

Reflections - Ninth year

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Vocation to the Imitation of Christ

This vocation has three elements: **the calling** from Jesus; **the response** from those called and **the mission** for which they are called.

1. Christ calls each one. Just as He called each one of his apostles, He also addresses each human being, priest or layman, contemporary of Jesus or later follower of Jesus.

In our baptism, we were called for the first time, to the imitation of Christ. And since then, God repeated and renewed this vocation many times and in many different forms.

Surely, He does not give everyone the vocation to follow Christ like the apostles and disciples, like the priests and religious who place all they have and are into his service. God calls many to the vocation of laymen.

And if the two groups distinguish themselves, among themselves, in regard to their tasks and specific responsibilities, they are the same in regard to the fundamental attitude of surrender because of faith and charity, because of being imitators of Christ. Basically, all of Jesus' preaching is an invitation to follow Him.

2. God expects a free response to his call. A heartfelt and life-long commitment, with an adherence of faith and obedience. Man is not always immediately aware of the vocation. Often he is afraid and tries to avoid it, like some of the prophets because, frequently, the vocation separates the man called and makes him a stranger among his own. God also expects from each one of us a suitable response.

Each day anew, we have to give our response to God's call, even when we do not understand it, even when it is hard for us to accept it. And what are hardest for us to accept in our life are suffering and the Cross. Nevertheless, it is God himself who sends it or permits it.

Therefore, if our following Christ is authentic or not, is decided upon by the acceptance of our Cross.

If we avoid our response to this personal calling from God, our Christian life cannot be achieved.

3. If God calls, it is to entrust a mission. Every vocation bears an inherent mission. Also, each one of us, priest and layman, is called by God for a personal mission. This mission is distinguished from others according to profession and the responsibilities of each person.

And to fulfill this mission, the layman must act in the place where God has placed him, giving his testimony there, working in the gears and wheels of his profession, amidst the always diverse circumstances.

Thus the layman has to know how to make his profane life an integral part of his religious life. He should not seek religion after his task or apart from it, but penetrating it profoundly to the point of nourishing himself from the spirit it contains. In God's plans for this world, each man has his own value and significance, and forms a part of the whole.

4. To faithfully live our own vocation to imitate Christ, that particular and personal mission, one must always anew take the mold in Christ. Thus in the questions and situations of our life, we place ourselves before the Master and we ask ourselves what did He do and what would He do in a similar situation?

Or, let us look at the Blessed Virgin who is the ideal image for the imitation of Christ, especially for the woman. Or, let us take as a model the Saints who lived the life of Christ in their times. In this way we feel we are in communion with all brothers and sisters in Christ who want to follow Him.

Questions for reflection

1. Who of us has already reflected, at sometime, on the personal mission which God has for him/her?
2. Are we always open and attentive to his callings, to his inspirations and demands?
3. Do we allow ourselves to be led by God on the road which He wants and in which Jesus Christ preceded us

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