

Vocational literacy, competence to read God's calling

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In our last column we explored literacy—the ability to read and comprehend—and in particular the four literacies that lead to mature Christian faith: Religious literacy, moral literacy, emotional literacy, and social and cultural literacy.

Literacy is one means by which we find meaning in our lives and one way we assign value to events and circumstances, relationships and opportunities.

Vocational literacy is the ability to read and comprehend God's movement in our lives, and the particular patterns and ways we respond. Vocational literacy is the foundation for mature Christian faith and key to our role in Jesus' work of salvation.

How do you develop vocational literacy? First, notice things. Notice how you feel about your work; notice where you are (or aren't) in relationships; notice when you feel animated (or drained) in work or in volunteer situations, and notice what in particular animates or drains you.

Second, don't make judgments about what you notice. Moral judgments aside, resist

assigning "good" or "bad" to what you experience. Going through a tragic personal loss may seem "bad," and having the doors of opportunity swing wide open to you may seem "good." But vocationally, God works in unexpected ways, so we are not at liberty to determine what's "good" or "bad" for our lives on our vocational journey.

Third, prayerfully and humbly work with what's given. "My vocation" is not about me. It's about the ways God chooses to redeem the particular part of the world which my life touches. More important than a straight path to success is the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the affirmation of the Christian community. God does not call us in a vacuum but anoints us for our mission in the context of the body of Christ.

Vocational literacy, like reading skills, is best developed early in life, because it is a skill that you will need daily for the rest of your life. Becoming competent to read God's calling enables you to give your informed and intentional Yes.