

Vocations



Serving Others-Serving God

The Prayer of Ignatius Loyola

Teach us, Good Lord
To serve you as you deserve.
To give and not count the cost.
To fight and not heed the wounds.
To toil and not to seek for rest.
To labor and not to ask for any reward
Except that of knowing that we do Your Will.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

SERVING OTHERS-SERVING GOD

GUIDING SCRIPTURE

DIFFERENT MINISTRIES: SAME GOD

1 Corinthians 12:4-11,

Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

MY VOCATION

A “Vocation” is defined as a strong impulse or inclination to follow a particular activity or career, or a divine call to God’s service.”-according to Dictionary. Com.

Vocations are more complex than this dictionary definition implies especially when I am asking myself the question:

“What is my vocation?”

All vocations or vocational decisions are “Three Dimensional.” or are “3-D”, to borrow a term from the film industry. Vocations and vocational decisions contain the “3-D” action verbs of DISCERNING, DECIDING and DOING.

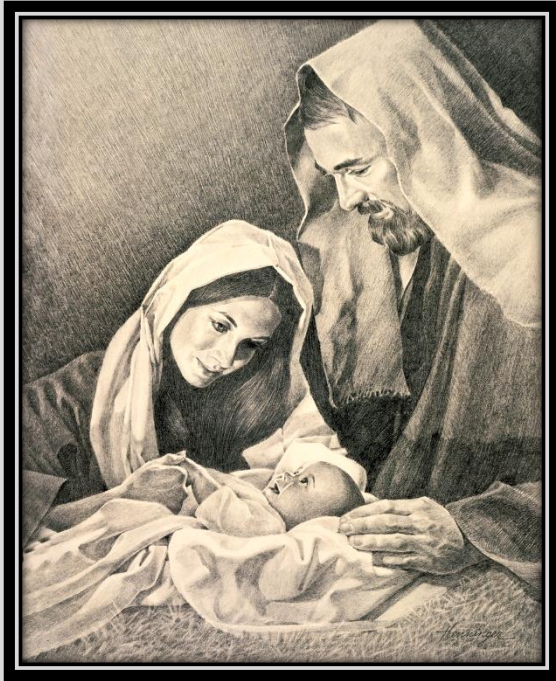
When I find myself at a “Vocational Crossroads” in my life, upon self-reflection and during my prayers, I soon realize that all My Vocations at this point in my life have evolved and changed from the moment of my birth to my current state in life.

I further realize that My Vocations have never been neither BLACK nor WHITE but also rich hues of GRAY. My Vocations may have been either secular, faith based or both. My Vocations often become defined and redefined as my roles in my households, communities, nations, and the world have changed.

In short, the 30 Reflections and Prayers contained in Different Ministries: Same God-MY VOCATIONS are designed to help you look at the Vocational Discernment process to answer for yourself, the age-old question of:

“WHAT DO I WANT TO BE WHEN I GROW UP?”

The Call to Holiness



God, teach me to be holy
as You are holy.

Reflection 1

The Universal Call to Holiness

“Each morning, God awakens me to hear.” (Isaiah 50:4)

Reflection

The universal call to holiness urges us to be mystics in our ordinary lives. Carl Rahner in 1983 encourages us to develop our mystic potential through attitudes of gratitude and love: by being the truest self an *Imago Dei* and by being the face of God to all.

Mystics experience a call daily: graced seeing every bush as a “burning bush”; hearing God calling their name as unique and holy; smelling fragrant works of mercy; tasting mindfully, nourishing ourselves wisely, thinking about the honey of our lives, not bitter herbs; touching in a gentle reassuring way,

My personal “call” was specifically nurtured by religious women who challenged me to “dare to be different”; unique; myself. Fulfilling a call is a lifetime adventure supported by many yet ultimately a gift of grace. I still read ‘**The Sanctifier**’, which Sister Theophane read to me as a young girl.

Call to Action

Today, use your senses to experience God’s presence: BE mystic potential

Author’s Vocation

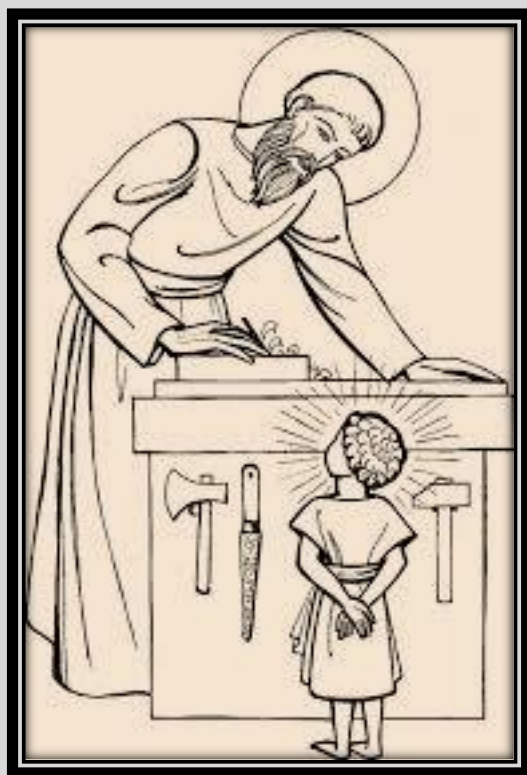
Deeply listening

Name: Sister Carole A Riley, CDP, Ph.D.

Witness to God’s Provident Care

Charleston, West Virginia

Vocations in a Household



God, teach me to serve You
by serving others as a member of a household.

Reflection 2

“Don’t be anxious about things; instead, pray. Pray about everything.”
-Philippians 4:6

Reflection

In this time of Pandemic, we read of everyday heroes who work in health care, education, and many other jobs requiring setting aside personal safety in order to serve others. They are worthy of praise, but so too are those who keep things running in the family with no recognition and sometimes little help. We all say we share the work at home, but do we?

If we see our household as a shared ministry, as a place where my calling is to serve you and yours is to serve me, if we understand drawing on God’s differing gifts to us to use them in concert with each other, then we live in harmony, benefitting us all. And drawing us closer as a family.

A Call to Action

It is vital to recognize that no one can do everything; everyone can do something; we can only do what we can do. So, call those in your household to acknowledge, after reflection and prayer, what each can do. And with love and patience, do it!

Author’s Vocation

The Reverend Kent Higgins
Retired Episcopal Priest
Charleston, West Virginia

Reflection 3

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”

-1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Reflection

Paul implores us to recognize that our bodies are not our own but belong to God. Our bodies are a temporary gift. We should honor Him with them. Remember, God made us in His image (Genesis 1:26) and that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

We are called to avoid temptations, observe the Sabbath, and take care of our bodies. We don't have any right to give them over to sin. Therefore, we should keep our minds on things from above opposed to giving into fleshly temptations.

Call to Action

- Identify some poor habits, you have, that can lead to temptation.
- Choose one poor habit you want to change or improve.
- Pray for the strength and desire to change it.

Author's Vocation

Clinton Shrewsbury, B.S.
Personal Trainer, Health Coach, and Dietitian
Scott Depot, West Virginia

Reflection 4

“A vocation is not something you choose. It chooses you.”

David Brooks, The Second Mountain

Reflection

We are called from all eternity in the heart of God. We are loved into being, called by name within the household of God. We come into being within a household of a family, our household of faith. There we learn to listen and discern the on-going call of God. A call that is ever-renewing, ever-evolving: an open invitation to on-going deepening and commitment.

Frederick Buechner says: “A vocation is where your deep gladness meets the world’s hunger.” Within our everyday lives in the household of faith, we experience so much at a rapid pace. We could often ask: “Where is the anchor of my life’s joy and peace where I share of my abundance to nourish life in the household of faith?” Discovering my vocation is a lifetime journey that begins and ends in the heart of God.

Call to Action

About vocational discernment, a wise person once told me:

“When you choose, choose freely – choose frequently – and celebrate your choice.”

How will you choose and celebrate today?

Author’s Vocation

Sister Deborah Lockwood, osf
Pastoral Ministry
Redwood City, California

Reflection 5

At the Home of Martha and Mary

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one, Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”-Luke 10:38-42

Reflection

Have you ever found yourself in Martha’s place at home? So many chores to do, rushing to get them done, eliminating things to get them done, but sometimes eliminating the wrong things?

Call to Action

Mary, facing some of the challenges we face every day in our household, chose the better way. Let her be our model in having undistracted devotion to God.

Author’s Vocation

Elaine Soper, Ph.D.
WVIS Associate Spiritual Director
Toledo, Ohio

Reflection 6

“Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church 2392)

Reflection

Within the household is the opportunity to foster and develop the vocation of each member. There are diverse households with different constellations of members dwelling within its space.

The “Family” has a broader definition and demonstrates more inclusivity. Those households that commit to serving vulnerable children and teens as caring and compassionate foster families are the recipients of this reflection. First-hand accounts of working with foster families have allowed each member of that household to be transformed through the process of service to each other.

Foster homes have the awesome responsibility of providing a safe and nurturing environment where healing of the heart takes place. A foster home can become a refuge where children can fully experience acceptance, belonging and discovering the persons they are to become. A household of love and service becomes a home filled with hope.

A Call to Action

- Foster a spirit of generosity of time with a child in need.
- Thank a foster parent for their commitment.

Author’s Vocation

Sister Linda Hylla, CDP, LCSW
Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Granite City, Illinois

Reflection 7

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”
- Corinthians 12:7

Reflection

The opportunity to consider the topic of vocations coincides with one of my annual exercises at the beginning of the school year when I ask my students to compose a paragraph about their life goals and aspirations. After reading more than 100 nicely worded paragraphs, I am delighted to share some wonderful news about the future leaders of our society. The students came forward with an abundance of encouraging and hopeful thoughts about their future vocations. Whether headed toward nursing, physical therapy, business, teaching, or the liberal arts, the students overwhelmingly cited helping others, nurturing a family, and making the world a better place, especially for the less fortunate. This is encouraging news, and speaks volumes about the parents, teachers, and religious leaders who have shaped our young generation to this point.

Call to Action

Seek children or young adults and, if appropriate, kindly encourage them to be open to a calling that enables them to make the world a better place. Encourage others to embody the Spirit for the common good.

Author's Vocation

Edward Kocher, Ph.D.
Professor of Music
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Reflection 8

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

2 Timothy 1:9

Reflection

I stand still. What is God's forever plan for me? I look at my life now and over the years. As I do so, I see God's plan for unexpected opportunities, events that proved to be challenging, times of pure joy.

In some of these moments I was convinced I was in the wrong place, that this was the wrong time. Upon reflection, looking back, God's plan was by far best. He certainly kept his hand on me. Life takes strange turns, but I am certain I am where God wishes if I only continue to listen to Him, ask for His grace and walk ahead in trust.

Call to Action

1. Review your life choices and your willingness to see all as God's special plan for you.
2. Take time to thank God for the here and now, for God is in the here and now.

Author's Vocation

Sister Ritamary Schulz, ASCJ
Spiritual Director
Hamden, Connecticut

Vocations in a Community



God, teach me to serve You
by serving others as a member of a community.

Reflection 9

“Nothing attracts like love. Love and you will win every heart.”
-Blessed Pauline von Mallinckrodt

Reflection

The above quote is taken from the Constitutions of the Sisters of Christian Charity, my community. After encouraging us to be welcoming and creatively open communities, we are to be truly prophetic witnesses to the world. It concludes with: “As an international community, we take up the challenge to foster communion among peoples and cultures. Our community living is not an end in itself but serves the mission of Christ.”

Our religious vocation in community is to give and receive Christ’s love, joy, peace and healing for the life of the world. Therefore, we follow Jesus in establishing community with everyone we meet, no matter what ministry God has called us to work with Him in communion with the Church, and especially in our celebration of Eucharist where we hope to become eucharist for God’s people, no matter what culture, race or creed.

Call to Action

Reflect on your vocational call

Plan a way to use that call to gather or be part of an outreach.

Author’s Vocation

Sister Mary Irene Sorber, SCC, MS
Religious, WVIS Associate Spiritual Director, former teacher, and
administrator.
Charleston, West Virginia

Reflection 10

“God has committed some work to me...” St. John Newman

Reflection

Vocation for me has always been a call to community, whether family, parish church, prayer group, Cursillo, and youth groups. Belonging to a community involves being part of something bigger than myself, giving and receiving, working together to bring about God’s Kingdom in a particular time and place.

To live a vocation of presence and participation is to be in the flow of God’s Spirit initiating, leading, and activating not only one’s gifts but also the gifts of other members of the community to accomplish what God wants to do in any given situation. If one is in the stream of God’s life, will, and love and allows it to flow freely through them to serve God’s people, one is truly living out the essence of one’s Christian vocation.

Call to Action

Self Examination: A pastor prayed, “God, what are YOU doing here (in the community) and how can I help YOU?” rather than praying, “God, please bless our work.”

1. What’s the difference?
2. Because there’s work to be done, is it MINE to do?

Author’s Vocation

Eileen Chwalibog
WVIS Associate Spiritual Director
Huntington, West Virginia

Reflection 11

“Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.”

-Richard Gillard

Reflection

A community where members seek to serve one another can be a vision of the Kingdom of God here and now.

Jesus at the Last Supper approaches His disciples on bended knee, showing them the way to the kingdom, through loving service and gentle care. The call for each of us in the myriad communities we belong to, is to listen to the voice of Jesus, who invites us to join Him with the towel and the basin to wash the feet of one another by using our unique gifts and talents in service to one another.

Whatever our vocation might be, God is always urging us to serve one another in humility and love, so that we might know here and now, the Kingdom of God in our midst.

Call to Action

- What is one way that I can be of greater service to my community through my vocational call?
- How can I be a servant to those in my community who are in need?

Author's Vocation

Thomas Octave

Husband, Associate Professor Saint Vincent College, Pastoral Musician
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Reflection 12

“Vocation does not mean a goal I pursue. It means a calling that I hear ... I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity.”

--- Parker Palmer

Reflection

Sandra Day O'Connor became the first female Supreme Court judge. Barack Obama became the first person of color to be President. I became the first person to open a licensed child care center in my county. I don't know about the other two, but I had never imagined doing what I did when I was young. These firsts happened because of the historical context, the cultural shifts, and the needs and nudges of the community that surrounded each of us. Vocation is more than a matter of deciding who we want to be when we grow up. It is a matter of getting to the core of our truths and values, and then stepping into the opening when it arises that fills the need in the community.

Call to Action

How have your historical and cultural surroundings affected your sense of vocation? What core truths and values are at the heart of your identity? Journal your reflections.

Author's Vocation

Mary Quick, MA, ALP

Developmental Specialist, Lay Preacher, Writer

Gandeeville, West Virginia

Reflection 13

“On the contrary, the call to do the will of God is a call to form a community.”

Mary, Wellspring of Peace, A Contemporary Novena for Peacemakers-
Joan Chittister, OSB

Reflection

When Jesus was called to the vocation of a Rabbi, He taught and demonstrated the ability to understand His audiences, and to present ways of living all members of His audiences could understand, relate to, and apply in their daily lives.

Then and now, Jesus still creates “communities of believers” called apostles who carry on God’s apostolic work. **We too are called to be apostles.** Some of the questions all apostles must ask themselves constantly are:

- What is my call or vocation in this situation?
- How can I bring God’s love to the sacredness of my work in this situation?
- With what like-minded people, workers, professionals or community members share my work?

To answer these questions, Jesus further teaches us how to love, forgive, pray, be open, discern and serve.

Call to Action

- Identify the communities to which you belong.
- Think of ways, you can make these communities better today.
- Do it.

Author’s Vocation

Bob Harrison, Ph.D.

Teacher, writer, editor, retired professor and administrator.

Charleston, West Virginia

Reflection 14

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor...; to comfort all who mourn;”- Isaiah 61:1-2

Reflection

Good and Gracious God, we pray that by the Gifts You have bestowed on us we may serve Your community in their needs through the words of the great prophet Isaiah. Help us to comfort the brokenhearted and proclaim that the Lord is among us, ever present.

Call to Action

What are your gifts, your talents? How have you or how could you use them to bring about the Kingdom of God today? You're the community? Listen for God's voice.

Author's Vocation

Deacon Thomas Soper
Married/Deacon in the Catholic Church
St. Catherine of Siena and St. Clement Parishes
Toledo, Ohio

Reflection 15

“It is very important to realize that our vocation is hidden in where we are and who we are.” - Henri Nouwen (1932-1996)

Reflection

PRAYER OF AN AGING DISCIPLE

Lord, grant me the grace
to live in the present and recognize what is possible
to look to the future and trust you to be silent, and hear your
voice in the stillness
to do what you ask without arguing
to humbly adapt to radical change to serve, and to graciously
accept being served
to give generously
to be ever grateful for all your generous gifts
to use all my gifts in whatever form of service you ask of me
to rejoice in all the graces you have given me
to forgive and ask forgiveness
to be sorry for all the times I have not responded to your call
to live in a way that bears witness to you
to have courage in times of trial
to let go of all that keeps me from drawing ever closer
to you to look forward to the future with hope and to be ever
surprised as you make all things new. Amen.
—Excerpted from Answering God’s Call by Barbara Lee

Call to action

Today, where are you and who are you, in your community?

- How can you use the graces God has given you?
- How can you respond to God’s call?
- How can you use your gifts in service?

Author’s Vocation

Margaret (Susie) Pace, M.Ed., MA
Retired Special Education teacher-principal-administrator
Princeton, West Virginia

Vocations in a Nation



God, teach me to serve You
by serving others as a member of a nation.

Reflection 16

“Love is our origin...our destiny... our calling”

– Preface to Eucharistic Prayer

God has not called us to be successful but to be faithful

-St. Teresa of Calcutta

Reflection

When God called you into existence, who did God create you to be? What did God call you to do for others?

In family, there was the call to faithfulness in the ordinariness of living: correction when needed, responsible caring, values of healthy relationships. Later, there was the call to celibacy. And later the call to ordained ministry of priest and pastor. And within this, the call to ministry of spiritual direction.

The dominant graces flowing through this call within call within call was **love** (the process of growing out of self-centeredness and into other-centeredness); **discernment** (learning to notice what God is doing in me and others); **wisdom** (distilling the truth of my experiences of God's-“know-how.”).

The Gospels, lives of the saints, shared friendships, and mistakes were the best mentors of faithfulness to the “calls”. God’s “calls” place us at the service of the Gospel and one another.

A Call to Action

With gratitude, notice the fruitfulness of living your personal response to God’s call(s).

Author’s Vocation

Father Bill Petro, M.A.

Associate spiritual Director

Frbpetro42@gmail.com

Dunbar, West Virginia

Reflection 17

“God has created me to do Him some definite service...”
“There are a variety of gifts...”

Reflection

These statements sum up so much of my vocation-My desire to follow God’s calling, to live His values, and to share His love.

To serve others can take on many meanings: to help, to be present, to bring what is needed to others, to just be with another. My vocation is to minister to others as a chaplain in a very large and busy hospital.

It is a call to be with people of every color, race, social stature and religious belief. It pulls one in directions one never thought one could possibly be pulled. It causes one to act in faith and to be at one with the person one is with, while one calls to God for guidance.

As one stands with a person facing death, one cannot help but think about one’s own death. We are one in our humanness. We are one as we all journey towards our God. Knowing this brings a peace to our hearts, helps us to know we are not alone in our journey, and we are members of the one family of God.

Call to Action

Can I see in the person before me the loving face of God? Why? How?

Author’s Vocation

Sister Gale Pankowski, SCC, BCC
Saint Barnabas Medical Center,
Livingston New Jersey

Reflection 18

“...Have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs?” -James 2:4

Reflection

We live in a divisive Nation. Patriarchs and Founding Fathers are now reviled for compliance with the norms of their times. Saints are attacked as enablers of slavery and oppression. Freedom of Religion has become Freedom FROM Religion. God is a dirty word. Years ago we said: “God is dead.”

But prayer works even today. Praying to discern and do God’s will works. “Being right” is the wrong approach. Prayerful acceptance is the key to spiritual growth. For individuals, and for a Nation.

Life’s difficulties are spiritual learning opportunities. A peaceful mind sees the opportunities, and is not defensive. Our nation has a need to re-discover prayer. Prayer to know and do God’s will, not prayer to win or be “right.”

Call to Action

Begin to pray in your daily life.

Encourage others to pray.

Ask non-believers to give prayer a try.

Author’s Vocation

Pat Riley

Husband, father, grandfather, brother, in-law, friend of Bill, cantor, choir member, and retired lawyer.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Reflection 19

“Hospitality... [is] the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.”-Henri Nouwen

Reflection

Amidst the constant noise and bickering of a noisy and divided nation, there often seems to be little “free space.” Crowded into pre-fabricated roles and positions by others’ opinions, we may find little room to become our selves.

Becoming our truest selves, however, is the very manner we may best serve others. We are, in fact, responsible for stewarding our own growth, as human beings becoming created in God’s image. Similarly, we soon recognize the essentiality and integrality of creating this same space of emergence for others.

Therefore, an evolving consideration of vocation, given today’s circumstances, should bring us to a deep awareness of authentic listening. As we remember those who have been our authentic listeners, we are remembered in the voice of our response to God’s call in that silence.

Call to Action

- Recall those who were an authentic listener(s) to me
- Offer another person(s) that same gift

Author’s Vocation

Brother Steve Grieco, TOR
Novice (life-long, as well as religious)
Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania

Reflection 20

“The more you lead by God’s love, the more you become yourself and it is all done without ever losing your freedom.”-Fulton Sheen

Reflection

We are amid a very trying and complicated time. The frustration of witnessing such decline in our nation, has become evident in our small centering prayer group. The question that kept surfacing: “What can we do to affect the suffering when the need is so great?”

That question was answered a few weeks later when a member discovered a Catholic kinship movement enabling ordinary parishes to help poor faith communities in the US who were suffering economic, racial, ethnic, medical, and spiritual needs even before the Pandemic. Our small parish could make a profound difference by supporting a vibrant faith community in need in America.

She told the group, “This is burning inside of me. I plan to engage others in our parish to bring this to fruition”. When asked what fueled her enthusiasm, and she simply replied, “This is something we can do to make a difference.”

Call to action

What type of gift” inspires hope for another?

Offer this “gift” that will make a difference.

Author’s Vocation

Mary Malamisura
Aquatic Physical Therapist
Bluefield, West Virginia

Reflection 21

“One nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.”
-Pledge of Allegiance, United States of America

Reflection

In our all success-driven, appearance-focused Western culture, we often confuse work and vocation, and too often service is overlooked and underestimated, relegated to a line item on a resume, or something we do to fill a need in ourselves, or worse yet, to “earn” or achieve our own salvation.

But vocation is not something we do; it’s who we are.

The most valuable thing we can bring to others is our most authentic self. Within our most authentic self is where our vocation lies. Vocation is what we bring of our truest selves to others. It always speaks to who we really are and what we really believe in our innermost being. Service through vocation is the way by which our most authentic self is guided by the Spirit and flows into the very lives of others, bringing with it the breath of life, compassion, justice, freedom, and hope.

As a nation built and fashioned on ideals and values that speak to the universal truth of “Many as One”, may we learn to embrace our freedom to live truly authentic lives in service bringing liberty and justice to all.

Call to Action

Through prayer reflect on what lies beneath your deepest desires, and ask the Spirit for the grace and freedom to allow it to rise up within you and flow out into the world to breathe God into being.

Author’s Vocation

Lisa Marie Marengo
Catechist, Lay Dominican, Spiritual Director Intern at WVIS
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Reflection 22

“Teach us to count up the days that are ours, and we shall come to the heart of wisdom.” -Psalm 90:12

Reflection

Early morning in the Serenity Garden at WVIS is a good time to sit in the quiet of the dark and contemplate the heart of wisdom. These are golden moments, when multiplied, create a clearer energy and a new purpose plowing within, a path that makes more sense, perhaps an invitation to further define vocation.

Something new always seems to come from this time in the garden, listening to the sounds in and around and even imagining what’s going on beneath. Imagination is the seedbed of discovery. The experience of the years on this earth says there is always more to discover as we draw closer to the Creator of our human mosaic. We possibly end up in a completely different place of seeking and serving.

As we draw closer, the wisdom is easier to hear. Who we were dreamed to be transforms and re-shapes. We become better at totally trusting a process of unique destiny that we will never own.

A Call to Action

Sit in the quiet space of your own garden and seek the true home of your vocation. Share your experience with your Spiritual Director.

Author’s Vocation

Bob Sylvester. M.A.
WVIS Spiritual Direction Associate
Charleston, WV

A sepia-toned illustration of Jesus Christ with a crucifix superimposed over his chest. Two hands are shown at the top, pointing towards the center. The illustration is signed 'M. H. L. 1897' in the bottom right corner.

**God, teach me to serve You
by serving others as a member of the world.**

Reflection 23

SERVUS SERVORUM DEI - Servant of the Servants of God

-Saint Gregory the Great

Reflection

Christianity reached India in 52 AD when Thomas the Apostle journeyed to Malabar Coast, which is presently my home state of Kerala. For this very reason, I consider it a profound blessing to be a missionary priest!

Jesus was this world's ultimate missionary priest, and every day I humbly attempt to follow in His footsteps. He came to serve spiritually, emotionally, charitably, and selflessly with no motivation for personal gain.

As a missionary priest, I was not ordained to minister to a particular family, church, community, or country. It is my calling and duty to go out to the whole world sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit just as the Apostle Thomas did in India over 1,969 years ago.

When I reflect upon my vocation, I am very thankful to my parents! They taught me to trust in God completely. Because of their holy example, I have trusted God and known He is with me throughout the many challenges and difficulties, I have encountered, in my priestly vocation.

My calling has led me to serve in India, Italy, and the United States. One thing I have discovered, the heart of God is universal; it is the same throughout the world!

Call to Action

What work or mission has God entrusted to you?

Do you trust His plan for you?

How can you answer His call to serve your family, church, community, country, or world?

Author's Vocation

Father Sebastian Devasya, VF

Priest of Sacred Heart Churches

Bluefield and Princeton, West Virginia

Reflection 24

“There is no such thing as being the perfect parent. So just be a real one.”- Sue Atkins

Reflection

No one can be a perfect parent...this is a comforting thought. We strive to give our children everything they need, nurturing them to allow them to grow into mature adults. How many parents worry that they are not doing it “right” or not doing “enough” or doing the “wrong” things ...

As the mother of a daughter who lived in Australia for many years, I was called to reimagine my parenting style. In the 21st century, when many of our children no longer live around the corner, how do we effectively live out our vocation?

Whatever one’s vocation is, we can only be our real selves. Pretending to be someone else or trying to fit into some random stereotype of what the perfect parent (or whatever) is, will only bring frustration and feelings of failure.

A Call to Action

Have a conversation with yourself while looking in a mirror. Look into your eyes and answer the question, “How is God calling me to live out my vocation?”

Author’s Vocation

Gerri Wright, MBA, MAPM
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Reflection 25

“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you”
-John 15:16

Reflection

One of the most common misunderstandings in the human experience is to believe we are in complete control of everything in our lives. We are free to choose Christ or reject Him, but we only do so because He first chose us. And, so it is God who chooses what He is calling us to do. How God goes about choosing and even revealing His choice is another story.

But one thing we know all Christians are called to do is to serve others in whatever we believe that to which we are called. For those called to the legal profession, for example, the possibilities are endless: the evicted tenant, the foreclosed-upon home owner, the stranger seeking asylum, the nurse whose employment is terminated because she refused to assist with a life-ending procedure. Needs abound.

Call to Action

How does my day-to-day work lend itself to serving others? Ask God’s Holy Spirit to guide you in serving others in the things you are called to do every day.

Author’s Vocation

Michael A. Kawash
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Charleston, West Virginia

Reflection 26

“It’s a small world after all.
It’s a small, small world.”

Reflection

These song lyrics were taken from the Walt Disney ride entitled, “It’s a Small World.”

Everyone, who rides this ride, hears these lyrics sung over and over again by children from all over the world. The lyrics are so repetitive as well as haunting that when one leaves this ride, they are either humming or singing these lyrics.

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan, the communications and media theorist, coined the term, “Global Village” to describe a shrinking world because of advances in communications and technology. It was during this same time period that Disney staff members were creating “It’s a Small World.” for Disney’s “Magic Kingdoms.”

Call to Action

- What is my current vocation?
- How has my current vocation changed to become more global over the years?
- What is one way that I can become more global focused in my vocation today?

Author’s Vocation

Bruce Neal
Executive Director, West Virginia Reading Association
Charleston, West Virginia

Reflection 27

"Follow your bliss and the universe will open doors
where there were only walls"
--Joseph Campbell

Reflection

When I was in my thirties, in order to find deeper meaning, I left my vocation as a chemist to pursue a career as a writer. It has been an interesting and sometimes difficult journey, but overall I have been enriched. I'd always wanted to study philosophy but never imagined I'd receive such a degree from a Bible college. But I did. Later when I was sixty, I earned an MA in pastoral ministry and women's studies. I have pastored two churches and also earned my certificate as an Associate Spiritual Director from WVIS.

My life as both writer and minister led me to recently write an historical novel, *Naomi and Ruth: Loyalty Among Women*, in order to expound on some of the unexplained situations in the biblical Book of Ruth and encourage women of today to recognize the importance of their ordinary lives.

Call to Action

How might your desire for wholeness in God enable you
to contribute to the wellbeing of others and of the earth?

Author's Vocation

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Reflection 28

“...I walked out of myself into the wideness of God's mercy.”

-Jessica Power

Reflection

A friend of mine experienced the tragic loss of her grandfather. He was brutally murdered by a homeless drug addict, who had broken into his home. The close-knit family was overwhelmed by grief. When they arrived at the wake, they reached out to console their grandmother. She kept repeating, “All we can do is pray.”... and pray they did.

When the time of the murder trial arrived, a unified family spoke powerfully against the death sentence. Their request was granted. It did not end there. The family faithfully visited Mark until he died in prison. They arranged his funeral and burial. They had adopted him with love. The prison guard returned the family portrait that Mark kept in his cell.

Call to Action

Pray the Prayer of St. Francis or the Prayer for Peace: “...O Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace...”

Author's Vocation

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Spiritual Director

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Reflection 29

God blessed them, and God said to them, “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28)

Reflection

God gave humanity the obligation to rule over His creation. Humanity has the task of caring for God’s creation, not only to learn about it and from it, but also to care for it.

A good sovereign cares for a kingdom and its people and builds them up.

A bad sovereign seeks their own gain over the welfare of their kingdom. They pillage the people and the land, leaving them desolate.

In our vocation in the world, God intends for us to be good sovereigns, caring for creation and building it up, not seeking our own gain over its welfare.

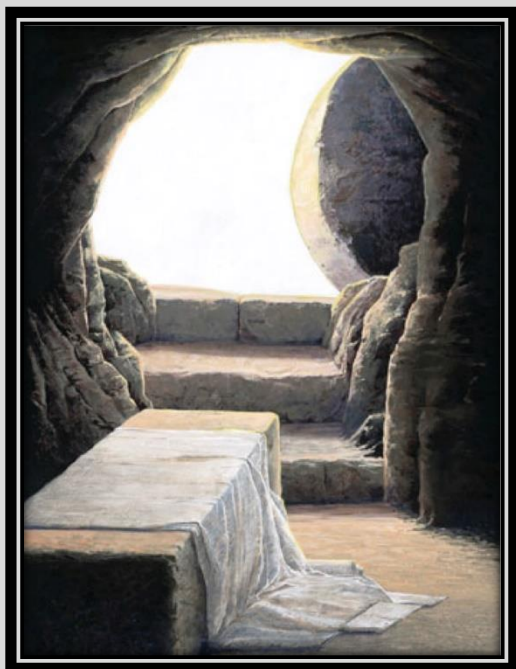
Call to Action

1. Identify resources you consume.
Stop, and thank God for the blessings you’re receiving.
2. Do something to enhance the environment around you.
Plant a flower.
Pick up trash.

Author’s Vocation

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Huntington, West Virginia

Closing Reflection



God, teach me to wait in joyful hope
as I discern Your call to ministry in my daily life.

Reflection 30

“If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it.
But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.”

-Luke 9:24

Reflection

New York Fire Chaplain, Father Mychal Judge was one of the first casualties at “Ground Zero on 9/11.” Father Judge demonstrated to all of us that we have to be willing to die for our vocation.

There is a great picture of Father Mychal in his Roman collar, bunker coat and fireman’s helmet, just beaming from ear to ear. He had found his vocation. He loved those, who worked for the fire service, and they loved him back.

There is a picture of five firemen, carrying the limp body of Father Mychal away from the chaos and destruction. This photo has been called “The American Pietà.” Just as Mary cradled the body of Jesus in her arms, those firemen were lovingly and gently carrying their fallen chaplain.

Living your vocation is doing that which you love, not because it is a job, but because Jesus is calling you to that unique place where you can use your talents beyond what you think you are capable of doing. It is understanding the popular saying of Irenaeus, “The glory of God is man fully alive.”

Call to Action

When you are following your vocation, pray that you can help others to blossom in their own spirituality.

Author’s Vocation

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ABOUT WVIS

The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality (WVIS) is an International, Four Seasons Retreat House located within 50 yards of the Kanawha River in Charleston, West Virginia, the State Capitol of the Mountain State.

“Kanawha” is a Native American word that means, “One from two.” The word “Kanawha” also describes the ministries of WVIS. Not only does WVIS offer innovative programs for people to attend in person, but the Institute also offers extensive technology-based programs for people throughout the region, state and world.

The WVIS Mission

The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality is dedicated to providing space and opportunities for deepening mindfulness, prayer practice, interior peace, and for integrating moral and ethical values.

For twenty-two years, many activities have been provided to support this mission, including: directed retreats, seminars, spiritual direction, training of spiritual directors, contemplative prayer, retreats for youth, programs and workshops, 30-day retreats, women’s and men’s retreats, as well as community and international programs.

WVIS can easily be reached by air, AMTRACK, and automobile. Staff members work with all program participants to ensure that their WVIS experiences are memorable and achieve their spiritual and personal goals.

For additional information visit, WWW.WVIS.COM or contact

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CLOSING PRAYER

The Mission of My Life by Cardinal St. John Henry Newman

God has created me to do Him some definite service.
He has committed some work to me,
which He has not committed to another.

I have my mission.
I may never know what it is in this life.
But I shall be told it in the next.
I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.

He has not created me for naught.
I shall do good; I shall do His work.
I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place,
while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments.

Therefore, I will trust Him.
Whatever I am, I can never be thrown away.

If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him.
If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.
He does nothing in vain.
He knows what He is about.

He may take away my friends. He may throw me among
strangers.
He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my
future from me.
Still, He knows what He is about.

