

He calls

The vocation is a free and enamored response to the call of Someone that transcends me, to offer myself with generosity and joy. Life is marvelous because it is fabric of calls and responses. It is God who calls and man who responds to that particular calling. Jesus says: *“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit”* (Jn. 15:16).

My calling is Gift, it is today, it is supernatural. Jesus calls me: *“Come, follow me”* (Mt. 9:9). The call is from always and for always. Mysteriously He chooses and calls disciples so that they follow him in the service of the Kingdom.

The vocation to missionary life is something very great and implies a totalizing self-giving. That is why the intuition is that the relationship of Jesus with his disciples was characterized by a special friendship, trust and intimacy. We see this through the whole public life of Jesus, from the first sending when he spends the entire night in prayer before calling the twelve (Lk. 9:1) until the Resurrection when he appears to them in Jerusalem (Acts 1:3).

We see this particular relationship of Jesus with his disciples in Luke 8:10, when he begins to teach using parables and they ask him to explain the parables to them when he finishes, and the Lord says: *“Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you . . .”* When he raises the daughter of Jairus, he doesn’t allow anyone to enter with him, except for Peter, James and John (Lk. 8:51). When he takes them with him after they have returned from missioning and he “withdrew in private” with them (Lk. 9:10). Or in Luke 9:18, when Jesus prayed in solitude and the Gospel says, *“and the disciples were with him . . .”*

Jesus calls some people to dedicate their life to Him and His Kingdom. The response is free and personal. *“God and my soul,”* St. Augustine said.

Silence and prayer

Now Jesus knows what is in our heart and in our spirit. St. John Paul II said: *“Do not be afraid! Christ knows what is within man; only He knows it! So many times today man doesn’t know what he carries within, in the depths of his soul, of his heart. Too often he shows himself uncertain about the meaning of his life on this earth. This invasion of doubt is converted into desperation. Permit, therefore—I plead with you, I implore you with humility and trust—permit Christ to speak to you. Only he has the words of life, Yes! Of eternal life.”*

In order to listen to the Voice of the Master who calls, we have to venture into silence. Like the prophet Elijah who heard *“a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak”* because he had heard the Voice of his Lord (1 Kings 19:9-13).

Likewise, the prophet Isaiah knew how to listen: "Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back" (Is. 50:5).

To pray is to listen and in prayer you will encounter Jesus Christ who speaks to you with Love. Jesus speaks in the silence, and it is there where his Word takes on its true dimensions.

Romano Guardini, in his "Letters of self-formation" writes: *"Only silence opens our ears to the music that resounds in all things . . . being silent doesn't mean being mute, not at all. True silence is the living correlative of right speaking. They are related like inspiration and expiration. Is it possible that there be one without the other? Speaking creates community; through the words we receive and share. Without language the interior world would oppress us. The true word liberates. But it should be true and should be in vital relationship with silence. Silence is the source of speaking . . . That which proceeds from silence is full, well-rounded, like the morning song of a recollected heart. It is vigorous and fresh like the flowers that grow on the heights. Notice how clear their forms are; how firm their stems and their leaves; and the color of their flowers, how deep and intense at the same time. True words are like that."*

It is the source of the river that is found in high places. The river at its beginning doesn't become a torrent, not until it descends the mountains, before coming to fertilize the valleys and culminate in the ocean. That's how it is with the foundations of prayer, they come from above, from Him, who knows, convokes, forms and sends.

Seeds of vocation

In order to discover what God wants of us, we can perceive, intuit, seeds of the vocation. They are little signs that begin to orient our heart toward a particular life. Seeds of the vocation to missionary life that germinate little by little and even begin bearing fruit.

Jesus convokes us to do what we love, He doesn't cancel out our nature. To Peter, who was a fisherman, he didn't say: "Follow me and stop doing that which you know how to do," but rather he said to him: "You are a fisherman, well, follow me and I will make you a fisher of men, of souls for this life and for Eternal Life." Jesus assumes, takes on, what Peter knows how to do and what he loves, and He elevates it to a level unimaginable for him. The same with us. He does the same for all his chosen ones, he elevates them to a new and unimaginable situation.

That is why it is healthy and guiding to ask oneself: What things do I love doing? For what or for whom would I give my life? How would I like to be the day that I die? What lifestyle gives me most hope? Can I imagine myself living like an apostle of Jesus, itinerant and missionary? If I imagine my humanity in its fullness: human virtues, a

more luminous testimony . . . If the idea of belonging to a community, to something greater, to something that transcends myself inspires me, etc.

“Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20)

Jesus assumes, takes on, our humanity and brings it to its fullest. Nevertheless, he doesn't convoke us just so that we will be a better version of ourselves, like an amplified photocopy. Rather, Jesus wants to prolong His life in us. That life isn't a theoretical life, but a real life that has already taken place; it is the life of Jesus. It isn't a life from a manual, but a concrete life. It's not that He wants to make you better, more patient . . . No. He wants to make you more Christ, and that is why He wants to make you better and more patient.

Missionary life is a prolongation of the public life of Jesus. Jesus wants to live His life in us; it is a particular and specific calling.

Jesus wants to pray, to love, to live, to save in us. We want to live in Him, pray in Him, heal in Him, save in Him. In the Saint John Society, we want to dedicate all our strength and energy to the New Evangelization, with the message that in Christ there is a new situation.

We model our life after the public life of Jesus. Going to cities and towns, in His missionary zeal, He goes out to find the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Among high school students and university students and professionals, in order to form leaders capable of transforming reality according to Kingdom values. And among the most humble, so that the Good News be announced to the poor, raising up among them leaders capable of animating their communities and being leaven in their environment.

Life in Christ is expressed very well by St. Alberto Hurtado in his book, “A Shot to Eternity”: *“Look at Him, to penetrate His sentiments, in his motivations for doing, and in the manner of realizing his actions in order to put these same features in our lives. The supreme aspiration of our life should be to look like Christ, to be like Christ, the ‘yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me’ that constituted the incomparable greatness of Paul of Tarsus (. . .) I will be great if I consent to lose myself in Christ, to abandon myself in Him, in being Him.”*

Living for Christ, with Christ and in Christ. Grafted onto Him like the vine and the branches. A new life in me, real, that fulfills me and knows how to bring out what is most authentic in me. *“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit”* (Jn. 15:5).

We are not Christ, but we are appropriating Christ through the vocation we've received, through the vocation to a Christian life, the calling of Baptism, and through the vocation to consecrated life. We grow into achieving that maturity, that stature in

Christ, little by little, and so become little by little more authentically who we are. We want to be a new incarnation of Christ in the world, that same light that penetrates and passes through the humanity of Christ, that same light is given to us through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Determination

Of course there will be struggles, they are expected: *“My son, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, undisturbed in time of adversity. Cling to him, forsake him not” (Sirach 2:1-3).*

The first “yes” is the beginning of a path. It is not a definitive yes, since the years of formation are also a time of discernment. And even though it is not the easiest yes, nor the most certain, it is worth trying to say it with all your strength. The spiritual author St. Thomas a Kempis writes: *“Engrave in your mind this brief and perfect sentence: leave it all in order to find it all.”* And Jesus is clear about this, too: *“Whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it” (Mk. 8:35).*

Then, while it is true that the vocation is a calling from God that only the person and God can hear and pronounce, and that no one can respond in our place, it is also true that we need someone who will accompany us in our vocational discernment.

For this a priest, a spiritual director is very important. The spiritual director is the person who will most help us to decide. To decide with courage and boldness.

In Luke 9:51 it says: *“Jesus resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem.”* That is to say, with great determination . . . as St. Ignatius said, it is necessary to have a determined determination, which is personal, but we also always need someone who confirms us, orients us, and strengthens us.

Love in action

Before beginning his public life, Jesus went to the desert, where he was tempted for forty days and forty nights by the devil. But after this, says the Gospel, he *“returned with the power of the Spirit,”* and so should each person who experiences himself convoked by the Lord. With serenity, without fear, with courage and with faith, allow oneself to be filled with the Holy Spirit, who is more interested than we are in showing us Divine Will.

To be a missionary priest, of the New Evangelization, today. It is a Grace. The priest is the love of God in action. Sent to bring *“glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Lk. 4:18).*

The Lord speaks, he doesn't play hide and seek, but speaks, impels, there is a real movement. It is on us to say yes. To have the attitude of the one who trusts in the power and might of He who calls, who convokes. To a life of service, a life of self-

sacrifice, given in ransom for a multitude. *“Can you drink that chalice that I will drink? . . . We can.”* And so we should say, *“with your Grace I can, here I am, I will serve.”* Jesus says: *“If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it”* (Jn. 13:17).

Jesus wants us to be happy, he is more interested than we ourselves are in our happiness, He wants to make us participants in his Kingdom, here on earth. New life here and now. *“Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive an overabundant return in this present age and eternal life in the age to come”* (Lk. 18:28).