

GOD CALLS, YOU, ME, YES! EACH AND ALL

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**To St. Joseph
Called to be Like God the Father**

CHAPTER I: VOCATION

People look for work to make a living, which is a necessity, and today work is hard to find. Furthermore they often hope to make a lot of money, which is a dangerous desire because that is not the purpose of human life. Neither aim is as such a vocation since that is not what God who created us has called us to do. What is God really calling you to do with your life? That is the question of vocation.

But what if there is no call from God because there is no God? Atheism is very old, but the recent flood of new books pushing godlessness show it is on the rise again. That must mean that atheists think they are doing us good by showing us that to think God exists does us harm. But if it harms us, that must be because it is contrary to our nature. Hence we must have a good nature that can be injured. And from where did it is goodness come? From chance, these atheists say. But how could chance, which is disorder, produce a nature orderly enough to think that it can injure itself by thinking, as most of us do, that there is a God who made our nature orderly?

So I am convinced, and I assume you are too, that there is a God who made us....you me, each and all...quite wonderful thinking and physical animals yet thinking, willing, spiritual animals in a world that is a marvelous collection of varied things, especially on this little earth in so vast a universe. God, since God is God, did not need to create us, not even, as does an artist, for the fun of it, but He did so for our sakes, so that we might share in His goodness. While some creatures are more wonderful than others, an antelope than an amoeba, an amoeba than an atom of gold, an atom of gold than of oxygen; each is wonderful in its own way and every individual has something that the rest of its species lacks. Thus, although it looks like there is a great deal of dust and dirt

in our universe, God knows there isn't, since God made each thing special as an imaginative artist who dislikes duplication.

The very fact (of such a comfort to atheists) that there is so much evil in the world, is even more comfort to us who know there is a God, in spite of the evil of the ignorance atheists labor so hard to manufacture. For if by "evil" atheists mean simply "disorder," then of course the more orderly and unified things evolve the more they use up less orderly and unified materials, as I do when I gobble a delicious dinner! But the happy result is that when out of this universe of dark matter you, and me, and each and all interesting and orderly beings have evolved. What evolution shows is not that there is no Creator, but that the Creator prefers to make complicated things by using the simpler tools he has already invented. Even the fact that it may be that our universe will end in a deep freeze, so thinned out that nothing happens except a random wiggle here and there, is thus an "evil" that a good God only permits for a greater good. No, it is no evil if it leaves our spiritual minds alive to ponder the meaning of its puzzling history.

Yet there *is* immense *moral* evil in our world that we, you and me, each and all, have produced. God rejects moral evil because moral evil rejects the happiness God has intended us to have. Just because God has made us free to choose even what injures us, such as the atheism which atheists have freely chosen to promote, our world is a beautiful work of art hacked up by vandals. How could a good God permit such atrocities, including that greatest atrocity, atheism? Only because God, like a wise parent, wants to teach us responsibility and thus in the end restore this perfect work of art that you and me, each and all, will finally be, if we don't like the atheists seduce us into being fools.

“Fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God’ (Ps 53:2). That, in truth, is our vocation, your and mine, and that of each and all human persons.

The word “vocation” means “calling.” God is both like the racing official who at the starting line signals “Go!” and the official at the close of the race who urges the runners on to the finish. God is calling us to the completion of Creation, an intimate union with Divinity that leaves us all ourselves. We are called to be deified. This is the vocation of all of each and all of us. For each of us there is his or her lane in a single track. Hence to speak of “vocation” is *many* as well as, more fundamentally, *one* “way” to God. The biggest mistake, therefore, is to wander from one track to another and get nowhere, wasting our energies as we finally run backward. We *must* find our vocation and stick to it until the race is over.

In the chapters that follow I will consider the principal choices of vocation that are open to us, but I must conclude this chapter with one fundamental rule. The first consideration in this discernment of your vocation is *not* what you would “like to do” but what you are *needed* to do. Not that God needs you, but that that his “very good” creation needs you to reach its perfect construction. **Because God created you as a member of the Divine Community he gave you the special gifts that are yours, whether you know what they are or not, to service that Community, and your vocation is that essential service. Only if you do your job will you find true satisfaction.**

CHAPTER II: WOMEN AND MEN AND OTHERS

This chapter may “turn off” some current readers because they have been taught that “equality” in human relations is the supreme value. Hence women’s vocations must be the same as man’s, since certainly both are equally human persons, and equal before God. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28).’ Granted this equality, however, what vocation is special to each? Who can deny that the answer to this intriguing question is now provided by science that has clearly shown that evolution produced women to be mothers and men to be fathers so that the human community might better survive and grow?

Furthermore, as far as we know at present, homosexual, transsexual, and persons of ambiguous sexuality are evolutionary anomalies that do not fit the individual to survive. The Church in speaking of these persons as suffering from a “disorder” (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2357-9) is simply being compassionately frank.¹ #2357-9 The community owes disordered, disadvantaged, unsound persons the help they need to achieve better functioning, while the vocation of the disadvantaged to overcome their limitations and free their special gifts, because like all persons they too each have special gifts as well as their defects.

Because human persons have both a body and a spiritual mind and are directed but are also conditioned by our bodies, the human female spiritual mind differs somewhat from the human male mind. While we all experience this difference, it is dangerous to put the difference into words. It is as St. Augustine said of “time,” What

then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.” The feminist Carol Gilligan said that women are “caring.” *In a Different Voice*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, (1982) said that women are “caring.” Others says “nurturing,” but this amounts to saying they are called to be mothers and in fact, as will see later, not all women have that vocation as not all men are called to be fathers. Certainly the differences is less with their spiritual minds than with their physical bodies, but since what we think is based on our experiences and women’s experiences of their feminine bodies are different than men’s experience of their masculine bodies, there must be some differences in male and female thinking. Let us just say that it would be an awful error for men and women to disregard their differences in discerning their respective vocations; that is, how they can serve the community.

Today many men think that to do this they must be *macho*, sexual champions that abuse women. The Bible, Gen 3:16, notes this evil notion as one of the main effects or “curses” of original sin, “Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master.” This curse has often been quoted as Divine approval on *machoism*, when in fact it is punishment, like obesity from over-eating, is the inevitable harm done by evil acts. I have been told by an experienced marriage counselor that today the opposite evil, today increasingly common, is that of the “momma’s boy” who demands his wife’s tender care while refusing to give her and their children manly support.

Generally speaking, the true vocation of man and woman is to be father or mother faithful to each other. The mother cares for the child in its earliest years supplying its food from the moment of its conception and hence the child tends to identify with her.

The father generates the child and cares for the mother, protecting and feeding them during her long pregnancy, birthing, breast-feeding and teaching the small child. As the child matures, the father, more in contact with the world outside the home than the mother, begins to discipline and educate the children in the world's ways. The mother models for her girls; the father for his sons, but not without competition (as Freud showed but not altogether accurately) and if this sexual modeling is lacking the children may suffer sexual disorientation. Thus for both sexes the modern demands of work and professional expertise often competes with the fulfillment by parents of their parental vocations and the children also suffer vocational disorders.

We can conclude that this harmful both for individuals and the community to stereotype women or men in certain sexual roles that their individual gifts or disorders are neglected are abused. On the other hand in discerning someone's vocation her or his gender is a major factor to be considered. To neglect it is to force either woman or man into disregarding one of their most significant natural gifts. This view is argued extensively in my book *Justice in the Church: Gender and Participation*, The McGivney Lectures, 1992, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

CHAPTER III: ORDINARY AND SPECIAL

St. Thomas Aquinas taught that if there had been no sin all men and women would have married, since in birth males and females are approximately equal in number. In simple cultures the father earns the family living and builds its housing. This can be called the “ordinary” pattern of human vocation that underlies all its latter developing complications as technology more and more supplements simple food collection. With these cultural complications that today anchor me to my computer much of the day special vocations multiply.

This increasing technological control of the environment is an important aspect of our human vocation to control our environment for our human purposes and moves us to our destination in the community of God who created us in the Garden ‘to care for and cultivate it’ (Gn 2:15). It is subject, however, to very grave abuses and consequentially to deviations from our true human vocation. We have lost sight of the nature of our environment and hence of the nature of our own human person. Karl Marx prophesied that “Some day we will create ourselves,” which is now coming true, but really means “destroy ourselves.” Once we know our human genome we can wreck it. No doubt God hid it from us hoping that by the time we could read it we would be wise enough to leave it alone!

Yet as we seek to fulfill our ordinary human vocations society necessary becomes more complex, outgrowing the nuclear family, and building up the cities to their towers of Babel or even higher to the New York Twin Towers that the terrorists shattered. Yet such cities as the Holy City of Jerusalem at their best anticipate the Heavenly City of God

to which our true vocation calls us. To build such cities there must be a division into many, many special vocations each making its unique contribution just as God created the universe with its mingled history of natural law, free will, and random chance.

Early in the U.S. Republic 95 percent of our population made a living by farming, while by 1900 it was only 45 percent and by 2000 less than 2 percent. Some idea of the vast diversity of “jobs” today is given by the lists given by employment agencies that include at least 6,000 names. Of special interest are skilled and unskilled laborers, such as heavy equipment operators, ironworkers, carpenter, masons, teamsters and truck drivers, concrete and paving workers, steel workers, piping, demolition, tunneling, masonry, fire-proofing, waste disposal, fences, landscaping, gardening, etc.. Formerly the rights of many laborers were protected by labor unions but today these unions cover only about 13% of workers.

It must be remembered that St. Joseph was a carpenter (Greek *teknon*, which has a broader sense than our word “carpenter”) and Jesus also for many years. Most of these tasks earn a very modest income and are truly useful to society, but some are sinful, such as prostitution, and trafficking in illicit drugs. Today many also are in the service of wasteful and exploitative consumerism. No one can be said to have a vocation to such wasteful or sinful occupations, but only that they can choose their occupation freely provide they take into consideration family and social needs. Young David took up arms in the time of war and Jesus moved on from his carpenter shop when John the Baptist began to call all Israel to repent. The time had come.

CHAPTER IV: MARRIED AND SINGLE

While, as we have seen, in a sinless world all would have married, in our sinful world for not a few marriage is either not possible, or not useful to as an element of someone's vocation. Bodily or psychological defects make it impractical, although the noted physicist Stephen Hawking, who is hardly more than a thoughtful head, is married. Homosexuality of sexual ambiguity is also an impediment to marriage, since "gay marriage" is in Catholic teaching not a true marriage because it lacks any ordination to procreation. A marriage never consummated by sexual intercourse can, however, be a true marriage, as that of Mary and Joseph, yet the Church can for good reasons can annul them. Such marriages, especially if virginal on the part of both parties, can be part of a spiritual vocation.

When persons believe marriage is their vocation and fall in love it is important that they get to know their future partner before actually marrying, because sexual attraction is by no means a sufficient reason for doing so. To marry and then discover that one's partner is a hindrance, not a help, to fulfilling one's chosen vocation is obviously tragic. Thus one's vocation may demand that one choose the single life, either because one cannot find a suitable partner, or because one is not able to fulfill its obligations.

The person, man or woman, whose vocation is the single life cannot, however, be considered frustrated. While it is true that marriage is natural and normal, for individuals and for society the single life can also be a fine vocation. Those who marry must not only do so for themselves but must also serve the community and community service is often

more possible and more easily supplied by single persons than those who are married. Thus in our disordered world the vocation of celibacy is to be preferred. St. Thomas Aquinas goes far as to say that in choosing a vocation there need not be any deliberation in preferring it as the best way to serve the Christian life because that is obvious, but only whether there are obstacles to such a choice of vocation, such as an existing engagement to marry. If in fact all who are baptized had made that choice of vocation to be single for the sake of salvation and for the Church, the work of the Church and the end of the world would be at hand! Unfortunately today the value of the chaste single life, praised by St. Paul, is poorly understood by most Christians and little preached or pastorally promoted. Hence marriage also is considered a burden and extra-marital sexual relations encouraged all too effectively. This is even worse than ancient and Islamic polygamy that at least protected women from single parenthood or contraception.

V: WORKERS AND PROFESSIONALS

John Paul II taught that all persons should “work” in the sense of somehow serving the community by contributing to the common good. This corrected the tendency, especially noted in European culture to support the existence of a “leisure class” that owned landed property farmed by serfs attached to the land. This was falsely supported by the teachings of Aristotle who favored a leisure class supported by slaves but dedicated to contemplation, the pursuit of truth, not to material enjoyments.

Work in this broad sense is either primarily manual or mental and the manual work is either unskilled or skilled, and mental work either routine or professional. Aristotle predicted that slavery as unskilled physical labor might some day be made obsolete by the invention of machines. This is rapidly becoming truer and workers are becoming more and more literate. Yet a large part (at least 30%) of our U.S. democracy does not vote in general elections and this failure to participate in political decision was Aristotle’s criteria for defining slavery! African-Americans who were once slaves, however, still retain the notion that education is not for real men, and hence have not risen as fast economically as Asiatics.

Skilled labor or craftsmanship involves both mental and physical skill and often has at least a touch of fine art. Our Lord himself chose to be a carpenter for all but three years of his life, not doubt because this best manifested his true humanity. Such skills generally have to be acquired early in life and are then perfected but the physical aspect declines in old age.

Work that is primarily mental, although it may also include physical skills secondarily, is called a “profession” from the fact that persons having such a vocation are expected to make a public declaration of their expertise and availability as advisers. The classic professions in the medieval universities were those of the clergy, lawyers, and doctors. The clerical vocation will be discussed later, and to these are now added a fourth profession, that of teachers whose work is not at all physical, except for coaches and trainers. In fact the military was also considered a profession, although the physical skills of combat were so essential to it.

In the military vocation I would include the police and others who enforce the laws and protect the peace. Its professional character arises from the fact that its most difficult part is not the physical risk but the moral and rhetorical skills of encouraging persons to risk their life for the common good. The medical profession also requires certain physical skills such as surgery that once was assigned to barbers, who now would be considered craftsmen.

Lawyers include politicians and other public officials and their assistants I would add to this business administration because in today’s large corporations the primary expertise is in administration of the many workers involved that has a political and ethical character. Economics, on the other hand, is an architectonic practical science dealing with the employment of resources and thus pertains to the teaching profession.

The teaching profession is the highest of all the professions, treating as it does both the theoretical and practical sciences, as well as history and methodology (logic) and those skills mental and physical making it possible for these professional vocations to be well carried out.

In choosing any of these professions as one's vocation one must first discover that one has the necessary physical and mental gifts required by first beginning their study and proving that one can acquire this or that expertise. Then one begins practice and finally should teach this profession to others. Craftsmen must do much the same but do not need the theory of their craft so much as its physical practice. Today this is often called "vocational training" but of course all education is at least in part vocational.

There is a real difficulty in relating the vocation of marriage and family with all these vocations. Once a married couple living on a farm found it not to difficult to keep up a constant companionship with each other and their children as the father farmed the fields and the mother tended the household and even the children helped with the "chores." With the development of city-life, however, the bread-winner, who today is often the wife as well as he husband, are gone from home much of the day, and the children left alone or in the care of a "sitter" or are left at a "day-school." Therefore in choosing a vocation one should decide whether one should or should not marry, since family responsibilities ought to come first and may limit one's vocational success, or unfavorably limit one's family role. As little as feminists like to hear it, this is especially true for mothers, but children also need their fathers intimate attention, particularly his sons who require a masculine role model in their adolescence that is often more difficult than that of girls.

In all these choices, I must repeat again, the first question is whether the society of which I am apart needs me to train for and carry out a particular vocation. In time of a just war or police patrol or a disaster persons of all vocations may be morally obliged to put aside their craft or profession and strive for safety or peace for their people.

CHAPTER VI: LAITY AND CLERGY

Jesus by the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit created a fundamental distinction within the community of the Christian Church between the ordained clergy and the laity. By this he did not mean, and Vatican II again emphasized the same point, that the clergy has an active role and the laity a merely passive role in the Church's mission. *Both* clergy and laity have active, complementary roles with regard to the Church's mission of evangelization. Therefore the clergy should prepare and activate the laity for their choice and implementation of their lay vocations. The notion of some feminists that women should be ordained to the clergy is, as I will argue later, a failure to understand the even superior vocation proper to women.

All those who by baptism are members of the Church, including the clergy, are laity, and their special role is to promote the Gospel by sharing it with those of their own milieu since they have personal contact with them and understand their particular mind-sets and experiences. The laity also have the more general role of supporting the clergy in their work, even substituting when necessary for them in some properly clerical tasks that do not require ordination. Note in particular that families have a special responsibility to encourage both clerical and religious education among their offspring. The clergy cannot generate clergy, only families can.

The Belgian Canon Cardijn, founder of the Young Catholic Workers and the Young Student Workers, had a definition of the lay vocation that is seldom heard of today but which I believe is the correct one: "The call of the Gospel of like to like." The clergy because of their office of leadership seldom has contact with the laity in their actual homes, work places, and places of entertainment; only other lay persons do and it

is in these experiences that the Gospel needs to be heard, not just in Church. Yet most Catholics seem to be afraid to speak of religion to their friends and acquaintances. The clergy must teach the laity what to believe, but it is they who can best share this in real life situations by example but also in friendly conversation.

In the Latin Church since Vatican II the clergy are bishops, priests, and deacons who are ordained by a bishop. Formerly there were “minor orders,” that are retained in some liturgically conservative sections of the Roman Rite. In the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches, the minor orders are reader (lector), chanter (cantor), taper-bearer (acolyte) and sub-deacon. Some of these services are now performed by altar boys (or girls) who are not clergy. The diaconate, which can be either permanent or transitional to priestly ordination and these other services relieve the bishop and priest for strictly sacramental and governing duties and are directed especially to care of the poor (Acts 6:2).

Vatican II gave rise to the claim of some that women should be ordained to the clergy since there were formerly “deaconesses.” John Paul II, however, in 1994 issued an "Apostolic Letter on Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*)" in which he declared:

Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Luke 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.

Those who still argue that this is not an infallible statement, overlook that the Church has always accepted as irrefutable declarations of the validity of the Sacraments by the Popes, such as Pius XII's declaration that the necessary matter of the Sacrament of Ordination itself is the laying on of hands, not the conferring of the sacred vessels as St. Thomas Aquinas thought.

In my book *Justice in the Church* I have given what seems to me to be the reason that women cannot be priests, a reason that, as I will show in the last section in no way detracts from woman's dignity. Priesthood is a sign of Christ who was male. He was the the Second Person of the Trinity Divine and called "Son" not "daughter of the First Person was called in the Old Testament and by Jesus himself, "Abba," Father. But why is God, the First Person, Father and not Mother, since to Him is attributed as to the Creator all perfections, female as well as male? This is because the fundamental teaching of the Old Testament was to correct the *monism* so common to other religions than Judaism that *identifies* the world as somehow the "same" as God. To call God "Mother" encourages this pagan view that is so common because a child comes from its mother's body, is nourished at her breast, and remains close to her in infancy since she is its material cause, while its Father is its efficient cause. The father is thus "other" than the child, as the Creator is utterly independent of His creation. Thus we cannot change the fundamental symbolism of the Bible since it reveals God's nature to us nor the maleness of the Christian priesthood that conforms to that revelation.

CHAPTER VII CONSECRATED PERSONS

What then of vocation to the religious life by the three vows, of poverty, chastity, and obedience? This is called the Christian “state of perfection” because it conforms to that which Jesus himself assumed. The Bible indicates that the twelve apostles and St. Paul were also called to this state and in the Eastern churches, although they have relaxed the requirement of celibacy for their priests, they still require it of bishops and it defines the “religious state” of those living the “consecrated life” either in community or “in the world.” Similar to these are the lay organizations attached to religious orders whose members make promises to live by a rule similar to that of the Order to which they are attached.

“Nuns” are women who live a contemplative life of contemplation and asceticism and who most properly are virgins. Their state is, therefore, most like that of the Blessed Virgin Mary, although she was a married virgin. The Church also recognizes “consecrated virgins” who may live in the world. As Vatican II in its *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* made remarkably clear, Mary is the highest member of the Church whose Head is Christ and to whom she is in a spiritual sense the Wisdom and Bride of God. No higher title could be given to any creature. Thus to claim that the Catholic Church degrades women, especially by denying them the priesthood, is absurd, since in fact it elevates them to the noblest position in the Church, in a sense superior to that of ordained bishops and priests. This superiority is evident in the fact that the ordained are called to an earthly ministry that will some day be complete, while the consecrated woman images Mary, the New Jerusalem descending from heaven.

Women in the active religious orders are not nuns but “Sisters,” a somewhat lesser state, as are men religious in active orders. Men in contemplative orders such as the Benedictines are called “monks” but although they take vows of celibacy, since they are not necessarily virgins can be considered inferior to nuns. Yet the contemplative life does not exclude the priestly ministry, since as the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) explicitly states, it is better to “Contemplate and then share the truth one has contemplated with others, than simply to contemplate.”

Thus the great Dominican Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that unless a Christian is prevented from living the vowed life by other responsibilities, such as an engagement to be married or the care of one’s parents, although a vocation religious life is matter of free choice, one should not delay that choice by doubts but should make the commitment at once. Certainly today when there is such a priest shortage and the Church has such wonderful opportunities to evangelize the globe, one should hear the voice of Jesus summoning, “Come follow me!” Priests and religious are more *needed* by the world than any other professionals, since as Jesus said, “The harvest is rich, but the harvesters are few.”