

What is a Vocation?

***Read 1Samuel 3:1-10

During the time young Samuel was minister to the LORD under Eli, a revelation of the LORD was uncommon and vision infrequent. One day Eli was asleep in his usual place. His eyes had lately grown so weak that he could not see. The lamp of God was not yet extinguished, and Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was. The LORD called to Samuel, who answered, "Here I am." He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me." "I did not call you," Eli said. "Go back to sleep." So he went back to sleep. Again the LORD called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "You called me." But he answered, "I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep." At that time Samuel was not familiar with the LORD, because the LORD had not revealed anything to him as yet. The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, "Here I am. You called me." Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth. So he said to Samuel, "Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the LORD came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

I. Vocation in General

- A. Etymology – *vocare* – to call
- B. Who's calling? – God
- C. Who's being called? – man
- D. Bible and salvation history is a drama of God's call and man's response

II. Two types of vocations

A. Natural – built into our nature as humans

- 1. Genesis
- 2. understand and dominate (use well) the things of the earth
- 3. Love and be loved – God and human persons
- 4. vocation of marriage and co-creators with God
 - a. marriage as natural institution (cf. CCC 1602-1611)
 - b. marriage as elevated to dignity of sacrament (CCC 1601, 1612-1617; 1621-1666)

B. Supernatural – super-added to our natures

- 1. Call to holiness (cf. Mathew 5; CCC 2012-2029)
 - a. Call to conversion – "Adam, where are you? What have you done?"
 - b. Call to communion – "Be ye holy, for I AM holy;" "Abide in my Love;" "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"
 - c. Call to mission – "You too, go into my vineyard;" "You are the salt of the earth!" "Go, therefore, unto all nations..."
- 2. Call to some good act/thought/apostolic action/etc.

- a. God calls through actual graces (internal or external supernatural helps to enlighten or inspire to some action) – like attendance at Abbey Youth Fest
3. Call to some supernatural state of life – permanent manner of living/existence/being

III. Kinds of Supernatural Vocations

A. Priesthood (cf. CCC 1533-1600)

1. No Church without the Eucharist and no Eucharist without priests
 - a. “Do this in memory of Me.”
 - b. “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them; whose sins you hold bound are held bound.”
 - c. “Go, therefore... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
 - d. “Are there sick people among you, let them send for the priests of the Church.”

B. Consecrated Life (cf. CCC 914-933; 1618-1620)

1. Not part of the hierarchical structure of the Church, but belongs to her *essential* life and holiness
 - a. Jesus is consecrated
 - b. He desires that His way of life be replicated throughout time in the Church and in every place
 - c. Jesus’ poverty, Jesus’ chastity, Jesus’ obedience
 - d. Matthew 19 – different kinds of eunuchs (chastity)
 - e. Mk 10 – call of rich young man (poverty)
 - f. Lk. 14:26-27 – call to deny one’s self (obedience)
 - g. JP II calls consecrated life the “Royal Road of the Cross”
2. Many varieties/flowers in the Garden of Consecrated Life

IV. Theology of Vocation

A. God’s plan to save us with us

B. A vocation is first and foremost a gift – “Lord, it is good for us to be here”

1. Transfiguration – “Jesus took to Himself”
2. Healing of Jairus’ daughter
3. Agony in the Garden

C. Based on need present in the Church

1. A significant motive in my own vocation – somebody ought to!
2. The vocation of St. Katherine Drexel

- D. It is an offer and not an obligation – thus FREE! – It is not a sin to say “no”
- E. It brings joy – Eg. Mary’s vocation and Mary’s magnificat!
- F. It demands a generous response and persevering gift of oneself to be realized
 - 1. Three goods of man, Three enemies, and the Three vows – holocaust
 - 2. One’s natural vital forces of life and love are not obliterated – with God’s grace they are collected, ordered, and sacrificed to God “for the sake of the Kingdom” – this makes one a greater lover, a greater Father, a greater Mother – grace doesn’t destroy nature, it elevates and perfects it!
 - a. Example of Mother Teresa
 - b. Inclusive vs. exclusive love

G. Normal people are called

- 1. Bishop Flynn’s fireside chat to seminarians – the seminarian must be normal!

V. Process of the Call

A. Remote call – Cf. Jeremiah – before I knit you in your mother’s womb I knew you and called you

- 1. Abortion - God calls from the womb!
 - a. Given the statistics from around 2012, since Roe vs. Wade we have killed off 250,000 vocations
 - b. We would have today 300,000 religious brothers and sisters in the US instead of 100,000
 - c. We would have today 96,000 priests in the US instead of 46,000 – 200 more in Louisiana!
- 2. Openness to life on part of my mother – doctor warning after 4th child that mom couldn’t have another pregnancy after her 4th. I was number 5 and then 5 more after me! Thank you Mama!
- 3. I was blessed by a Pere Blanc missionary priest who was filling in at our parish when my mother was about 6 mo. pregnant for me. The priest said to my mom after Mass in the sacristy: “This will be your boy...this will be your priest!” He then consecrated me to the Sacred Heart and blessed me. Truly He knows us from the womb!

B. Proximate call

- 1. State of grace – prerequisite of being/becoming a “good” Catholic

- a. Role of conversion experiences – like Cursillo, youth retreats, etc.
 - 2. Vocation involves presence of actual graces over time – like Samuel
 - a. Graces of illumination – thoughts of things
greater/priesthood/religious life/poverty/missionary activity
 - b. Graces of inspiration and desire – beginning to recognize the presence of a deeper (perhaps less intense) and more profound desire for priesthood, religious life, etc.
 - 3. Exposure to a person living a vocation which resonates with what is in my heart
- VI. Helps in Discerning/Responding to the Call
- A. Regular Confession to purify oneself and guard the state of grace in one's soul
 - B. Take seriously your call to holiness – decide early to become a saint!
 - C. Praying and praying well *****
 - D. Good spiritual direction – like that given by Eli!
 - E. Period of time for discernment and investigation – “come and see” or discernment program
- V. Appendix – Texts for Meditation (B above)
- A. Call of Abraham – Genesis 12:1-9
 - B. Call of Moses – Exodus 3:1-12; 4:10-17
 - C. Call of Isaiah – Isaiah 6:1-8
 - D. Call of Jeremiah – Jeremiah 1:4-10
 - E. Call of Samuel – 1Samuel 3:1 – 4:1
 - F. Call of Jonah – Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-10
 - G. Call of Mary – Lk. 1:26-38
 - H. Call of First Disciples – Mk. 1:16-20; Mt. 4:18-22; Jn. 1:35-42
 - I. Call of Peter et al – Lk. 5:1-11
 - J. Call of Paul – Acts 9:1-19
 - K. Call of Rich Young Man – Mk. 10:17-62
 - L. “Would be’s” and “wanna be’s” – Lk. 9:57-62
 - M. Meditation on States of Life – Mt. 19; 1 Cor. 7:25-40

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