

TWENTY EIGHTH SUNDAY PER ANNUM, Year A

“FOLLOWING ONE’S VOCATION”

Today, on this ‘Laity’ or ‘Vocations Sunday’, we focus our attention on the importance of freely following one’s own God-given vocation.

When we hear that word, ‘vocation’, we often think of the calling that some people receive to serve the Church as ordained ministers (deacons, priests) or those who enter the religious life as consecrated brothers and sisters. This is a valid, but limited, understanding of the word ‘vocation’. After all, the Gospel (Mt. 22:14) states, “Many are invited, but few are chosen.”

The literal meaning of the word, ‘vocation’, is a ‘calling’. In the religious sense, a vocation is a call from God. Each person’s vocation is unique, since each one of us is unique.

St. John Paul II said that one’s vocation answers the question that each one of us should ask: “Why am I alive?”ⁱ

‘While most people think of a vocation as what they are called to *do* in life, it is important to understand that the first and most important call from God is a call to *be* – the universal call to holiness.’ⁱⁱ This was an emphasis of the *Second Vatican Council*: that we are all called to a life of holiness, or sanctity.ⁱⁱⁱ

According to *Andreas Widmer*^{iv}, there are three levels of vocation:

1. The Universal Vocation to Holiness. “To know, love, and serve God in this life so that you can know, love, and serve him eternally in the next life. Your objective is to cooperate with God in his work to save your soul.”^v

2. Primary Vocation. Your primary vocation is the way you live out this objective. It is the way of life in which you love and serve God and others. There are four primary vocations: single life, married life, priestly life and consecrated life.

“Each of these vocations is a permanent and freely chosen way of life. Each also entails a gift of self. In choosing [your] primary vocation, you give priority in your life either to God and the consecrated life or to your spouse and family.”^{vi}

Pope Francis spoke of the definitive nature of a vocation: “We are living in a “provisional” culture, a culture that shies away from definitive choices. Pope Francis told a story, related to him by a bishop, of a young man who wanted to be a priest – but only for ten years! “We have a fear of the definitive.” But choosing a vocation – whether matrimony, consecrated life, the priesthood – should be chosen with a view to the definitive. This is opposed to the “provisional” culture that we experience every day – a culture that we must live in, but which we must also overcome.”^{vii}

3. Secondary Vocation. This third level of vocation is what you do on this path that you have chosen. “It’s how you use your gifts and talents in service of God and others while living out your universal and primary vocations. For most of us, this means our work or profession. It also, however, can apply to your civic and community involvement, apostolate work, or simply bearing the various crosses and trials that come your way in life. It’s your plan of action for living.”

“John Paul II realized that through our work we don’t simply make more: we become more. Work shapes us, refines us, and pushes us to discover and hone our natural gifts. It enables us to love, becoming a means by which we’re able to serve our family, customers, clients, neighbors, and communities. Through that, work becomes a means of giving our life to God.”

The Importance of Prayer. On the occasion of last year’s *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, Pope Francis said that:

“Behind and before every vocation to the priesthood or to the consecrated life there is always the strong and intense prayer of someone: a grandmother, a grandfather, a mother, a father, a community.... Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer; and only through prayer can they persevere and bear fruit.”^{viii}

St. John Paul II once said that:

“Only when you’re living out your vocation can you find fulfillment in this life. Your vocation, understood, embraced, and lived, is what makes you feel truly and fully alive.”

As we come before the altar of God, may we be truly open to living out our God-given vocations in true freedom. For it is when we are faithful to God’s call that we will find true peace, happiness and fulfillment in this life and in the next.

ⁱ John Paul II, as stated by Andreas Widmer, <http://www.thecatholicthing.org/columns/2012/the-importance-of-vocation.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.cam.org.au/vocations/The-Call/What-is-a-Vocation->

ⁱⁱⁱ *Lumen Gentium*, n. 9

^{iv} Andreas Widmer served as a Swiss Guard during the papacy of John Paul II. He wrote about his experience of that service and was inspired by the way that Pope John Paul II lived out his priesthood. Source <http://www.thecatholicthing.org/columns/2012/the-importance-of-vocation.html>

^v <http://www.thecatholicthing.org/columns/2012/the-importance-of-vocation.html>

^{vi} <http://www.thecatholicthing.org/columns/2012/the-importance-of-vocation.html>

^{vii} http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/06/29/pope_francis_on_vocations_christians_need_mary,_church/1102329

^{viii} <http://vocationboom.com/vocation-wisdom-from-pope-francis/>