



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Spiritual Essays

Center for Ignatian Spirituality

2009

Vocation Calling

Fr. Randy Roche

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/spiritualessays>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Ignatian Spirituality at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spiritual Essays by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

Vocation Calling

The word "vocation" comes from a Latin word meaning "to call." When we find a particular, personal direction in life, we can say that we are aware of a calling, or a vocation. The experience of receiving, discovering, or becoming aware of a significant choice that is open to us is like having someone call us, offering an attractive, though perhaps disturbing, invitation.

We perceive calls towards basic orientations in life as personally and individually as we do with answering a telephone: it is for us, not someone else. We might go through a period of doubt and questioning, much as we do if at first we believe that someone has dialed a wrong number, only to suddenly recognize the caller, and therefore become alert and attentive to the message or to the conversation that ensues. Some of us find that the most satisfying explanation for the special invitations we receive is to believe that they come from God.

However we might explain to ourselves the source of vocational awareness, we experience the calls as insistent, but not commanding, powerful, but not overpowering, a bit frightening perhaps, but never actually threatening. Our true callings are usually accompanied by consolations that support us in taking practical steps towards enacting what we, at our deepest level, want to do and how we want to live. Many of us receive not only increased understanding of options we might pursue but also desires to act, even in the face of some contrary, negative thoughts that arise.

Though we surely do at times receive invitations or even commands from other persons, only we can know, perhaps after some reflection, whether or to what degree we experience from them a true match with our deepest desires. We do not know all our reasons for choosing to make a significant change in our lives, or to accept a heavy responsibility, or to make a commitment to a group or to an individual, but we do have an inner assurance that coincides with decisions involving our calling or vocation. No matter what the cost or consequences might be, when our hearts say "yes" with conviction, refusing such a call would make it difficult to live with ourselves. We can rightly say: "Our vocations are us."

Many of us, looking back, have come to recognize both the complexity and the simplicity of the foremost callings in our lives. One of us might have known with complete certainty that we would marry, or that we

would be self-employed, or that teaching would be our career. Some of us have taken small steps that we knew at the time were ours to take, and only later found where they led us: to becoming a care-giver, an administrator, or a peace-maker. All of us follow more than one vocation in life, some of them concurrent, but each and all of them comprise the real reasons for getting up and beginning our day.

If we do not want to receive telephone calls or email messages, we can ignore them. We can even separate ourselves from contact with the sources of communication if we wish. We can also take no notice of vocational stirrings, and can, to a certain extent, avoid contact with God and anyone else who might present us with options that would resonate with our hearts. But ultimately, we have yearnings and desires already within us to live with purpose, to make a difference, and to accomplish something of value.

Out of misplaced fear we might refuse to consider the invitations that are surely directed towards us, but every true vocation is, and can only be, for our welfare and that of everyone around us. Our calling is always in accord with our gifts, talents, capabilities, and personalities. We can enhance our reception of vocational calling by reflecting consciously on the desires of our hearts rather than the attractions that appeal only to our minds or physical senses. We can, if we choose, pray to perceive and to receive our vocations.

Again: "Our vocations are us."