

## Be Ready for the Call

It used to be thought that only priests and nuns had vocations. Praying for vocations meant praying that young men would enter the seminary, or young women enter the convent. And young Catholics would wonder whether they had a vocation. But after Vatican II the Church has emphasized the idea that everyone has a vocation—for after all vocation comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call. A vocation is a calling, and today the church emphasizes that God calls everyone.

What is the meaning of my life? What is its purpose? I work with students who are trying to discern their calling. And one of the things I emphasize with them is that the meaning and direction of their lives is less a choice than a discovery. Our choice lies first in whether or not we take the time to quiet down, reflect over our relationships and the course of our lives and listen to how God is speaking to us through our everyday life.. And secondly our choice lies in how we respond to what we are hearing in the depths of our souls.

To hear our call we must listen for it. Zen Buddhism teaches that enlightenment is not something that one attains by one's own efforts. One can meditate day and night for years, and suddenly finally attain enlightenment while washing the dishes or taking out the garbage. So too in the Christian tradition God's grace is ultimately a gift, not a reward to be earned. A Buddhist disciple once asked his master then, if we do not attain enlightenment through long years of meditation, why do we devote ourselves to meditation at all? The master responded: that we might recognize enlightenment when it comes. As Paul says in today's second reading: now is the hour to wake from your sleep. Now is always the hour. You cannot be too awake.

Jesus warns us today that when the Son of Man comes two men will be out in the field, one will be taken and one will be left behind. Two women will be grinding flour, one will be taken, one will be left behind. When God calls what determines who is taken and who is left behind? The one taken is the one who is waiting for it, ready to leave everything and follow. How could Peter and Andrew, James and John immediately drop what they were doing, quit their day jobs and follow Jesus when he called them? They must have already been wondering whether there was not more to life than what they were living. They heard the call because they were listening for it. On the other hand there is the rich young man, whom Jesus also called to sell all that he had and follow him, why did he stay behind? He too was looking for more, but when his call came, he wasn't ready to pull the trigger. He did not want it enough. He'd rather long for more than commit to becoming more.

Evangelical fundamentalists have a word to describe what happens in today's Gospel –they call it the rapture. And those who don't hear the call? They are the troubled and the confused "left behind" to endure the tribulation of the end times. But we don't have to wait for the end of the world for the Son of Man to enter into our lives. God is always knocking on our door. Its just that most of the time we have the TV on too loud to hear it. Or we may think we hear something, but we are too absorbed scrolling Facebook or Instagram, or binging Youtube and TikTok to check it out. Or we are worried it's those pesky Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses again. Or we dismiss it as just our imagination. Or we just roll over and fall back asleep. There are a million reasons why we don't answer the door.

There is only one reason to answer that knocking. Only one reason to respond to God's call—to become whom we were made to be all along, to become our true selves, and in so doing, to be swept up in a new world, or an old world, newly charged and vibrant.

Now God does not just call individuals, he also calls communities. Today is our 20<sup>h</sup> anniversary as a parish, and around the 60<sup>th</sup> year for Our Lady of the Lake as a worshiping community of Catholics out here in Tum Tum and Suncrest. How is God calling us?

In preparation for the next synod, focused on how we should conduct synods by the way, the Church is asking all Catholics in parishes across the world to listen and share what we hear. I was too cynical to take that knock on the door seriously. Is it really worth the effort? Does the church really intend to address the challenges that are bound to be voiced over the role of women or LGBTQ or sexual morality—those third rail issues over which virtually all controversy within the church revolves? Or is it not an exercise to coopt criticism by reporting out that we can't change because we don't all agree on any of these issues. But we had a squeaky wheel who pestered me to listen up. So while I was away, sheer coincidence by the way, while I was in Europe, you were all polled over how we are doing: what we are doing well and where we have room for improvement. Its not the universal church but it is our church. Where your voice can make a difference and where you can hold the church to account. This week our parish council will reflect over what you said and figure out how to get back to you, hopefully in a way that does not disappoint and illusion. Can our parish hear the knock on our door? And will we answer it or will we leave well enough alone.... and be left behind?