

Vocation Reflections

November 2022



**Blessed Theresa, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame,
quotes the Gospel of Matthew and reminds us:**

**“Let your light shine so that all may see it and praise your Father who is in heaven.”
Matthew 5:16 / March 3, 1863**

Can You Lose Your Vocation? (Click [here](#) for the original.)
Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

Recently I received a letter from a man who shared that he was still deeply haunted by a story he'd heard in grade school many years before. One of his religion teachers had read them a story about a priest who went to visit a childhood friend. While staying with his friend, the priest noticed that, while his friend was cheerful and affable enough, he seemed to be harboring some deep, residual sadness. When he asked his friend about it his friend confessed that he “had lost his salvation” because he had felt a call to priesthood when he was young but had chosen instead to marry. Now, he felt, there was no existential redemption from that. He had had a vocation and lost it and, with that, also lost for good his chance at happiness. Though happily enough married, he felt that he would bear forever the stigma of having been unfaithful in not accepting his God-given vocation.



I was raised on stories like that. They were part of the Catholicism of my youth. We were taught to believe that God marked out a certain vocation for you, that is, to be a priest, a sister, a married person, or a single person in the world, and if you didn't accept that, once you knew your calling, then you had “missed” or “lost” your vocation and the consequence would be an abiding sadness and even the danger of missing heaven. Such were the vocation stories of my youth, and, truth be told, I went to the seminary to become a priest with that lingering as a shadow in my mind. But it was only a shadow. I didn't enter religious life and priesthood out of fear, though some moral fears did play a part in it, as they should. Fear can also be a healthy thing. But it can also be unhealthy.

It's not healthy to understand both God and your vocation in terms that can have you missing out on happiness and salvation on the basis of a singular choice made while you are still young. God doesn't work like that.

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It's true that we are called by God to a vocation which we are meant to discern through conscience, through community, through circumstance, and through the talents that we've been given. For a Christian, existence does not precede essence. We're born with a purpose, with a mission in life. **There are many clear texts in scripture on this:** Jesus, praying for entire nights to know his Father's will; Peter conscripted on a rock to be led by a belt that will take him where he would rather not go; Paul being led into Damascus and instructed by an elder as to his vocation; Moses being called to do a task because he saw the suffering of the people; and all of us being challenged to use our talents or be stripped of them. We're all called to mission and so each of us has a vocation. We're not morally free to live our lives simply for ourselves.

Vocation Reflections is a monthly newsletter for those interested in learning more about discernment, prayer, and other topics related to the consecrated/vowed life. For questions, comments and subscription information, please contact sisters@ssnd.org.

But God doesn't give us just one chance which if we miss it or turn down will leave us sad forever. No. God opens a new door every time we close one. God gives us 77x7 chances, and more after that, if needed. The question of vocation is not so much a question of guessing right (*What very specifically was I predestined for?*) but rather a question of giving oneself over in faith and love to the situation that we've chosen (or which more often than not has by circumstance chosen us). We should not live in unhealthy fear about this. **God continues to love us and desire our happiness**, even when we don't always follow to where we are ideally called....

... None of us should be haunted, long-term, by sadness and fear because we feel that we've missed our vocation, unless we are living a selfish life. Selflessness rather than selfishness, a life in pursuit of service rather than a life in pursuit of comfort, not guessing correctly, constitutes one's vocation. Our Christian vocation is to make what we are in fact living – married, priest, religious, single in the world – a life of selflessness and service to others. Happiness and salvation are contingent upon that, not upon guessing correctly.

For reflection: *Have you ever identified with any part of this reflection? If so, which part? How would you deal with it now?*

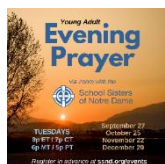
This month's vocation resource:

Sisters Stephanie Spandl, SSND, and Katherine Mullen, VHM, were interviewed about their vocations to religious life for the Practicing Catholic radio program in the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis. Listen here: <https://bit.ly/3taBRew>.

Did you know?

Back issues of Vocation Reflections are available [online](#).
You can stay up-to-date with SSND Vocations at flowpage.com/ssnd or scan the code below.

Looking ahead



Online Evening Prayer

November 22, 2022

December 20, 2022

8 p.m. ET / 7 p.m. CT

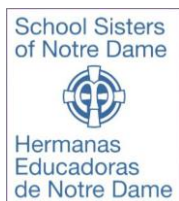
National Vocation Awareness Week / Meet Our Sisters Tour

November 6-12, 2022

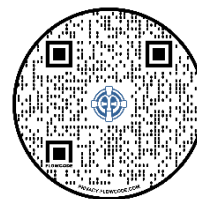
SSND Discernment Weekend (details TBA)

February 17-19, 2023

St. Louis, MO



God's cause
is the *only* concern of
our hearts Discipos of Jesus
Catholicism



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