

Formation of social conscience essential in discerning God's personal call

by Mary Sharon Moore

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Even a quick listen to the news on any given day tells us that God's work of redemption—completed in Jesus' death and resurrection—is still being worked out in fits and starts on the human plane. And that human plane is precisely where God's calling awakens our personal response.

Formation of social conscience, John Neafsey notes in his book *A Sacred Voice is Calling*, stretches our personal horizon to include not only our own path to holiness but the world's path to holiness. Why? Because God created us as social beings, with an innate longing for connection, inclusion, communion. Social conscience stirs me to compassionate care for others, to have the heart of Jesus who was moved with pity for the suffering of others.

As part of the human community and anointed for God's purposes, I discover that relieving human suffering and restoring human dignity and hope is a vital part of God's purposes. In fact, God so cares for the poor and the suffering that Jesus identifies as one of them (see Matthew 25). If I do not hear the cries of those who suffer, I may be hard of hearing—in a troubling spiritual sense.

Formation of social conscience, accepting personal responsibility for social sin, and working for social justice are not someone else's work; they are my work, and a significant way in which I fulfill God's calling—my personal vocation. My mission is not separate from God's mission, which is the healing and redemption and restoration of all of humankind and all of creation.

The starting point for formation of social conscience is listening to the heart where God speaks, and listening to the voice of those who suffer, whether they are visible or invisible to me. A passionate commitment to life, justice, mercy, and peacemaking is more than a concept; it's action based on my being in this particular place at this particular time, anointed for God's purposes and the full revelation of God's reign.

Formation of social conscience means awakening from the sleep of inhumanity, as Jon Sobrino, S.J., puts it, a sleep which we have come to accept as the norm, and awakening to God's dream for humankind and all of creation.

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