

THE CALL TO LEADERSHIP, A VOCATION

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – October 2009

To Discover and Live One's Vocation and Mission¹

The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it out, so as to fulfill one's mission.

God calls me and sends me forth as a laborer in his vineyard. He calls me and sends me forth to work for the coming of his Kingdom in history. This personal vocation and mission defines the dignity and the responsibility of each member of the lay faithful and makes up the focal point of the whole work of formation, whose purpose is the joyous and grateful recognition of this dignity and the faithful and generous living-out of this responsibility.

In fact, from eternity God has thought of us and has loved us as unique individuals. Every one of us he called by name, as the Good Shepherd "calls his sheep by name" (Jn. 10:13). However, only in the unfolding of the history of our lives and its events is the eternal plan of God revealed to each of us. Therefore, it is a gradual process; in a certain sense, one that happens day by day.

To be able to discover the actual will of the Lord in our lives always involves the following: a receptive listening to the Word of God and the Church, fervent and constant prayer, recourse to a wise and loving spiritual guide, and a faithful discernment of the gifts and talents given by God, as well as the diverse social and historic situations in which one lives.

Therefore, in the life of each member of the lay faithful there are particularly significant and decisive moments for discerning God's call and embracing the mission entrusted by him. No one must forget that the Lord, as the master of the laborers in the vineyard, calls at every hour of life so as to make his holy will more precisely and explicitly known. Therefore, the fundamental and continuous attitude of the disciple should be one of vigilance and a conscious attentiveness to the voice of God in order to become one with Christ so He can work through us, with us and in us at every moment of our lives.

It is not a question of simply knowing what God wants from each of us in the various situations of life. The individual must completely surrender to doing what God wants, as we are reminded in the words that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, addressed to the servants at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5). However, to live in God's will requires a capability for doing so and the developing of that capability. We can rest assured that this is possible through the free and responsible collaboration of each of us with the grace of the Lord which is never lacking. St. Leo the Great says: "The one who confers the dignity will give the strength!"

¹ John Paul II, *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People*

This then is the marvelous yet demanding task awaiting all the lay faithful and all Christians at every moment: to grow always in the knowledge of the richness of Baptism and faith as well as to live it more fully. In referring to birth and growth as two stages in the Christian life, the Apostle Peter makes the following exhortation: “Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation” (1 Pt. 2:2).

Discerning God’s Call²

Jesus always called people to embrace the highest ideals possible. Not everyone was called to be part of the Twelve, but all were called to perfection and holiness. The same is true with the work of the Cursillo. Everyone must discern his or her own calling. All of us are called to embrace our Fourth Day fully, but some are called to do the special work of the Cursillo Movement. Not everyone will be called to the School of Leaders. We can never water down the principles of the Cursillo or the School of Leaders out of fear that it will not be for everyone. So how do we discern where God wants us to be? The answer is simple — through prayer and discernment.

When we look to Jesus we see a perfect model of prayer. Before any major decision Jesus spent time alone with the Father. Before He began His public ministry we are told that the Spirit compelled Jesus to go into the desert for forty days. Before He chose the Twelve He prayed. Before He made the long walk to Calvary He prayed. In Luke 6:12 Jesus’ prayer with the Father is described as being “in communion” with God. “Communion” is an interesting word. Like the word “community” the word means “working” with. Prayer is not just for our personal satisfaction and nourishment. It is a power source of action. Prayer that only nourishes us is prayer that has only done half the job. Our prayer must also nourish others through our apostolic witness of life and evangelizing efforts. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed for the power needed to perform the final great act of sacrifice on the cross. David prayed that he would carry out his duties as a worthy servant of God. Paul prayed that the power of God would help him and us to do what is just and to live upright lives.

Prayer is not simply a personal enterprise. It is not just for me. Fr. David Knight talks about the “prayer of encounter” which he describes as “reflecting on the Word of God until we come to decisions that change our lives . . . Prayer that does not affect our life is simply not prayer, no matter how good it feels.” That is why Piety and Study cannot stand apart from Action. Without our apostolic witness, prayer is reduced to a purely selfish exercise. It is like dieting during Lent, not because we want to fast, but because we want to lose weight. For Jesus, prayer was never for Himself alone. It was always directed to doing the Father’s will.

“In communion” — that is the heart of prayer: working for and with God to help bring about the Kingdom of God. Prayer is working with God. Everything we do for God begins with prayer, ends in prayer and is sustained by prayer. It is noteworthy that the word “liturgy” means “work”. Liturgy of any kind is work done for God to nourish us to work for others. Consider palanca for a moment. Palanca is a perfect example of prayer

² Fr. Frank Salmani, *Whom Shall I Send? Discerning the Will of God*

as part of God’s work. We offer some sacrifice for others — that is the heart of palanca. Also, when we approach prayer as part of God’s work, our “work” in the world will seem less like a burden or a chore.

Our work is a call from God and the ongoing work will feed ongoing prayer that will help in our progressive conversion. Work and prayer are interwoven just as the vertical (God) and horizontal (others) dimensions of our spiritual life are interwoven. If we accept the call as a Cursillo leader, prayer and study will be the fuel for the work of the Movement. It is not enough to be filled spiritually. We need Christians who are leaders not because they are spiritually advanced, but leaders who are willing to set the standards for Christian service to the Cursillo, the Church and the world.

The Cursillo Movement³

It's important for us to realize that being a Cursillo leader *is a vocation – a calling from God*. As one becomes more deeply involved in the leadership of the Movement, we hear the phrase — “making the Cursillo our primary apostolate”. That phrase needs to be understood as being conscious that leadership in the Cursillo Movement is a vocation, a calling from God to serve the Church in this special way.

Each of us has a chosen state of life: marriage, priesthood, religious life, single life, etc. and it is within this state of life that we have a calling — a vocation.

The Council Documents state: “It is the Lord Himself who has called you.” Yes, the Lord Himself invites each of us to live out our vocation — our calling. For some of us, that vocation is being leaders in the Cursillo Movement — to serve Christ and His Church through the Cursillo Movement.

It is no accident that the Lord has called each of us. Each of us is part of the total plan of God. In Romans 8:28-30, it says: “He has called us according to His purpose — He called those He intended. Those He called, He justified, and with those He justified, He shared His glory.”

So there is purpose and intention in our calling. Through the experience of a Cursillo weekend, we were called to a deeper, fuller life centered on the Lord. We became aware of our need and responsibility to live what is fundamental for being a Christian. Beyond that weekend experience, we have been called to where we are now — leaders in the Cursillo Movement. Hopefully, we look at where we are today as having answered the Lord’s calling as vocation, as a way of life.

If we see where we are today as an answer to a calling — as vocation — we need to realize that no one fulfills their calling overnight. A vocation evolves and develops and we, each of us, need to closely examine our acceptance of that call, our response to that call and our commitment to that call.

The first thing we must do is to recognize and accept the fact that it is in fact a call from

³ How to Program a School of Leaders Manual

the Lord, and it should be revered and respected as such. Cursillo leaders, those who work within the Movement for the good of Cursillo, need to see their service as a calling — as a primary apostolate; a prime apostolate, first and foremost, before other things even other Church things. It should not be the same response as we might have to our hobbies; “when I want”, “when I have time”, or “because it gives me pleasure.” No, the vocation of Cursillo is an investment of our time, talents and yes, sometimes even treasures, because God invites us to be faithful and trustworthy stewards.

It is no accident that we are where we are today — leaders in the Cursillo Movement. We know that because we see it as His plan for us. St. John’s Gospel, Chapter 15, reminds us of that. Jesus said: “You did not choose me, no I chose you and I commission you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last” (John 15:16).