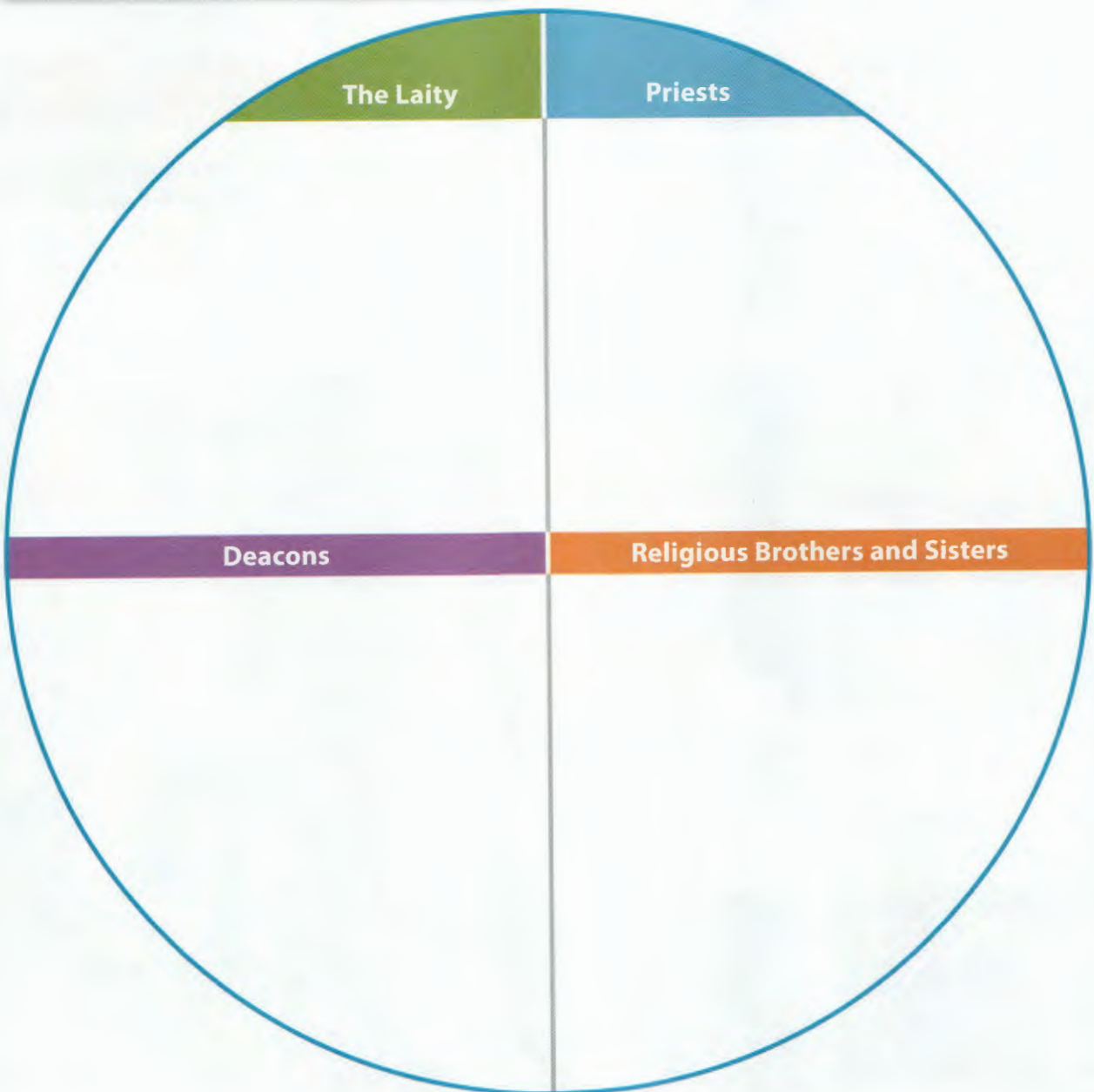
## Getting Started

In this chapter, you will learn about the importance of each person's membership in the Church and the role of the laity in the Church. You will also examine the call to serve as religious priests, brothers, and sisters.

### Catholic Faith Words

- clergy
- laity
- consecrated religious life
- evangelical counsels

In the chart below, record how each group serves the needs of the Church. As you complete the chapter, add new information to the chart.



## DESIGN

**Welcome Home** A Catholic family has moved to your town and is searching online for a new parish. The search lands them on your parish's homepage. What will they discover about the groups, activities, and ministries? How can you communicate how your parish is salt for the earth and light of the world (see Matthew 5:13-16)? Write some information the family might find on each of these navigation tabs:

### Parish Staff

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### Ministries

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### Faith Formation/Religious Education

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### Daily and Sunday Mass Schedule

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### Stewardship

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## Priestly People

### How are all Church members important to the Church?

The Apostles knew that it was important to divide responsibilities in the early Church. As more and more members joined, there was more work to be done. We learn from the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that some new Christians were concerned that poor widows were being neglected. The Apostles realized they needed help.

### Priest, Prophet, and King

Every member of the Church has an important role to play in carrying out her mission. Through our Baptism, we all share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices of Christ. The **clergy** are ordained and given sacred authority to serve the Church by teaching, through divine worship, and through pastoral leadership. The **laity** serve in their personal, family, and community lives and in the parish.

Our participation differs depending on our state in life and our circumstances, but we are all called to bring the Good News to the world. As diverse as the Church is, we are united by our mission.

Jesus gives us this share in his mission. They are not honors we have earned. When Jesus showed us what a king should do, he showed us the job of a shepherd taking care of a flock of sheep. When he showed us how to exercise authority, he washed the feet of each Apostle and then told them to do the same (see John 13:3–15).

When you were baptized you became part of the common priesthood of the faithful, sharing in the priesthood of Christ. As you pray and discover what God wants you to do with your life, you will be called to be part of the clergy or the laity.

➤ **What roles have you noticed that people have in the Church? How are they all part of the same mission?**

## The Church's Hierarchy

From that earliest division of Church leadership started by the Apostles, we have come to a more complex division of leaders called the “hierarchy.” Each member of the Church’s hierarchy has clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They are ordained to serve the Church.

The Pope has “supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls”

### Go to the Source

Read Acts 6:1–7. What are the different roles described in this passage? How is the work in your parish divided among the clergy (priests and deacons) and laity?

(CCC, 937). Bishops share with the Pope concern for all the Churches, but they are the visible successors of the Apostles in their own dioceses. The bishops must authentically teach the faith, celebrate divine worship, and guide their Churches as true pastors.

Priests—by their ordination into the ministerial priesthood—have sacred authority for the service of the faithful. They help their bishops by teaching, conducting worship, and governing in the name and the person of Christ in the community.

Deacons are ordained not to the ministerial priesthood but to ministry of works of service to the community. They assist the

### Catholic Faith Words

**clergy** men who are ordained and given sacred authority to serve the Church by teaching, divine worship, and pastoral leadership

**laity** all baptized members of the Church who share in Jesus' mission and witness to him and his message but are not priests or consecrated sisters or brothers; sometimes called lay people

bishops and priests in worship, especially in proclaiming the Gospel and preaching, in presiding at Baptisms, marriages, and funerals, and in dedicating themselves to different works of charity and outreach to the parish and beyond.

### NAME AND DESCRIBE

Look at the pictures below. On the lines under each picture, describe the ministry shown.



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name someone you have seen faithfully serving your parish. What role does this person play? What can you tell about this person based on what you have observed?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## The Lay Faithful

### What is the role of the laity in the Catholic Church?

Faithful Catholic lay men and women are essential to the work of the Church. Everyone who is baptized is called to be holy. In both Baptism and Confirmation, all Catholics receive grace to help them lead holy lives.

By cooperating with God's grace, all Christians can be faithful to Christ in all aspects of their lives—personal, family, social, and parish.

### Leaven in the Heart of the World Community

Lay people work in offices, factories, schools, farms, labs, stores, and any number of other busy places. Many do not spend their entire day focusing on religious matters, but they are called to bring their faith with them into all parts of their lives. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says lay people “are called to be witnesses to Christ in all

circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind” (CCC, 942). Some lay people serve the Church in full- or part-time ministry. They are called “lay ecclesial ministers.”

Jesus described those who serve the Kingdom of Heaven as leaven, which means to lighten or raise something, much like yeast makes bread rise. (See Matthew 13:33.) Lay people are called to be like “leaven in the world.”

- **Think about a finished loaf of bread. Can you take it apart and find the yeast in it? How can we know the yeast is there?**
- **What are some ways you have seen lay people bring Christ to a group of people or a certain place?**

### The Laity at Worship

The clergy lead the worship of the Church, but there are liturgical roles for the laity, too. Perhaps you are already performing some of them. Lay people can be altar servers, readers at Mass (lectors) and the rest of the Seven Sacraments, cantors and/or choir members, organists, or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

All of these roles help the assembly give praise and thanks to God during the Mass and the rest of the Seven Sacraments. Roles such as greeters and ushers, although not liturgical, help to bring people into the celebration.

### Other Parish Ministries

It is hard to imagine a parish today where the priests do all the work! It takes a whole community with many different gifts and talents to accomplish the mission of a parish. In addition to liturgical ministry roles, lay





A priest prepares for morning Mass inside the sacristy

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men and women volunteer their time and talents to serve the Church. They may have busy secular (nonreligious) jobs, but they can be found on weekends and at other times in the week helping at the parish.

Keep your eyes open to see how things get done at your parish. Who decorates the sanctuary? Who washes the altar linens? Who teaches religious education classes?

Who ministers in Catholic schools? Who visits the sick and shut-ins? Who answers the phone, shovels snow, or counts money? Every time you see your parents or other lay people doing any of these things, you are seeing the laity helping accomplish the mission of the Church.

Underline the ministries you and members of your family have been part of in your parish. Talk with a classmate about roles would you like to try in the future.



Every time you help out in any way, you are part of the mission, too. For more information on the work of the laity, see page 378 in the Our Catholic Tradition section of your book.

## EXPLAIN

Write a paragraph finishing this phrase:

By my Baptism, I was called to serve . . .

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## Consecrated Religious Life

**Why do some people decide to become religious priests, brothers, or sisters?**

At Baptism, Jesus calls every disciple to follow him. Some Catholic men and women find Christ calling them to a different kind of dedication. They want to be more closely united with him, devoting their entire lives to God. These people choose some form of **consecrated religious life** so they can dedicate themselves to God's service and to the good of the whole Church.

Consecrated religious life is a special vocation in the Church that draws members from both the clergy and the laity. Priests, lay men, and lay women answer the call to become members of one of the many religious communities in the Church.

People who live a consecrated religious life make a public vow or promise to follow the **evangelical counsels** of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They join a religious order or congregation, that is, a vowed community of people carrying out the Church's mission.

These three special gifts—poverty, chastity, and obedience—are not commands. The

### Catholic Faith Words

**consecrated religious life** a state of life lived by religious sisters, brothers, and priests in community and characterized by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience

**evangelical counsels** poverty, chastity, and obedience. Those in consecrated religious life take public vows to live these counsels.

Commandments tell us what we must do. The evangelical counsels tell us what more we can do beyond what is required.

Consecrated religious men and women understand these gifts in a particular way and vow to live these three counsels. For consecrated religious, these vows have these meanings:

- Poverty: owning nothing in one's own name
- Chastity: giving oneself to God completely by living a celibate life for the Kingdom
- Obedience: promising to serve God and neighbor in one's religious community

In this way those who have chosen consecrated religious life as their vocation are free to serve God wholeheartedly.



## Many Forms of Religious Life

All through history, there have been men and women who felt a call to religious life in response to events and needs in the world. Some individuals felt led to gather other like-minded people around them to form religious communities.

The founders of religious orders established a way of life that others could follow. They selected the ministries to be done, and appealed to the bishop, or sometimes the Pope, to recognize their group as an official religious community in the Church. Lay women religious are often called “sisters.” Lay men religious are called “brothers.” Priests who join religious orders are called “fathers,” as all priests are.

Some members of religious orders live a cloistered and contemplative life. They remain inside one convent or monastery, dedicating their lives to prayer for everyone in the world and to the study and preservation of Scripture and other religious texts. Often, cloistered women are called “nuns” and cloistered men are called “monks.”



Other members live in active religious communities, where they go out to serve as missionaries, teachers, or hospital workers, and to do many other good works.

➤ **What memories do you have of a faith-filled sister, brother, or priest?**

### LIST AND PRAY

List three things that would be appealing to you about living the consecrated religious life. Then write a prayer for those who have accepted the call to consecrated life.

## IN SUMMARY Catholics Believe

All baptized Catholics are called to share in Jesus' mission as priest, prophet, and king to serve the mission of the Church.

- The Pope and bishops belong to the Church's hierarchy, and lead the priests, deacons, religious communities, and the lay faithful. Priests serve in the ministerial priesthood and assist bishops in their role of teaching, governing, and sanctifying. Deacons assist the bishop and priests in sacramental ministries and the ministry of service.
- The laity in the Church act as leaven, bringing the raising and lightening power of God's Kingdom to the secular world where they live and work.
- Members of religious orders consecrate their lives as a sign of God's love and holiness and serve an important part of the Church's mission.

## Our Catholic Life

No matter what career you follow, you can live the life of a faithful Catholic. It's not the career that matters as much as how we bring the love of God to what we do. There are many ways to be faithful: some are called to priesthood, some are called to married life, some are called to be part of a religious congregation, others are called to the committed single life. Pay attention to God speaking to your heart to see what he is calling you to do. To live our vocation—our call from God—is to be who God made us to be. It's not always easy to know what work God wants us to do, but one way to start is by praying to the Holy Spirit to guide you to know what your vocation in life will be.



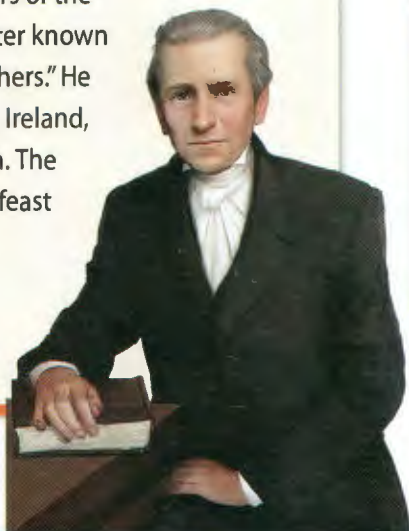
➤ Have you thought about vocations? What do you hear God telling you about your future?

## People of Faith

### Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, 1762–1844

Born into a large family in Ireland, Edmund Rice married at age 25, but his wife died two years later and Edmund spent much time caring for their infant daughter alone. He thought about becoming a monk, but instead arranged for the care of his daughter, and began his work of founding Catholic schools for troubled youth. He took the name "Ignatius," and founded the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, better known as "Irish Christian Brothers." He founded 23 schools in Ireland, England, and Australia. The Church celebrates his feast day on May 5.

For more, go to  
[aliveinchrist.osv.com](http://aliveinchrist.osv.com)



## CONSIDER

Think and pray about your own vocation in life. Begin by writing a paragraph that finishes this sentence:

I think I may be called to ...

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Together, pray this vocation prayer: Lord, show me how to be of service in your Church and in the world. Help me to see what you want me to do. Give me vision, courage, and friends who encourage me to do your work. Amen.



## A Prayer for Guidance

**Leader:** O Lord, open my lips.

**All:** That my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

**Leader:** Lord,

You have given each of us gifts and talents that can benefit others.

You call us to echo your Word and your love in the world.

Help us to understand your wisdom and your teachings.

Amen.

**Side 1:** How can young people keep their way pure?

By guarding it according to your Word.

With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your Commandments.

**Side 2:** The Lord is my portion;  
I promise to keep your words.  
I implore your favor with all my heart;  
be gracious to me according to your promise.

**All:** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

**Side 1:** Your hands have made and fashioned me;

give me understanding that I may learn your Commandments.


Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your Word.

**Side 2:** The Lord exists forever;  
your Word is firmly fixed in Heaven.

Your faithfulness endures to all generations;  
you have established the Earth, and it stands fast.

**All:** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

**Based on Psalm 119:9, 10, 57, 58, 73, 74, 89, 90, 105**

 *Sing or play "There Is a Light"*

Go to [aliveinchrist.osv.com](http://aliveinchrist.osv.com) for an interactive review.

**A Work with Words** Circle the letter of the choice that best completes the sentence.

- People who live a consecrated religious life make a public vow or promise to follow the evangelical \_\_\_ of poverty, chastity, and obedience.
  - traditions
  - orders
  - laws
  - counsels
- The \_\_\_ are given sacred authority to serve the Church by teaching, leadership in divine worship, and pastoral ministry.
  - laity
  - ordained
  - professors
  - nuns
- Cloistered men and women are typically called \_\_\_ and \_\_\_.
  - laity, nuns
  - monks, nuns
  - clergy, brothers
  - priests, nuns
- \_\_\_ share with the Pope concern for all the Churches and are the visible successors of the Apostles in their own dioceses.
  - Bishops
  - Deacons
  - Priests
  - Cardinals
- The \_\_\_ serve(s) through their Baptism and Confirmation in personal life, family life, social life, and parish life.
  - laity
  - priest
  - clergy
  - monk

**B Check Understanding** Indicate whether the following statements are true or false. Then rewrite false statements to make them true.

- We all share in the offices of Christ, sharing in his work as priests, prophets, and kings. **True/False**

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- Consecrated religious life is a special vocation in the Church. **True/False**

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- Deacons are ordained to the ministerial priesthood and can preside at the Eucharist. **True/False**

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- Men and women who feel a call to religious life gather with other like-minded people to form religious communities. **True/False**

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- Only consecrated religious are called to live out the evangelical counsels. **True/False**

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**C Make Connections** On a separate sheet of paper, write a one-paragraph response to the questions below: Think of opportunities to serve in your parish. How have you served or how would you like to serve? What effects do you think this ministry would have on you and on others?