

homiletic & pastoral review

APRIL 1985

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Editor

Kenneth Baker, S.J.

Publisher

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Contributing editor

Joseph J. Farragher

Assistant editor

Margaret M. Treacy

General manager

Bernard Belson

Circulation manager

Russell A. Murray

Advertising manager

Elizabeth Schmitz

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For the faithful Christian, vocation is neither something to be invented nor arbitrarily chosen, but a divine calling to be discerned.

Personal vocation: A key to authentic renewal of the Church

By Germain Grisez

■ Many Catholics erroneously think that only priests and religious have personal vocations. The truth is that each and every Christian is called by God to play a unique role in the drama of salvation. One's personal vocation includes but is not limited to one's state in life as priest, religious, married person, or single person living in the world.

Although personal vocation is a central principle of Christian life, many factors have tended to obscure it. When Christians ignore their responsibility to find, accept, commit themselves to, and faithfully carry out their unique personal vocations, their growth in Christian life is stunted. Moreover, when young men and women are not searching for their personal vocations, few hear a call to the priesthood or the religious life. Hence, a

concerted program of pastoral activity directed toward raising consciousness of personal vocation would promise extremely important fruit for the lives of each Christian and for the life of the Church as a whole.

This article clarifies personal vocation, explains why and how this important principle has been obscured, and suggests some ways in which bishops, priests, teachers, and parents might contribute to the needed program of pastoral activity.

Vocation presupposes a personal God who reveals himself, for only such a God can call men and women to cooperate with him by entering and building up a divine-human covenant community. Hence, pagans both ancient and modern have no concept of vocation. But unlike pagans, God's people of the old covenant and the

new believe in his wise and loving providence. Hence, they will expect help from God in shaping their lives according to his plan and can be aware of his call.

Still, the principle of personal vocation did not fully emerge in the Old Testament. A whole people was called to enter into covenant with God, and certain men—Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Jeremiah—were called to roles of leadership as priests, kings, or prophets. But members of the rank and file did not receive personal vocations. Their roles and responsibilities were to a great extent predetermined by their economic and cultural situation. Moreover, the detailed precepts of the old law shaped the practice of daily life into a standardized response to the common vocation to follow God and live within his covenant.

Growth requires commitment

The New Testament maintains and deepens the conception of the covenant community. All men and women are called to enter it and to share by the Spirit's gift in the divine life and holiness of Christ. What is more, Jesus, by both his teaching and his practice, makes it clear that every individual is precious to God and personally looked after. Not only the great but every disciple of Jesus is called to a special role of service. Each Christian has his or her own cross to bear—a unique way of sharing in Christ's redemptive work and bringing the Father's truth and love to suffering humankind.

In Jesus' new covenant, all are to be priests, spokespersons for God, and responsible for his people. Each Christian has a life of good deeds, prepared in advance, which must be accepted and lived out as his or her unique contribution to the divine plan to restore all things in

Christ. Each member of the Body of Christ, endowed by the Spirit with unique gifts and opportunities, has a vital function. Every member of the Church depends on every other one.

Undoubtedly, the emergence of personal vocation in the New Testament was partly a result of the economic and cultural diversity among Christians and their greater scope for choices among social roles. But more important is the freedom of God's children characteristic of the new covenant, in which the interior gift of the Spirit provides a law of freedom which renders a detailed code of precepts no longer necessary. An even more profound factor is the enhancement of the dignity of the individual person which comes with the Christian understanding of God's kingdom, in which created persons will enter into communion with the Trinity.

But although the truth that each person has a unique calling emerges in the New Testament, the principle of personal vocation often has been obscured among Christians. Persecution threatened every Christian during the first centuries, so all were required to arrange their lives in view of it. But when the centuries of martyrdom ended and society became Christian, a gap opened between the rank and file of lay people and the spiritually elite groups of religious and clerics. Social and economic conditions in medieval society also left most lay people with few choices as to what sort of lives they were to lead. These factors together tended to limit the idea of personal vocation to callings to the priesthood or the religious life.

In this situation, the principle of personal vocation was obscured, and even the universal Christian vocation to holiness was often forgotten. Of course, the Church's liturgy always embodied this wonderful calling, and great doctors of the

Church, such as St. Thomas, affirmed it. But the virtual absence from the calendar of the saints of secular lay men and women who attained marked holiness in their proper vocations is a striking sign of ecclesial assumptions about where holiness can be expected.

Vatican II emphatically recalls attention to the universal and common vocation of Christians to holiness. The Council's teaching absolutely excludes any lingering notion that Christians who are neither priests nor religious are second class members of Christ's Body, who can settle for the negative minimum of staying out of hell. The laity also have their proper vocations, including the vocation of husbands and wives to be "witnesses to one another and to their children of faith in Christ and love for him" (LG 35; cf. AA4).

Expect God's help

More than this, Vatican II makes it clear beyond doubt that every Christian has a unique personal vocation, which must be discerned, fostered, accepted, and faithfully fulfilled. Parents should encourage every one of their children in the vocation proper to each of them (LG 11). As teachers of the faith, priests are to see to it "that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation as required by the gospel, to a sincere and active charity, and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free" (PO 6). "Bishops should be diligent in fostering holiness among their clerks, religious, and laity according to the special vocation of each." (CD 15).

Vatican II advances a most comprehensive conception of apostolate. It is not limited to certain members of the Church, nor to specifically religious works, nor to activities carried on by special associa-

tions, or to works specifically approved by the hierarchy. Rather, apostolate embraces the whole mission of the Church: To spread God's redemptive work in Jesus to all humankind and to restore all things to God in Christ. Each member of the Mystical Body receives special gifts and makes a unique contribution to this all-embracing salvific work:

For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the People of God through the ministry and the sacraments gives to the faithful special gifts as well (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7), "allotting to everyone according as he will" (1 Cor. 12:11). Thus may individuals, "according to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another" and become "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10), and build up thereby the whole body in charity (cf. Eph. 4:16). From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the upbuilding of the Church (AA 3).

The words "personal vocation" do not appear in this passage, but the concept is articulated with precision: From the reception of gifts there arises in the believer the duty to use them.

Pope John Paul II's first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, can be read as building to a climax in its second last section, which treats of the Christian vocation to kingship and service. Jesus' kingly mission is service to fallen humankind, and every Christian is called to the kingly dignity of readiness to serve. The Church is a human society, but she is more than that and must not be reduced to the factors which explain any other society:

For the whole community of the People of God and for each member of it what is in question is not just a specific "social membership"; rather, for each and every one what is essential is a particular "vocation." Indeed, the Church as the People of God is also — according to the

teaching of St. Paul mentioned above, of which Pius XII reminded us in wonderful terms—“Christ’s Mystical Body.” Membership in that body has for its source a particular call united with the saving action of grace. Therefore, if we wish to keep in mind this community of the People of God, which is so vast and so extremely differentiated, we must see first and foremost Christ saying in a way to each member of the community: “Follow me” (*Redemptor hominis*, 21).

Thus the Holy Father makes it clear that each Christian has a personal vocation: his or her unique way of following Jesus.

No undertaking, the Pope goes on to explain, will help bring about genuine renewal in the Church unless it takes full account

... of the individual Christian’s vocation and of responsibility for this singular, unique and unrepeatable grace by which each Christian in the community of the People of God builds up the Body of Christ. This principle, the key rule for the whole of Christian practice—apostolic and pastoral practice, practice of interior and of social life—must with due proportion be applied to the whole of humanity and to each human being. The Pope too and every Bishop must apply this principle to himself. Priests and religious must be faithful to this principle. It is the basis on which their lives must be built by married people, parents, and women and men of different conditions and professions, from those who occupy the highest posts in society to those who perform the simplest tasks. It is precisely the principle of “kingly service” that imposes on each one of us, in imitation of Christ’s example, the duty to demand of himself exactly what we have been called to, what we have personally obliged ourselves to by God’s grace, in order to respond to our vocation (*ibid.*).

Not only each Christian’s maturity and holiness but the authentic renewal of the whole Church by the co-responsible service of all depend on faithful fulfillment by everyone of his or her own personal vocation. Like members of a well prac-



Dr. Germain Grisez, a layman, is Professor of Christian Ethics at Mount Saint Mary’s College, Emmitsburg, Maryland. Personal vocation is a central theme in his recently published work, The Way of the Lord Jesus, volume one, Christian Moral Principles (Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), which updates fundamental moral theology in response to Vatican II’s call for renewal.

ticed team, all must play their own positions and encourage and support others in playing theirs. Moreover, good team players do not try to play other, perhaps more glamorous, roles while neglecting their own responsibilities.

Thus, Vatican II and John Paul II clearly articulate the principle of personal vocation and underline its importance as “the key rule for the whole of Christian practice.” Theological reflection can further clarify various aspects of this principle.

Every Christian is called to follow Jesus. Jesus’ basic commitment and our act of faith share the attitude toward the Father: “Your will be done.” But God’s will for each individual differs, for he gives

each one different gifts and tasks. These God-given gifts and tasks constitute a personal vocation, a calling to accept the gifts and use them to carry out the tasks. The appropriate response to this vocation is a commitment or group of commitments, by which one undertakes to do God's will in one's own life.

Of course, nonbelievers also are endowed by nature and nurture with certain abilities and powers, and they find in their situations opportunities to fulfill themselves and serve others. However, without faith they neither see their powers as *gifts* nor their opportunities as *tasks*. And they naturally assume that the relationship between the two is simply accidental, a matter of chance.

Vocation is on-going

In the light of faith, one views everything as part of a providential design. One's natural endowments and the nurture one receives from others are gifts of a wise and loving Father; the opportunities to use these gifts are provided by him as ennobling and worthwhile tasks.

Thus, for the faithful Christian, vocation is neither something to be invented nor arbitrarily chosen, but a divine calling to be discerned. One must find one's vocation much as one fits together pieces of a puzzle, knowing that the pieces will fit when their proper arrangement is discovered. Finding one's vocation takes patient reflection; one must not try to speed up the process by applying pressure, as impatient people do to pieces of a puzzle which almost but not quite fit together.

Vocational commitments are choices, but not simply small choices to *do* one or another particular thing. Rather, they are large choices to *be* this or that — to accept certain roles and responsibilities. By com-

mitments, one enters into stable relationships with others and undertakes to work faithfully with them for specific goods to be served and shared in common. Thus, commitments are self-determining choices which last indefinitely. They must be implemented day after day by small choices made in accord with them.

Receiving the sacrament of orders, getting married, and making religious vows are examples of commitments. Such commitments have a fully Christian character only when they are also commitments to God made in response to his call. Only those whose commitments are undertakings to accept *God's* gifts and to carry out the tasks *he* sets really fulfill the fundamental promise of obedient faith: Thy will be done.

Vocation is not limited to the single commitment to one's state of life. Of course, that commitment should be a vital part of any Christian vocation. However, nothing in a Christian's life is exempt from integration by living faith. St. Paul teaches: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Again: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). There is a place in a Christian's life for every human good, provided it is pursued in a morally upright manner (see Phil. 4:8). Hence, every act of Christian life should be done in Jesus' name, should give God glory, and so should carry out a commitment pertaining to one's personal vocation.

It follows that the finding and accepting of one's personal vocation cannot be done once for all. Determinations of one's state in life and occupation, once made, may require subsequent unfolding. Spouses die; priests and sisters are called to missionary work; a professional person's work may require him or her to seek a new in-

stitutional context. Prior commitments always must be faithfully fulfilled, but faithfulness also demands growth.

The experience of the Virgin Mary is a splendid example. She already has committed herself to virginity when, by Gabriel's message, God calls her to be the mother of Jesus. At first, she does not see how motherhood can be part of her vocation. But reassured by the angel, she accepts her unique role in God's plan: "Be it done to me according to your word."

Concomitant lesser choices

It is also worth noticing that everyone must make many commitments which are less vital than those concerning state in life and occupation, but which still belong to one's total vocation: commitments to specific ways of pursuing social justice, to groups of friends, and so on. All these commitments need to be united to form a single, integrated Christian identity. If they are, then the whole, complex self formed by commitments is determined by faith and is one's personal response to God's unique personal vocation.

The preceding already shows one of the main reasons why personal vocation is so important: The whole of each Christian's life ought to be lived by faith—lived in Jesus—and this will be so only if one's every thought, word, and deed implement one or more of the commitments pertaining to one's personal vocation. This point becomes even clearer if one considers what happens when young Christians ignore the question of personal vocation as they organize their lives.

The life of such a young man or woman, reaching the end of adolescence, is likely to be organized more or less as follows. Strong likes and dislikes determine most of their actions. Among these are the



liking for pleasure in experiences and for personal gratification in accomplishments, especially in relations with other people: gratification in helping them, in winning their admiration, receiving their praise, defeating them in competition, and so on. Some of these likes and dislikes lead to the selection of very long-term projects: typically, the setting of a career objective with an eye to maximizing status and comfort.

There may also be genuine commitments apart from faith which open up areas for personal, creative development yet also render it more or less likely that tensions will arise between the resulting loyalties and loyalty to Christ. That happens if these commitments which are not integrated with faith sometimes make demands inconsistent with the Church's teaching.

Faith itself may very well remain an overarching commitment, and the Christian life of such a young person is not necessarily insignificant. There can be a

The Church needs a steady and ample supply of her most gifted young members to spread the kingdom. The young need to be open and receptive to God's influence.

real effort to live within the framework of the Church's moral teaching. Yet faith is insulated from much of life. Religion is a concern, but only one concern among many. Most of the time, specifically Christian teaching simply has no relevance. What does self-sacrifice have to do with successfully completing the program of training necessary for the career one wants? What has mercy toward those who are enslaved by sin and those who suffer from its consequences to do with parties and vacations?

Wholly or in part, a life organized along these lines lacks the structure of personal vocation. The commitment of faith is more or less isolated and in competition with many other cares and interests. The possibility of mortal sin, at least from time to time, is considerable. There is also a real possibility of determined refusal to repent, which can lead to loss of faith. Even where this does not happen, however, and even in a life with few or no mortal sins, the lack of affirmative and thorough organization by faith blocks any significant growth in holiness. Living faith hardly touches most everyday activities, which at best coexist with faith in a more or less peaceful relationship.

The other main reason why personal vocation is important is that the good order and vitality of the Church depend

upon it. This is so in at least three respects.

First, as St. Paul and John Paul II teach, the Body of Christ is a unity of her many members, each with his or her special gifts. The Church needs the contribution by each member of the fruit of the use of these gifts for the building up of the whole. The failure of some members to contribute as they could and should weakens the whole Church. Attempts by some members to usurp the functions of others lead to confusion and conflict.

So it is a mistake if a pope overcentralizes the administration of the Church and gathers the proper functions of other bishops into his own hands. Likewise, it is wrong for theologians who are not bishops to usurp the role of the magisterium. Nothing is gained when priests and religious abandon their proper ministries to engage in secular careers — for example, in politics. And lay people are likely to neglect their own responsibilities if they mistakenly think that they can contribute to the apostolate only by sharing in the ministry of the Word and the sacraments proper to priests.

Ascertain motivating principles

Second, the Church needs a steady and ample proportion of her most gifted young members to offer themselves in her direct service. The crisis in vocations to the priesthood and religious life already has weakened the Church in some parts of the world. This crisis will not be overcome unless boys and girls come to the correct understanding of personal vocation *before* they have organized their lives by other principles. For if young people are not listening for God's call, few of them will hear it, whether that call is to the priesthood or the religious life, or to a secular, lay state of life.

Because they are confused about personal vocation as such, preachers, teachers, counselors, and others who wish to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life often send false signals. Too often they project a repulsive, elitist image of the clerical and religious life. Devout children and young people are easily turned off by efforts to promote “vocations” which promise membership in a club rather than service to the kingdom.

Moreover, there is a real danger that if contemporary marketing techniques are used to promote “vocations,” some who lack genuine vocations will enter seminaries and novitiates. Many such individuals will be dismissed or voluntarily withdraw before they are ordained or professed. But if some unsuitable candidates are mistakenly advanced — which is likely when demand far outruns supply — the Church will be greatly burdened by those who try to use her for their own self-gratification rather than seek their more genuine fulfillment through self-sacrificing cooperation in her mission of service.

Third, it is equally important — perhaps even more so — that Christian couples approach marriage and parenthood as part of their vocation, not simply as a project for mutual gratification, an arrangement offering marginal advantages over its alternatives. It is vital for the Church that couples marry *in order to* pursue holiness together and cooperate with God in raising up new members of the kingdom. For only then will there be fewer broken marriages, more chaste and faithful marital love, more generous and responsible parenthood, and holier family life. Apart from adult converts, the future Church depends on such families.

In simpler and less affluent societies than ours, Christians who entered one or another state of life with the right inten-

tion embodied the principle of personal vocation in their lives without becoming explicitly aware of it. For example, a couple who committed themselves to indissoluble faithfulness, to a common effort of mutual sanctification, and to having and raising children for God lived their faith in the form of marriage and family life. A simpler culture left them few other commitments to make.

Many faithful husbands worked simply to support themselves and their families; their social life and community involvements were oriented toward the welfare of their families. Many faithful wives had no life except that of family and Church. Given faithfulness to the marital-parental commitment, virtually the whole of life was brought under the sway of faith working through love.

Holiness — part of marriage

In our society, where greater complexity and affluence make for greater liberty, everyone has more choices to make and so has a more complex puzzle to solve if the whole of life is to become the fulfillment of a personal vocation. Lacking explicit awareness of personal vocation, it is hardly likely that all the relevant commitments will be made and woven into a coherent whole in the light of faith.

Moreover, in our pluralistic society, those with faith associate and cooperate with unbelievers, and thus tend to acquire worldly values and attitudes. Where dominant trends in the surrounding culture are not Christian, principles at odds with personal vocation are likely to be accepted unconsciously.

Hence, there never has been a time when it was more urgent for Christians to be conscious of the principle of personal vocation. Yet in recent years, this princi-

ple has been downplayed in many ways in the Catholic media, in homilies, in catechetics, and so on.

Since Vatican II, some addressing themselves to the faithful—especially to young people—have wished to avoid making heavy demands. The strategy has been to try to lighten the burden of faith. Hence, some who proclaim the faith seem to have adopted as a principle: We will not tell you what you must do for Christ and the Church, but what Christ and the Church will do for you.

This trend has been intensified by a swing of the pendulum away from the excessive, almost semi-Pelagian emphasis before Vatican II on good works and merit. To be sure, the priority of God's mercy and gracious gifts needed to be reemphasized. The redressing of the balance was accelerated by renewed attention to sacred Scripture, which is all to the good.

Good works may not be omitted

However, the pendulum has swung too far. The pressure of the surrounding culture toward permissiveness and self-absorption has merged with a reading of Scripture which too often overlooks the Catholic principle that God's grace includes our works and merits. The responsibility of Christians to live their faith is being clouded over and the principle of personal vocation downplayed.

The general deemphasis on moral responsibility permeates some current catechetical programs. Efforts have been made to replace legalism's alienating stress on reward and punishment with love, joy, and a sense of communion. This effort also was needed. But it should have included a balancing emphasis upon personal responsibility and service.

Too often, this balancing emphasis is missing, especially from catechetical programs addressed to children. One reason

for this is that the new catechetics tries to meet children where they are and to promote the Christian life appropriate to their age and situation. So children are instructed about their current Christian responsibilities and they are encouraged to carry out charitable projects as part of their school work.

Again, all to the good. But something is missing when the future responsibilities of adult Christian life are seldom or never mentioned. Insofar as this happens, children are not led to ask themselves what their personal vocations might be—how God wants them to help Jesus complete his redemptive work on earth and build up his heavenly kingdom.

Responsibility must be included

Given the importance of personal vocation and the extent to which this principle of Christian life is being ignored, renewed pastoral efforts are urgently needed. A concerted program of pastoral activity directed toward raising consciousness of personal vocation promises very important fruit for the lives of individual Christians and for the life of the Church as a whole.

The working out of such a program should be a cooperative undertaking at least at the diocesan level, and perhaps at the level of the national episcopal conferences. Hence, what follows are only a few tentative suggestions, intended to provide some points of departure for reflection.

Diocesan vocations offices could be enlarged and reorganized to deal with personal vocation in all its aspects. Such offices could reflect the truth that every Christian has a personal vocation by being organized as team ministries of priests, religious, and laity, including married persons. They could integrate all diocesan efforts to help members of the Church discern, prepare for, commit themselves to, and faithfully fulfill their diverse vocations.

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Author: Evolution of Money, The Social Teachings of Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler; frequent articles in Economics journals.

TUESDAY, JUNE 4

Rev. John Harvey, O.S.F.S., Ph.D.

Professor of Moral Theology, DeSales School of Theology, The Theological Cluster, Washington, DC; Director of *Courage*, New York, NY

CURRENT PROBLEMS IN HUMAN SEXUALITY

Author: Moral Theology of "The Confessions of St. Augustine"; contributor to Understanding the Homosexual and All Things To All Men; article on Homosexuality in New Catholic Encyclopedia, frequent articles in Theological Studies, the American Ecclesiastical Review, The Priest, Marriage, Linacre Quarterly.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5

Rev. Richard Roach, S.J., Ph.D.

Professor of Theology, Marquette University
Board Member, Confraternity of Catholic Scholars.

DISSENT IN THE CHURCH: CAUSES AND CURE

Author: Numerous articles in theological and philosophical journals on ethical and moral questions including The Way, Linacre Quarterly, Homiletic and Pastoral Review

THURSDAY, JUNE 6

William Kirk Kilpatrick, Ph.D.

Professor of Education, Boston College

PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

Author: Identity and Intimacy (1975), Psychological Seduction (1983), The Emperor's New Suit (1985); articles in Human Life Review, Policy Review, National Catholic Register, Catholicism in Crisis, Adolescence, Psychological Reports, and Fidelity.

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Vocational guidance and testing services under diocesan auspices could be offered by the diocesan vocations office. Such integration would respond to the fact that personal vocation is not limited to state in life, but includes occupational commitments. At the same time, it would bring the light of faith to bear upon career choices, which ought to serve not only genuine self-interest but the needs of the Church and humankind.

Some currently engaged in vocations work might object to such a reorganization due to fear that it would detract from their present work and perhaps even siphon off part of the limited pool of potential vocations to the priesthood and religious life. However, if more young Christians were listening for God's call, whatever it might be, those hearing a vocation to the priesthood and religious life would be more, not fewer. The "vocations crisis" will never be solved unless the supply is developed at its source and the drying up of vocations is prevented before they reach the pool from which applicants to seminaries and novitiates are drawn.

Priests by their homilies should try to awaken or reawaken awareness of personal vocation and all that this principle of Christian life entails. A rounded, balanced presentation of the relevant truths of faith is needed. God's grace is first, but it entails our responsibility. Benefits of membership in the Church must be balanced by duties.

Every good homily should build up the life of faith. One cannot really preach the gospel without teaching Christian morality. But that does not mean legalism, with its negative and minimalistic moralism. The homilist can get beyond that by emphasizing the positive: God's gifts are our tasks; our diverse Christian roles and responsibilities are our personal way both of holiness and of love of neighbor; we must find God's will for ourselves by dis-

cerning our personal vocations; we must do God's will by faithfully fulfilling precisely what we have committed ourselves to.

Personal vocation should be the unifying theme in instructions before marriage. It can no longer be assumed that young people will already have an understanding, at least confused and implicit, that their marriage should be united to the Eucharist at the center of their life of faith. Thus, if there is no explicit instruction about and emphasis on personal vocation, any theological account of marriage which is proposed will seem irrelevant theory. Moreover, any specific moral instruction provided will be regarded as the "Church's official rules" (which a couple may or may not choose to play by).

Parents' role unparalleled

Catechetical instruction following first confession and Communion should begin at once to raise the question of personal vocation. God has given us so much; Jesus has done so much for us. We must ask what we can give in return. By the Eucharist we are one with Jesus and so in communion with all other Christians and with all men and women, whom Jesus wishes to save. How can we help him complete this work? What will be our role in the Church?

In most respects, young children cannot clearly discern their personal vocations and should not be pressed to make premature commitments, even of the most tentative sort. But preadolescent children can and should begin praying about and listening for their personal vocations. Otherwise, during adolescence they are likely to organize their lives in other ways.

Where confirmation is administered at age twelve or fourteen, a main aim of catechesis from first Communion to confirmation should be preparation for the latter sacrament. But confirmation is the sacrament which strengthens one to bear witness—that is, to carry out one's per-

sonal vocation as apostolate. Hence, catechesis after first Communion during the grammar school years should raise the question of personal vocation and guide children's efforts of discernment.

The bishop's confirmation homily can fittingly sum up and solemnly emphasize the responsibility of each Christian to find, prepare for, accept, and faithfully fulfill every aspect of his or her personal vocation.

Finally, parents have an extremely important role to play in fostering awareness of personal vocation in their children. Generally parents wish their children to become good and happy adults. When they become aware that their example is important in some respect, most fathers and mothers receive a fresh impetus from their love for their children to improve their own patterns of behavior.

Hence, parents need to be shown the importance of their children's finding and accepting their personal vocations for their own true goodness and happiness. Married life faithfully lived *as* a vocational commitment also provides an essential example for children. These points should be stressed in every special program for married couples.

The preceding ideas are offered as starting points for reflection. No doubt, much else can and must be done to raise consciousness of personal vocation. The approach outlined promises no quick and easy solutions. But it could provide a key to authentic renewal in the Church. Can any conscientious bishop, priest, teacher, or parent ignore this key or refuse to try it? ■

** A cassette recording of the above article may be obtained from: Cardinal Communications, Box 34, New London, Conn. 06320 Price \$3.50 postpaid (Canada: add 50¢).*