

VOCATIONS EXPLAINED

MATRIMONY, VIRGINITY,
THE RELIGIOUS STATE, AND THE PRIESTHOOD

BY A VINCENTIAN FATHER

AN ABRIDGMENT OF
“QUESTIONS ON VOCATIONS”
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Chapter 1

**Definition—Every Person Has
Some Special Vocation**

Q. What is a vocation?

A. A call from God to some state of life.

Q. Which are the principal states of life?

A. Matrimony, virginity, the religious state, and the priesthood.

Q. Has every person a vocation?

A. Yes; God gives a special vocation to each person.

Q. How is this doctrine proved?

A. St. Paul says: “Every one hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that. . . . As the Lord hath distributed to every one, as God hath called every one, so let him walk.”¹

Q. Is it not beneath God’s notice to give a particular vocation to each person?

A. Not at all; for even the birds of the air are objects of the providence of God: “Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”²

¹ 1 Cor. 7:17

² Luke 12:7

Q. What do Father Faber and St. Alphonsus say on this subject?

- A. Father Faber says: “Every man has a distinct vocation.”
St. Alphonsus says: “We must embrace that state to which God calls us.”

Q. What does St. Augustine teach concerning special vocations?

- A. St. Augustine says: “He who does little, but in a state to which God calls him, does more than he who labors much, but in a state which he has thoughtlessly chosen: a cripple limping in the right way is better than a racer out of it.”

Chapter 2

Necessity of Following A Vocation

Q. Are we obliged to follow the vocation which God gives us?

A. Yes; if we should wilfully neglect to follow our vocation we would be in danger of losing our souls.

Q. Why so?

A. Because God attaches to our vocation special graces to help us to resist temptations and to discharge our duties properly. Hence, if we neglect God's call, we lose also His special graces; we then easily fall into temptation, and thus we are more liable to lose our souls.

Q. Can you quote reliable authority for this doctrine?

A. St. Alphonsus Liguori says: "In the choice of a state of life, if we wish to secure our eternal salvation, we must embrace that state to which God calls us, in which only God prepares for us the efficacious means necessary to salvation."

St. Cyprian says: "The grace of the Holy Ghost is given according to the order of God, and not according to our own will."

Q. What does St. Vincent de Paul say on this point?

- A. St. Vincent de Paul says: “It is very difficult, not to say impossible, to save one’s self in a state of life in which God does not wish one to be.”

Q. Has any one of the Popes given his views on this subject?

- A. Yes; Pope St. Gregory the Great teaches that our salvation is closely connected with our vocation.

The Emperor Maurice having published an edict forbidding soldiers to enter the religious state, Pope St. Gregory the Great wrote to him these remarkable words: “This law, forbidding soldiers to enter the religious state, is unjust, because it shuts heaven to many; for there are very many who cannot enter heaven unless they abandon all things.”

Q. Can this doctrine be explained by a comparison?

- A. Yes; a master feels a just indignation against those servants that do as they please and neglect the particular duty assigned them. The work done by such servants may be very good in itself, yet it is not pleasing to the master, nor will it be rewarded by him, because it is not in accordance with his designs.

The same principle holds with regard to God: “Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”¹

¹ Matt. 7:21

Q. What is to be said of those that know nothing about vocations?

A. If they are ignorant of the matter without any fault on their part, God will not hold them responsible for such ignorance. By providential circumstances many are, without adverting to it, in the state of life in which God wants them to be.

Q. What is to be said of those who, having opportunities, give this subject little or no thought?

A. We answer with St. Alphonsus: “In the world this doctrine of vocation is not much considered by some persons. They think that it is all the same whether they live in the state to which God calls them, or in that which they choose of their own inclinations; and therefore so many live bad lives and damn themselves. But it is certain that this is the principal point with regard to the acquisition of eternal life. He who disturbs this order, and breaks this chain of salvation, shall not be saved.”

Q. What is the remarkable saying of St. Gregory Nazianzen on this subject?

A. St. Gregory Nazianzen says: “I hold that the choice of a state of life is so important that it decides, for the remainder of our lives, whether our conduct shall be good or bad.”

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