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What is vocation? Does everyone have a vocation?

Here are some questions about God's call and vocational discernment, with explanations from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and enriched with quotes from Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

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Summary

1. What is vocation?

2. Does everyone have a vocation?

3. How do I know if God is calling me to a particular vocation?

"Today the Lord continues to call us to follow him. We should not wait to be perfect in order to respond with our generous 'yes,' nor be fearful of our limitations and sins, but instead open our hearts to the voice of the Lord. To listen to that voice, to discern our personal mission in the Church and the world, and at last to live it in the today that God gives us." (Pope Francis, Message for the 55th World Day of Prayer for Vocations in 2018)

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1. What is vocation?

God who created man out of love also calls him to love, the fundamental and innate vocation of

every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1604)

From his conception, man is destined for eternal beatitude: Heaven. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1703)

God creates everyone with a purpose, a mission. That mission is what is known as vocation.

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- I love to speak of paths and ways, because we are travelers, journeying to our home in Heaven, our Father's land. But don't forget that, though a path may have some particularly difficult stretches, and may occasionally involve wading across a river or passing through an almost impenetrable wood, as a rule it

will be quite passable and hold no surprises for us. The danger lies in routine, in imagining that God cannot be here, in the things of each instant, because they are so simple and ordinary! (*Friends of God*, 313)

- I like the motto: “Let each wayfarer follow his way”, the road God has marked out for him, to be followed faithfully, lovingly, even though it is hard. (*Furrow*, 231)
- Your happiness on earth is identified with your fidelity to faith, to purity and to the way God has marked out for you. (*Furrow*, 84)
- God's love is a jealous love. He is not satisfied if we come to meet him with conditions. He longs for us to give ourselves completely, without keeping dark corners in our heart, where the joy and happiness of grace and the supernatural gifts

cannot reach. (*Friends of God*, 28)

2. Does everyone have a vocation?

Yes, we have all been created by God with a purpose and an end.

God has willed a unique and unrepeatable plan for each of us, designed from all eternity: "Before I formed you in the womb, I chose you; before you came forth from the mother's womb, I consecrated you" (Jeremiah 1:5).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of the vocation to beatitude, in short, to holiness, to union with God who makes us partakers of His happiness and who loves us totally and unconditionally.

The common vocation of all Christ's disciples is a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world.

Within this common vocation, God invites each one to follow a specific path in life together with Him. Some are called to the ministerial priesthood, others to the religious life, and others, the laity, are called to meet him in ordinary life, either by living celibacy or by a vocation to marriage. (See the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1533, 1716-1729)

"We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be

holy by laboring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain" (*Gaudete et Exultate*, 14).

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- Just think, there are so many men and women on earth, and the Master does not fail to call every single one. He calls them to a Christian life, to a life of holiness, to a chosen life, to life eternal. (*The Forge*, 13)
- You laugh because I tell you that you have a 'vocation for marriage'? Well, you have just that: a vocation. Commend yourself to the Archangel Raphael that he may keep you

pure, as he did Tobias, until the end of the way. (*The Way*, 27)

- The Lord's calling — vocation — always presents itself like this: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Yes: a vocation demands self-denial, sacrifice. But how pleasant that sacrifice turns out to be — *gaudium cum pace*, joy and peace — if that self-giving is complete! (*Furrow*, 8)
- How beautiful our Christian vocation is — to be sons of God! It brings joy and peace on earth which the world cannot give! (*The Forge*, 269)
- Practicing charity means respecting other people's way of thinking. It means rejoicing at their road to God, without trying to make them think like you or joining you. It occurred to me to put this consideration

to you. These other ways are different, but parallel; each person will reach God by following his own way. Don't get sidetracked in comparisons, or in wanting to know who is higher. That does not matter; what does matter is that we should all attain the end.

(Furrow, 757)

- Open your own hearts to Jesus and tell him your story. I don't want to generalise. But one day perhaps an ordinary Christian, just like you, opened your eyes to horizons both deep and new, yet as old as the Gospel. He suggested to you the prospect of following Christ earnestly, seriously, of becoming an apostle of apostles. Perhaps you lost your balance then and didn't recover it. Your complacency wasn't quite replaced by true peace until you freely said "yes" to God, because

you wanted to, which is the most supernatural of reasons. And in its wake came a strong, constant joy, which disappears only when you abandon him. (*Christ is Passing By*, 1)

- It is very important that the idea of marriage as a real call from God never be absent, either from the pulpit and the religion class or from the conscience of those whom God wishes to follow this way. Couples should be convinced that they are really and truly called to take part in the fulfillment of God's plan for the salvation of all men. (*Christ is Passing By*, 30)
- Whenever sanctity is genuine, it overflows from its vessel to fill other hearts, other souls, with its superabundance. We, the children of God, sanctify ourselves by sanctifying others. Is Christian life growing around

you? Consider this every day.
(*The Forge*, 856)

3. How do I know if God is calling me to a particular vocation?

As mentioned above, God calls everyone, some to a specific mission, personally designed for them. "Each in his or her own way,' the Council says. We should not grow discouraged before examples of holiness that appear unattainable. There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in

their hearts (cf. *1 Cor* 12:7), rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness. Indeed, when the great mystic, Saint John of the Cross, wrote his *Spiritual Canticle*, he preferred to avoid hard and fast rules for all. He explained that his verses were composed so that everyone could benefit from them 'in his or her own way.' For God's life is communicated 'to some in one way and to others in another'" (*Gaudete et Exultate*, 11).

The setting in which a person can discover his vocation is that of prayer, that is, a living and personal relationship with God. Prayer is absolutely necessary for spiritual life. It is like the breath that allows the life of the spirit to develop. In prayer, faith in the presence of God and his love is actualized. It fosters

the hope that leads to directing one's life towards Him and trusting in His providence. The heart is enlarged by responding with one's own love to divine Love.

Our model is the Lord. Jesus prays before the decisive moments of his mission: before his Father's witness to him during his baptism and Transfiguration, and before his own fulfillment of the Father's plan of love through his Passion. He also prays before the decisive moments related to the mission of his apostles: at his choosing of the Twelve, before Peter's confession of him as "the Christ of God," and again, that the faith of the chief of the Apostles may not fail when tempted. Jesus' prayer before the events of salvation that the Father has asked him to fulfill is a humble and trusting commitment of his human will to the loving will of the Father.

With his prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray, to discover the will of our Father God and to identify with it. In prayer we can discern God's will in every moment of our life: "You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world." (*Gaudete et Exultate*, 23)

In addition, at the moment of vocational discernment, the figure of a spiritual director can be a great help, a person to whom we can entrust ourselves and who, through his advice, helps us to discover the will of God and to strive to put it into practice. (See the *Catechism of the*

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- We cannot take refuge in the anonymous crowd. If interior life doesn't involve personal encounter with God, it doesn't exist — it's as simple as that. There are few things more at odds with Christianity than superficiality. To settle down to routine in our christian life is to dismiss the possibility of becoming a contemplative soul. God seeks us out, one by one. And we ought to answer him, one by one: "Here I am, Lord, because you have called me."
- We all know that prayer is to talk with God. But someone may ask, "What should I talk about?" What else could you talk about but his interests and the things that fill your day?

About the birth of Jesus, his years among us, his hidden life, his preaching, his miracles, his redemptive passion and death, his resurrection. And in the presence of the Triune God, invoking Mary as our mediatrix and beseeching St Joseph, our father and lord, to be our advocate, we will speak of our everyday work, of our family, of our friendships, of our big plans and little shortcomings. The theme of my prayer is the theme of my life. (*Christ is Passing By*, 174)

- How lovable is the scene of the Annunciation. How often we have meditated on this! Mary is recollected in prayer. She is using all her senses and her faculties to speak to God. It is in prayer that she comes to know the divine Will. And with prayer she makes it the life of her life. Do not forget the

example of the Virgin Mary.
(*Furrow*, 481)

- Prayer is the most powerful weapon a Christian has. Prayer makes us effective. Prayer makes us happy. Prayer gives us all the strength we need to fulfill God's commands. —Yes!, your whole life can and should be prayer. (*The Forge*, 439)
- I would like all of us to pray genuinely, as God's children, not gabbling away like hypocrites who will hear from Jesus' lips 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord!" shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.' People who live by hypocrisy can perhaps achieve 'the sound of prayer', says St Augustine, 'but they cannot possess its voice, because there is no life in them'. They lack the desire to fulfill the Father's Will. When we cry 'Lord!' we must do so with an effective desire to put into

practice the inspirations the Holy Spirit awakens in our soul. (*Friends of God*, 243)

- You well know the obligations of your Christian way of life; they will lead you safely and surely to sanctity. You have also been forewarned about the difficulties, or practically all of them, because you can already get a rough idea of them at the beginning of the road. Now I wish to emphasise that you must let yourselves be helped and guided by a spiritual director, to whom you can confide all your holy ambitions and the daily problems affecting your interior life, the failures you may suffer and the victories. Always be very sincere in spiritual direction. (*Friends of God*, 15)
- Here is a safe doctrine that I want you to know: one's own mind is a bad adviser, a poor

pilot to steer the soul through the storms and tempests and among the reefs of the interior life. That is why it is the will of God that the command of the ship be entrusted to a Master who, with his light and his knowledge, can guide us to a safe harbor. (*The Way*, 59)

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