

CONFORMED TO CHRIST

## ***Real vocation robs you***

by Mary Sharon Moore

*This column appeared originally in the Southwest Kansas Register, Dec 2009.*

The whole notion of vocation, on first blush, seems pretty straightforward. God calls. I hear the call. It resonates deep in my soul and awakens me for ministry in the Church or mission in the world. It's a calling to something I have not yet become, to accomplish something I have not yet done.

So far, so good.

But the concept of vocation can carry a lot of baggage—what I'll call romantic baggage. The romantic is the person who would rather long for the object of heart's desire than engage in the imperfect reality of the present. For the vocational romantic, "searching for my vocation" can easily become an endless, fruitless yearning for what I cannot achieve, because it is disconnected from commitment to the here and now, where God's willing is active. The vocational romantic lives a frustrated life, battling an endless stream of really good reasons to resist commitment to the task at hand, no matter how mundane or thankless it might be.

But in the reign of God, real vocation doesn't work that way. Real vocation robs you of such leisurely anguish, robs you of the unfreedom of your own stubborn willing, strips away any romantic notions you might have of how pleasing in God's eyes you will be, once you can start living, really living, your vocation.

Real vocation robs you of the unfreedom which is sin, strips you of the unfreedom of committing yourself to what is not-God. Real vocation, in the end, renders you

incapable of turning away from God. Real vocation moves you in the only direction you were ever built to go—into God, starting from where you are right now, no matter what wrong choices may haunt you, no matter what broken past makes you cry, no matter what injustices have crippled you with anger.

Real vocation—that authentic, faithful, self-giving, personal response to God's calling—does not invest itself in a pleasing notion of "how my life might be someday." Rather, it invests itself in personal conversion—in turning toward God—right now. Like it or not, where you are in your life today is the vocational reality which comes after yesterday's dreaming. And where you are in your life today is exactly where the Lord Jesus in his grace is pleased to meet you.

Finally, real vocation robs you of the misunderstanding that God's calling as you perceive it now will unfold and blossom, mature and bear fruit in the ways you imagine. Time may not be on your side. Daily, people experience their life cut short, or at least radically changed in ways they never would have chosen or even contemplated. Is that the end of one's "real vocation"—or the beginning? Too easily we imagine a life cut short, or at least radically changed through unforeseen tragedy, as an obstacle to vocational fulfillment. Real vocation is not about bearing fruit in the ways you imagine, but about faithfulness to God's calling here and now, today, in this hour. Consider Jesus' words: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies,

it produces much fruit” (John 12:24). We do not understand this mystery we name God, nor the mystery of God’s ways.

Charles de Foucauld, a French priest of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who went as a missionary to live a hermit’s life among the poor in Algeria, said of his vocational awakening: “As soon as I believed that there was a God,

I understood that I could not do anything other than live for him. My vocation dates from the same moment as my faith.”

The vocational question here is this: Does my belief in God cause me to understand that I can do nothing other than to live for him? If so, would you know that by looking at my life now?

**MARY SHARON MOORE, M.T.S.**, is founding director of **AWAKENING VOCATIONS**, author of *Touching the Reign of God* (Wipf and Stock, 2009), and creator of the L.A.S.T. Workshop for workteam development. Her work in vocation discernment spans from Church ministry to animating organizations for work that touches the soul of the world. For more, visit [www.awakeningvocations.com](http://www.awakeningvocations.com).