

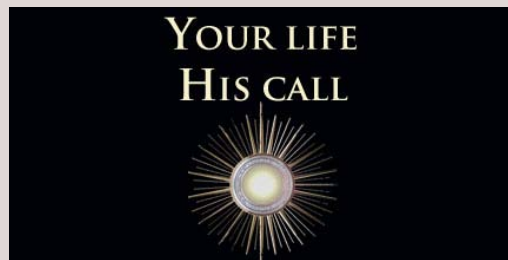
VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT: MOTIVATION AND MOTIVES

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In God's great love for each person he has an intended plan for their life, in which they can achieve fulfillment and hopefully eternal life with him forever. We are created by Love with a loving divine reason for our existence; a plan and a purpose. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you."¹ Although His great love includes free will, which allows one to divert from His plan for ones

live, He does not withhold his love and fulfillment even then. God looks upon certain people and calls them to a closer union with Himself, to a life of service, a great witness and presence of His love for His children. Others He calls to unite closely with another in the sacrament of marriage and to help give life to a domestic church within a family for the building up of the Body of Christ, these callings are known as vocations. Whichever vocation he calls, one must listen to God to discover His intended plan and ponder the motivations so to purify ones intentions. The motive for embracing a vocation should not be fear or dislike of another vocation. A firm foundation is needed to respond to the call of God, if not the vocation may not be able to endure the trials that will come.



A vocation is a permanent commitment of self to other, a state in life not a 9-5 job or a school that teaches a trade; it is part of who you are and how you live, making of your life a sincere gift of self a total donation by which full realization of ones being is achieved. "To consider life as a vocation encourages interior freedom, stirring within the person a desire for the future, as well as the rejection of the rejection of a notion of existence that is passive, boring and banal."² There exists a disease among the younger generations of today, which is a debilitating sense of apathy that does not permit one to make or keep a commitment. This is of course a generalization and not always the case but a prevalent tendency of not caring either way. Vocation helps restore the hope and purpose for the future and the belief with certainty that the Lord has a plan and is in control. Pope Francis says, "A vocation is a fruit that ripens in a well cultivated field of mutual love that becomes mutual service, in the context of an authentic ecclesial life. No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love."³ This is a rich text from our Holy Father, stating that we are sustained by God in any vocation and recognizing that we are not the origins of a vocation neither the end of a vocation. It must be initiated by God and for God, through service and fraternal charity to others.

In the process of discovering one's vocation, often referred to as discernment and responding to the vocation there are many factors to consider before making a lifelong commitment. There are many outside voices that will influence a person's decision, which is why knowing thy self is so important, ultimately it is only you who can make the commitment and it is only you who can remain faithful to fulfill the commitment that you made. Self-knowledge can help identify and purify motivations and motives for a specific vocation. When one is aware of their strengths and weaknesses they can avoid vice by practicing a particular virtue and prevent possible pit-falls. "Formation programs must search for ways of helping the individual to discover some of the subconscious elements that may favor or disfavor his or her progressive movement toward self-transcendent, Gospel values."⁴ The goal is to use right reason to govern our emotions and unconscious desires. Each of these elements are not bad in and of themselves, but when there are no boundaries to our emotions or no value system to follow, these unconscious elements of our human psyche can override ones reason and logic. This could potentially lead one to act or make decisions not supporting one's future vocation. After self-knowledge it is equally important to have a strong sense of personal responsibility. God has granted us each the possibility to freely choose this is part of our God-given dignity to choose; the

question is whether one will choose a life of selfishness or generosity. While speaking to youth about discernment my Mother Foundress commented, "The youth of today must be formed with diligence and responsibility to be ready for the encounter with Christ, to be able to give a fiat to the vocation that the Lord will invite you to embrace, or better said, to that original vocation written in your souls from your creation."⁵ Making a responsible choice to live for others through a vocation of service necessarily calls for vigilance and attention to the Lord.

Preparing for this encounter will include proper formation including a clear understanding of what one is committing to and giving up. A good director can also be beneficial to guide ones discernment process. The most circuital preparation is to be living in the state of grace and receiving the sacraments; this will allow one to more clearly hear the Lord and provide the grace necessary to respond to His call. Although there are many factors to vocational discernment one should not allow fear to rule or govern ones emotions. The Lord tells us many times in the Scriptures Be not afraid! Besides it is He who calls and He who equips the called therefore trust is the proper virtue to respond to Him as well as to combat fear.

1 *Jeremiah 1:5*

2 *St. John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 2011, Vatican.va*

3 *Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, January 15, 2014, Vatican.va*

4 *Anaeto, Fr. Dominic, Holy Apostles College and Seminary; PS 908 Class notes, Lesson 6: Integrating the conscious and unconscious elements for vocational choice, May 5, 2014*

5 *Mother Adela Galindo, Foundress, SCTJM, A Profound Gaze a Vocational Discernment Contemplating the Heart of Bl.*

John Paul II, January 21, 2012

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