

## Discerning a Vocation

It is to those of you who are sensing a movement, a rustling of the Spirit deep within your souls, to whom I decidedly and personally address this section. I sense that you must already have a profound awareness of the presence of Jesus in your life. As a matter of fact, you may have – many years ago – even felt that ache in your heart that only those with a vocation can feel, that undeniable inner yearning of deep calling to deep. But that was decades ago, and lots of kids, or careers, or responsibilities, or relationships since. What could possibly be happening now at this stage of your life? Yet, the voice within sounds so familiar, the feelings so reminiscent of those from times past. These are the same feelings of joy and wonder, of anticipation and conflict that you experienced when you first heard his call, his very personal invitation to “Come, and follow me.”

“Could this be the Lord again,” you ask, “once more – after all this time – calling me so intimately to himself?”

His words shake you. They reverberate through your soul, and echo into the deepest recesses of your heart. You sense in the very core of your being that he is wooing you, bidding you, “Come.” He is on a quest, he is in pursuit, and you are his reward. This is more than a petition for increased time with you in prayer, or more frequent attendance at Mass. This is more than an improved spiritual life he seeks from you. This is more than an inspiration. This is a proposal. He is asking for your hand in marriage. To you he says not only “Come, and follow me,” but “Come, and BE with me.”

There must be a stirring, perhaps even a storm, in your heart. There must be within you a burning desire to say a definitive and unqualified “yes” to Jesus, as well as a struggle with the reasonable and rational and logical part of you which repeats, with the frequency of a mantra, “No, regain your senses, be realistic, get a grip.” But, despite your best efforts, and perhaps those of your family and friends, your soul yearns all the more to understand and penetrate the depths of this holy longing within, to accept this irresistible invitation to draw closer, to respond to this persistent and unmistakable beckoning of Love. He, who initiated this courtship, has himself drawn close to you – so close, in fact, that you can almost feel the very breath of his whisper. And now you have become intensely aware of the nearness of him who desires more than discipleship, more even than friendship. He desires to be your beloved. Now you are beginning to grasp, to comprehend the mystery of a vocation: *It is in the service of others that we find him; but, it is in the forsaking of all others that we obtain him.*

He has been a trusted companion for many years. Together you have been through joys and trials, suffered much, loved much, laughed much, cried much. This, however, is different. This is passionate, intimate, consuming, terrifying. There is growing fire in your soul, and it is uncontainable. There is an increasing thirst in your heart, and it is unquenchable. Nothing, it seems, will remedy this blessed agony but total surrender, or total resistance to his call. He is captivating your every thought, tugging relentlessly on your timid heart. He is luring you to himself, away from all that is familiar and secure. He is becoming the object, the sole object, of your deepest desires. This is mutually unrequited love. He will not be satisfied with anything less than your all, your whole life, your whole soul, your whole heart. And neither will you be.

If anything in the preceding paragraphs resonates with you, touches you, inspires you, even troubles you, you may very well have a vocation. You may be called to live out your vocation with the Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus or with another religious order. You may be called to give yourself to Jesus as a hermit or as a consecrated celibate. You may be called to a life of apostolic service or to one of contemplative prayer. It is for you to discern, to determine what the Lord's invitation to "be" with him means to you. For our part, we will do all that we can to assist you in that discernment process and to support you in your journey. We, too, are on a journey, and it may be that you and we will walk some part of it, or all of it, together. Whether, though, we are to be close traveling companions on the road or simply fellow pilgrims in the larger caravan, we welcome you to the Way.

— Sr. Brigid O'Mahony