

CONFORMED TO CHRIST

Why vocations matter

by Mary Sharon Moore

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The Church today is in a state of emergency, vocational emergency, often understood as a shortage of priests. Indeed, clergy and laity alike feel the strain. So our first response to the question: Why does vocation matter? is often the obvious: “Because there’s a shortage of priests.” This answer can easily get us off the hook and make “vocation” someone else’s problem. But this logic blinds us to the reality that the world suffers when we as Church forget the urgency of our anointing.

Really, why does vocation matter? Vocation means “God’s calling.” As a lay member of the Church, my place vocationally is in the world. My vocational work is to let the concerns of the world—which are the concerns of God’s own heart—become my concerns. My vocational work is to notice what in the world is going on, to respond as one responds who has been personally anointed and sent by Jesus to stand in his place. That’s what an apostle does. My vocational work, like yours, is to read the signs of the times through the lens of the Gospel—not through the lens of popular culture, political commentators, or spin wizards. In baptism, we all were anointed precisely for this prophetic work in the world, to read the signs of the times through the lens of the Gospel, and to act accordingly.

So I ask again, why does vocation, or God’s calling, matter? My reading of the times today tells me that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is challenging the human heart and conscience, socially and corporately, in ways we never imagined. Vocationally, we

are being stripped of the illusion that we can live our lives untouched by the world’s anguish. Vocationally, we are being challenged to publicly stand against greed and injustice, against all attacks on the gift of life. We are challenged by the Gospel to stand against crushing poverty and denial of the basic rights to life. Vocationally we are being challenged to transform our rightful anger into advocacy for justice and action on behalf of the marginalized and the vulnerable at every stage of life.

And it’s so tempting to take the easy way out. Yet each of us, because we are baptized into Christ, must humbly undergo an awakening of social conscience, recognizing that our lives, like his, are not our own. We could hunker down in the trenches and lob grenades at anyone who does not think like us, but we would totally miss the point.

Vocationally, you and I have been anointed for one thing only: to stand in Jesus’ place in these uncertain times, in the socially and morally complex circumstances of this 21st century. If you feel poorly prepared to stand as a prophetic light in dark times, now is not the time to hold back. As Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit will guide you. Every one of us, lay and clergy alike, is appointed, each according to our office and unique circumstances, to engage in the pressing work of being Gospel for people in a hurting and hurtful world. God calls baptized men and women to something far greater than protection of self interest. God has appointed you and me to participate in the urgent and mighty work of redemption. Together we are the body of Christ. Our

flesh really is his flesh. His blood flows through our veins. We dare not betray our divine mission.

God beckons you and me to live large, anointed, bold and holy lives because God also beckons every human person, baptized or not, to the fullness of personhood, which is nothing less than eternal life in God. The quality of our Christian lives is measured by our capacity to let the Holy Spirit move us

to do the works and be the presence of Christ.

Why does vocation matter? Because our anguished world cries out for something better.

No matter how your financial investment portfolio might be performing right now, God has plans for your spiritual investment portfolio. Work with it.

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