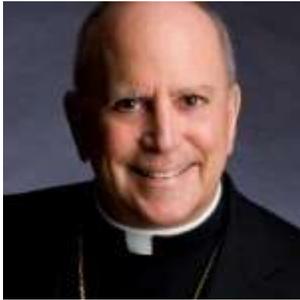


# Vocations are given, not manufactured



[Archbishop Aquila](#)

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There are many uncertainties in life, but as the Church observed World Vocation Day on May 12, I want to remind everyone — especially young people — that you can be certain that God has a unique and loving plan for your life that only you can fulfill. Your task is to seek the Lord with all your heart, and if you do so, you can be sure he will reveal your vocation.

This is not a popular thing to believe, but it is true. Most young people today are taught that they are a blank slate that can be drawn upon however they wish. The tides of relativism have eroded belief in objective truth to the point that increasing numbers of people think that one's gender, the nature of marriage, and ultimately what is right or

wrong can be changed at will. When there is no reference to God, one makes oneself God.

This development could lead to people thinking that vocations are just like a career choice, but in fact, a vocation is a calling that God the Father places on one's heart. As Pope Francis reminds us, it is a summons "to follow Jesus on the path he has marked out for us, for our own happiness and for the good of those around us" (Pope Francis' 2019 World Day of Vocation Message). Jesus is the one who "marks out our path for our happiness."

The Gospel message stands at the very heart of every vocation: God loves you. He died for you. And he has a plan for your happiness. Experiencing this in your life will bring you lasting joy and freedom.

But that's not to say that following God's plan for you won't be challenging. Pope Francis draws on the story of Jesus calling the apostles away from their fishing to become "fishers of men" to describe how being called contains both promise and risk. "The Lord's call," he says, "is not an intrusion of God on our freedom ... On the contrary, it is the loving initiative whereby God encounters us and invites us to be part of a great undertaking. He opens before our eyes the horizon of a greater sea and an abundant catch."

Whether one is called to the priesthood, religious life, consecrated life, or marriage, the great joy over souls brought to the Lord for healing and salvation is certainly abundant. Ask any priest and you will hear stories about the richness, the challenges and the joys of his ministry.

The Holy Father offers us a reflection on the risk and promise of our vocation by looking at Mary's life. "Her mission was not easy, yet she did not allow fear to prevail. It was the 'yes' of someone prepared to be committed, someone willing to take a risk, ready to stake everything she had, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of a promise. I ask each one of you: Do you see yourselves as bearers of a promise? What promise do I bear within my heart to take forward? Mary's would undoubtedly be a difficult mission, but the challenges that lay ahead were no reason to say 'no.'"

May the Blessed Mother's example inspire everyone to discern how the Father is calling you and may she intercede for you to receive the gifts of wisdom and courage so that you can follow her son, Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He will bring you great happiness, even in the trials of life.

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