

# Our Universal Call to Holiness

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The Bible has many passages about God calling someone, people like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, to be a leader or a prophet or about Jesus summoning persons, such as the apostles, to follow him. These passages serve to remind each and every one of us has been similarly called by God but for each one us the call is unique.

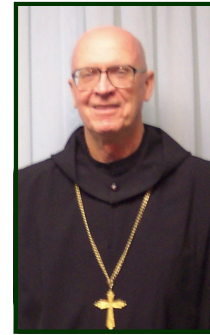
The theme of this issue of *The Raven* is vocation; several monks will talk about their calling to be a monk. The word vocation is simply a Latin based word that means "calling". Many people when they hear the word vocation in a religious context assume it refers only to the men and women called to be priests and brothers, nuns and sisters. When I was growing up we spoke of it that way: *He has a vocation to be a priest; she has a vocation to be a nun.* The assumption was in those days, I guess, that everyone else had no vocation, i.e. no specific calling from God.

Nothing could be further from the truth. We believe in a God who loves us personally and intimately and is, therefore, very much concerned about every aspect of our lives, especially what we do and what we become be it doctor or lawyer, husband or wife, religious or lay. God does this while always respecting our freedom to choose. He will never use his almighty power to force us to do what we don't want to do nor will he ever prevent us from making wrong or harmful choices. Yet he is very much present to us with his grace and inspiration to show us the way he wishes us to go. It is in this context the God calls us, gives us a vocation if you will. Sometimes he makes the call fairly clear as it he did, for example, with Mary when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her and asked her to be the mother of his Son (Cf. Lk 1: 26-38) or when he knocked Saint Paul off his horse on the road to Damascus and asked him to be his apostle (Cf. Acts 22: 6-11). Sometimes it happened suddenly as with St. Matthew in the gospels (Cf. Mt 9: 9). Other times it took years as it did for St. Augustine who kept closing his mind and heart to the Lord's call but eventually paid

attention to it and became a great teacher and Bishop.

With most of us the call is neither dramatic nor clear. It may take the form of a kind of nagging or yearning in our hearts, or we may feel an uneasiness with what we are currently doing because we feel it is not right for us, or it acts like a closed door that prevents us from going the way we think we want to go and so we are directed in another way. The Lord has all sorts of subtle ways of calling us and directing us. Our task is to be listening and open to his promptings. Through it all we need to pray and ask for divine guidance and grace in our quest to build our lives according to God's will for *unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it* (Psalm 127:1). It is also good to talk with wise, holy persons whose advice we trust.

God's call is not something that occurs only one or twice in our life. As Christians we were called initially and profoundly at our Baptism to be a follower of Christ and we said yes at that time. Since most of were infants when we were baptized someone else said it for us. Thus it became necessary for us to restate that yes at a later stage of our life and then to confirm it over and over again. In fact the response to the divine call needs to be renewed daily. It is a good practice, as we arise, to pray for God's blessing on all we do that day, that it will give glory to God. It makes no difference what we do; the most menial to the most exalted tasks, if they are done with God's blessing they will aid our salvation. There is a story about the humble monk who was hoeing the garden one day and a reporter came by and asked him: *If you knew you were going to die in the next hour what would you do.* (He assumed he would say that he would run off to church, go to confession and pray like he never prayed before.) The monk answered: *I'd just continue hoeing the garden, because that's what the abbot assigned me to do, while I wait for God to call me.*



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My friends, we all know the feeling of terror when we're called to do something new and difficult, be it when we were in the first grade and had to stand up and recite something in front of everybody or when the soldier is deployed for combat or the priest has to give his first sermon. Nothing, however, can compare to the call of God to us; it is the most crucial yet the most wonderful call we will ever have. And we have the ability, as human beings, to recognize God's call to us, his vocation for us if you will. Since God leaves us free to respond in whatever way we wish let us pray for the ability to respond as Mary did; *let it be done to me as you will*, (Lk 1:38) or as Paul did, *what shall I do, Sir* (Acts 22:10). Our yes to God's summons will always demand great trust in him and the belief that he alone knows what is best for us. My friends, fundamentally your vocation and mine is to be a saint and thereby to be with God forever. Let us strive to fulfill this, our true vocation.

## A Prayer for Vocations

An excerpt

Lord Jesus, as You once called the first disciples to make them fishers of men, let your sweet invitation continue to resound:  
Come, follow Me!  
Give young men and women the grace of responding quickly to Your voice. Pope John Paul II