

Pope John Paul II to the Youth of the World

On the Question of Vocation

Purpose of Life

Some advice to all in the name of Jesus Christ...I would like to ask each one of you: What will you do with your life? What are your plans? Have you ever thought of committing your existence totally to Christ? Do you think that there can be anything greater than to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus? (*May 13, 1984*)

Our interior gaze extends to the limitless horizons of our hopes and aspirations. And in the midst of all life's contradictions, we search for life's true meaning. We wonder and ask, why? Why am I here? Why am I alive at all? What must I do? None of you is alone in posing these questions. Humanity as a whole feels the pressing need to give sense and purpose to a world which is increasingly complicated and difficult to be happy in. (*August 14, 1993*)

Ask yourselves, young people, about the love of Christ. Acknowledge His voice resounding in the temple of your heart. Return His bright and penetrating glance which opens the paths of your life to the horizons of the Church's mission. It is a taxing mission, today more than ever, to teach men the truth about themselves, about their end, their destiny, and to show faithful souls the unspeakable riches of the love of Christ. Do not be afraid of the radicalness of His demands, because Jesus, who loved us first, is prepared to give Himself to you, as well as asking of you. If He asks much of you, it is because He knows you can give much. (*September 8, 1992*)

From All of Eternity

Every vocation is part of a divine plan. This means that in God's creative initiative there enters a particular act of love for those called not only to salvation but also to the ministry of salvation. Therefore from all eternity, since we began to exist in the plans of the Creator, and He willed us to be creatures, He also willed us to be "called", preparing in us the gifts and conditions for the personal, conscious, and opportune response to the call of Christ and of the Church. God who loves us, who is Love, is also "He who calls" (Romans 9:11). (*July 5, 1980*)

Vocation is, therefore, a mystery that man accepts and lives in the depths of his being. A gift and a grace, it depends on supreme divine freedom and, in its total reality, it escapes our understanding. We cannot demand explanations from the Giver of all goods—"Why have you made me thus?" (Romans 9:20) because He who calls is also "He who Is" (cf. Exodus 3:14). Therefore, in the presence of a vocation we adore the mystery, we respond lovingly to the initiative of love, we say yes to the call. (*July 5, 1980*)

You Are Chosen by Christ

He has chosen you, in a mysterious but real way, to make you saviors with Him and like Him. Yes, Christ calls you, but He calls you in truth. His call is demanding, because He invites you to

let yourselves be “captured” by Him completely, so that your whole lives will be seen in a different light. Let yourselves be seized by Jesus and try to live just for Him! (*October 13, 1993*)

As we reflect together on the life which Jesus gives, I ask you to have the courage to commit yourselves to the truth. Have the courage to believe the good news about life which Jesus teaches in the Gospel. Open your minds and hearts to the beauty of all that God has made and to His special, personal love for each one of you. (*October 13, 1993*)

Pray for Clarity

There is a wonderful way of experiencing love in life: it is the vocation to follow Christ in the celibate state freely chosen or in the state of virginity for the love of the Kingdom of Heaven. I ask each one of you to question yourselves seriously about whether God may not be calling you to one of these paths. And to all of those who suspect that they have this personal vocation, I say: pray insistently to receive the needed clarity, but then reply with a joyful yes. (*September 8, 1985*)

God Calls in Truth

How many young people do not possess the truth, and drift along without a ‘reason why’; how many, unfortunately, after empty and exhausting searches, disappointed and embittered, have given and still give themselves up to despair. And how many have succeeded in reaching the truth only after years of tormented questioning and painful experiences! Just think, for example, of St. Augustine’s dramatic path to arrive at the light of truth and at the price of regained innocence! What a sigh he heaved when at last he arrived at the light! And he exclaimed with nostalgia: “Late have I loved Thee!”

Just think of the effort of Cardinal Newman had to make to arrive with the force of logic at Catholicism! What a long and painful spiritual agony! It is really a great thing to know that one possesses Truth.

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Take Courage

You understand that I am speaking to you of very important matters. It is a question of dedicating one’s life to the service of God and of the Church, of doing so with unshakable faith, with mature judgment and a free decision, generously - regardless of the price. Open your heart to a joyful meeting with Christ. Ask for advice. The Church of Jesus must continue its mission in the world. In speaking to you about vocation and in urging you to follow along this path, I am the humble servant of that love that moved Christ when He called the disciples to follow Him. (*April 20, 1980*)

Be certain that, if you listen to His call and follow Him, you will find great joy and happiness. Be generous, take courage, and remember His promise: “My yoke is easy and My burden light” (Matthew 11:30). *(May 31, 1982)*

How to Make a Decision

You are at the great crossroads of your lives and you must decide how your future can be lived happily, accepting the responsibilities which you hope will be placed squarely on your shoulders, playing an active role in the world around you. You ask me for encouragement and guidance, and most willingly I offer some words of advice to all of you in the name of Jesus Christ. In the first place I say this: You must never think that you are alone in deciding your future! And second: When deciding your future, you must not decide for yourself alone! *(May 31, 1982)*

The conviction which we must share and spread is that the call to holiness is directed to all Christians (*Lumen Gentium*, Ch.5). This is not a question of privilege or spiritual elitism. It is not a matter of some persons feeling inclined to heroic daring. Still less it is a question of seeking a quiet refuge adapted to certain forms of piety or certain natural temperaments. It is a question of a grace offered to all baptized, but in varying ways. *(June 6, 1986)*

Listening to His Voice

Young people of the world, hear His voice! Hear His voice and follow Him! *(August 14, 1993)*

During the years of youth each person develops his own personality. The future already begins to be present, and it is right beyond your arms reach. It is the period in which life is seen as a promising plan to be fulfilled in which each one is, and wants to be, involved. It is also the right time for discerning and becoming more radically aware that life cannot develop without God and others. It is a time for facing the great questions, the choice between selfishness and generosity. *(May 18, 1988)*

Young people: Christ needs you and calls you to help millions of your brothers and sisters achieve their salvation. Open your heart to Christ, to His law of love. Place no conditions on God’s accessibility to you, have no fear to respond definitively, because love and friendship never fade. *(November 6, 1982)*

A Process

From the human point of view, a vocation in the Church begins with a discovery, with finding the pearl of great price. You discover Jesus: His person, His message, His call. After the initial discovery, a dialogue in prayer ensues, a dialogue between Jesus and the one called, a dialogue which goes beyond words and expresses itself in love. *(September 13, 1987)*

The experience of a vocation is unique and indescribable, and is only perceived as a gentle breeze of the clarifying touch of grace. The vocation is a breathing of the Holy Spirit, Who, at the same time as He genuinely shapes our fragile human reality, shines a new light into our

hearts. He instills an extraordinary power that merges our existence into the divine enterprise. *(March 17, 1982)*

A Gift

If someone among you hears Christ's call to a complete gift of self in the religious life, do not reject such a noble, though demanding, proposal. Have the courage to say yes generously and firmly; this can give an incomparable depth of meaning to your whole life. *(March 18, 1989)*

A religious vocation is a gift, freely given and received. It is a profound expression of the love of God for you, and, on your part, it requires in turn a total love for Christ. The whole life of a religious is aimed at strengthening the bond of love which was first forged in the Sacrament of Baptism. You are called to do this in religious consecration through the profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. *(September 13, 1987)*

Instruments for God's Call

God calls whomever He wills through free initiative of His love. But He wants to call through other persons. This is the way the Lord Jesus wants to call us. It was Andrew who called his brother Peter. Jesus called Phillip, but Phillip called Nathaniel. We should not be afraid to directly suggest to a young or not so young person that the Lord may be calling them. It is an act of esteem and confidence. It can be a moment of light and of grace. *(April 13, 1983)*

Consistency and the Cross

Unfortunately, we live in an age in which sin has even become an industry which produces money, inspires economic plans, bestows prosperity. The situation is certainly striking and terrible. Yet we must not let ourselves be frightened or oppressed: Any age demands consistency from the Christian. *(August 30, 1980)*

It is easy to be consistent for a day or two. It is difficult and important to be consistent for one's whole life. It is easy to be consistent in the hour of enthusiasm; it is difficult to be so in the hour of tribulation. And only a consistency that lasts throughout the whole of life can be called faithfulness. *(January 27, 1979)*

His calling is a declaration of love. Your response is commitment, friendship, love manifested in the gift of one's own life as a definitive following. Being faithful to Christ is loving Him with all of one's soul and all of one's heart in such a way that this love becomes the standard and motive of all our actions. *(January 27, 1979)*

Christ's fidelity achieves its fullest and highest expression on the Cross. As a result, renunciation and mortification are indispensable. Without a demanding asceticism and without a disposition to serve Him deeply rooted in your heart, without habitual self-forgetfulness, it becomes impossible to truly love and to be concerned solely with the interests of Christ. *(November 8, 1982)*

"Act Like Those Fishermen..."

Take heart, young people! Christ is calling you and the world awaits you! Remember that the kingdom of God needs your generosity and complete dedication. Do not act like the rich young man who, invited by Christ, was unable to choose and kept his possessions and sadness, he who had been looked upon with a loving gaze. Act like those fishermen who, called by Jesus, immediately left everything behind and became fishers of men. (*February 2, 1989*)

The Rich Young Man

In the Gospel story we see that the young man, having affirmed that he has kept the commandments, adds: "What do I still lack?" (Matthew 19:20) That young heart, moved by God's grace, felt a desire for a greater generosity, more commitment, greater love. This desire for more is characteristic of youth; a heart that is in love does not calculate, does not begrudge; it wants to give of itself without measure. "Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, 'Come, follow Me'" (Mark 10:21). (*May 18, 1988*)

To those who entered the path of life by observing the commandments...the Lord proposes new horizons: The Lord proposes to them means that are loftier and calls them to commit themselves to His love without reserve. To discover this call, this vocation, is to realize that Christ is looking on you and inviting you by His glance to give yourself totally in love. Before this glance, before His love, the heart opens its doors gradually and is capable of saying yes. (*May 18, 1988*)

If some of you hear the call to follow Christ more closely, to dedicate your entire heart to Him, like the apostles John and Paul, be generous; do not be afraid, because you have nothing to fear when the prize that you await is God Himself, for Whom, sometimes without ever knowing it, all young people are searching. (*May 18, 1988*)

"There is one thing you lack; come, follow me" (Mark 10:21). Is Jesus perhaps repeating to some of you today: "is there is one thing you lack?" Is He perhaps asking for even more love, more generosity, more sacrifice? Yes, the love of Christ involves generosity and sacrifice. To follow Christ and to serve the world in His name requires courage and strength. There is no place for selfishness—and no place for fear! Do not be afraid, then, when love makes demands. Do not be afraid when love requires sacrifice. (*November 22, 1986*)

Mary, Mother and Guide

Look to Mary to see how to respond to Jesus' call. First, she kept all things [concerning that call], pondering them, in her heart. She also went in haste to serve her cousin Elizabeth. Both attitudes are essential parts of our response to the Lord: prayer and action. That is what the Church expects of young people. That is what I have come to ask of you. Mary, Mother of the Church and our mother, will help us hear her Divine Son. (*January 14, 1995*)

What does Mary, our Mother and teacher, have to tell us? In the Gospel we find a statement in which Mary certainly shows herself to be a teacher. It is the statement she makes at the wedding

feast of Cana. After having said to her Son: “They have no wine,” she says to the waiters: “Do whatever He tells you.” (*December 13, 1987*)

“Do whatever He tells you.” In these words Mary expresses, above all, the deepest secret of her life. The whole of her person is in these words. Her life, in fact, has been a total yes to the Lord. A yes filled with joy and trust. And these words enclose a very important message, relevant to every man of every age. This “do whatever He tells you” means: listen to Jesus, my Son, act on His word and put your trust in Him. Learn to say yes to the Lord in every situation of your life. This message of great comfort is one of which we all have need. (*December 13, 1987*)

You must welcome Mary into your young lives as the apostle John took her “to his home.” May you allow her to be your mother. May you open your hearts and consciences to her. May she always help you find Christ, to “follow Him”, on all the paths of your lives. (*March 23, 1986*)