

PARENTS, FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS



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Parents, Family & Religious Vocations

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Vocation-as-Person

"Vocation" is a terrible word. It is frightening because it is so impersonal.

There is really no such thing as a vocation. There is only a person with a vocation. So whenever we think of "vocation," let us always think of this word as a contraction, a shortening of the phrase "a person with a vocation." For brevity of speech, we use only the last word. But we should never forget that the essence of a vocation can be found only within a person in the full sense of the word "person."

The foregoing paragraph is no idle excursion into the thickets of verbiage. Rather, it underlies the concrete nature of a vocation as it exists in the now. Indeed, this rich concept of vocation-as-person forms the basic thrust of this pamphlet.

In the learned professions there are many categories of trained personnel whose knowledge is relevant to the deeper understanding of vocation-as-person. Educators, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers and theologians all can provide valuable information on the nature of persons having vocations. Let us take René Spitz's interesting and famous research experiment on babies to illustrate this point.

Aid From Psychology

Spitz studied a rather large group of babies born to unwed mothers. For purposes of scientific investigation, Spitz separated the babies into two groups. The babies in the first group were cared for either by their own mothers or by women judged to be adequate substitutes for the original mothers. The babies in the second group were cared for by trained nurses in accordance with scientifically objective attention and with high professional standards. As a matter of fact, the babies in the second group were cared for in a more professional manner and with higher medical standards than those in the first group.

At the end of the research investigation, the babies cared for by their mothers or by mother substitutes were found to have made normal progress. However, the situation was dramatically reversed for the babies of the second group. These had fared tragically on all counts. Of the 91 babies in the second group, 34 died despite elaborate medical precautions. The rest of the babies were apathetic, and had decreased in intelligence. Only five of the babies could walk unaided.

From this celebrated investigation Spitz concluded that mothering, or more precisely the personal bond between the mother or mother substitute and the baby, is far more crucial to the proper development of the baby than even the highest type of institutional or impersonal attention, however professional.

Thus the first and most important imperative for any parent is to love the child in a deeply personal manner. Surely, the study by Spitz bears out the contention of psychoanalyst Theodor Reik who wrote: "The unloved child dies, and if it does not die, maybe it is better that it did."

A Matter of Total Personality

Spitz's research investigation and Reik's insightful comment both bear directly on the responsibility of Catholic parents and families in fostering religious vocations. A religious vocation decidedly does not develop as an isolated phenomenon or even as an isolated grace, but rather as a facet of the child's total personality. Fostering of religious vocations, therefore, is most effectively done by fostering personality growth. And personality growth is best fostered in a family setting—fostered more effectively even than in the finest Catholic school or religious house of formation.

Julius Cardinal Döpfner, Archbishop of Munich, made this point abundantly clear in his speech con-

cerning the seminary decree at the third session of the Second Vatican Council. In his powerful address the Cardinal clearly stated that parents who had children manifesting signs of a religious vocation should not be content simply to send such offspring to a Catholic school or religious house of formation. To do so, he contended, would be to shirk their deep responsibility. Rather, he said, parents should become more aware of their responsibility for vocations which may be evolving in their midst. Such an awareness will cause Catholic parents to play their fundamental role in the nurturing of religious vocations, instead of shunting the total responsibility onto Catholic schools or religious houses. Catholic schools and religious houses are not substitutes for family life. At best, these institutions are supplemental to the family.

From our discussion thus far several key points emerge. A vocation is never an isolated phenomenon, but always an integral contextual element of one's total personality makeup. A warm, person-to-person relationship which exists at its deepest level in the family is the most important factor in the development of the person. Finally, Catholic schools and houses of formation are only supplemental to the role of the family.

From this plateau of perspective it is now possible to offer briefly 10 guidelines to parents to assist them to most fruitfully exercise their crucial role in effectively fostering religious vocations.

GUIDELINE 1—Bend every effort to provide the richest possible home life for the child or youth.

It is interesting to see that many of the forward-looking proposals on seminary transformation emanating from both European and American students of the problem have suggested that religious houses of

formation be restructured so as to be more closely based on a homelike setting. Thus, it has been advocated that instead of large, impersonal dormitories and common rooms such as refectories, the religious house be divided into small units simulating a family atmosphere. Indeed, it has been proposed that an actual family reside in each unit. The basic reason for such proposals is quite simple: These advanced seminary educators realize that there is nothing like a rich, homelike atmosphere to best promote personality development, and hence most likely to nurture a religious vocation.

Love Must Be Personalized

A rich home life is characterized first and foremost by personalized love. This is not the type of institutionalized love of which the Baroness de Hueck once wrote, the type of love which puts a dollar in the poor box and then hurries away. A family, Fathers Hagmaier and Kennedy have reminded us, is a place where a person can dare to be himself. In a family, a person is loved for what he is, in the nakedness of his faults and virtues. Acts done within the family context are performed person-to-person, and love, like all other family activities, almost of necessity is personalized.

The Council decree on the priesthood clearly states this pivotal role of love in the sacerdotal ministry: "Priests have been placed in the midst of the laity to lead them to the unity of charity, 'loving one another with fraternal love, eager to give one another precedence' (Rom. 12:10)."

It is within the context of the home that there must first grow such a charity which will transform the effective priest or religious. For, indeed, if such charity is not planted and cultivated in the home it is unlikely that it will descend like a stray windblown

seed onto the soil of adolescence or adulthood. As was said earlier, the Catholic school or religious house is only supplemental to the family. It can build only on what the family has already provided. The school or religious house is not a miracle worker.

Life Adjustment

An important result of a rich home life is the development of a well-adjusted and integrated personality in the child. Research investigation upon research investigation has disclosed that the priestly and religious lives attract to their ranks more than their proportionate share of mentally unbalanced persons. This is to say that the clerical or religious life tends to have a particularly strong appeal to many persons not enjoying normal mental health. (An important point to keep in mind in this connection, of course, is the obvious fact that there is a vast difference in saying that the religious life attracts a disproportionate percentage of abnormal personalities and asserting that most or even many priests and religious are victims of mental or emotional imbalance. The overwhelming majority of priests and religious are in excellent mental health. Detractors of the clerical and religious life who maintain that most or even a sizable minority of priests and religious are mentally ill simply do not know the research studies.)

The awareness of the special attraction which the clerical or religious life has for emotionally disturbed persons has prompted alert religious superiors to begin to utilize standardized psychological tests to screen out those candidates who deviate substantially from the normal. Some priest-psychologists and sister-psychologists have either developed their own psychological measurement instruments or have modified existing tests of proven value to make these evaluation devices appropriate to seminary or novitiate candidates.

In this entire problem of mental health and the religious life, the principle of the religious house being supplemental to the home once again intrudes itself. The seminary or novitiate has every right to expect the home to play its part in vocation development teamwork. It is in the home, particularly in early life, that mental health is either fostered or eroded. One of the most effective ways in which the home can play its indispensable role as a partner in the nurturing of religious vocations is to promote optimum mental health. This can be done most effectively by affording the child a rich home life with deep, warm, personal relationships suffusing all home activities.

GUIDELINE 2—Gradually expose the child to the world around him.

No child or youth learns himself directly. Rather, he learns himself by seeing himself bounced off other persons and things. Hence, the wider the range of his contacts with a broad scope of reality, the richer person he will become—and the clearer will be his vocational goals.

The late beloved pontiff, Pius XII, remarked that “the isolated life is likely to restrict a larger view of the world.” A nearsighted or narrow vision of reality has particularly harmful effects on priests and religious. More than anyone else, these consecrated apostles have to carry the world in their hearts. The family must not be a shelter for the growing child, but an avenue which positively promotes his growth toward personal and, hence, vocational fulfillment. The antiquated view that a religious vocation can best be nurtured by sheltering it from “the contamination and infection of the world” has, in the main, been discarded. “The world is charged with the grandeur of God,” as Gerard Manley Hopkins so beautifully ex-

pressed it. A sheltered life does not nourish the beginnings of a religious vocation, but cripples it to the point where such a person, on reaching adulthood, often lacks the personal maturity to insert Christ in a world which though objectively real is but a confused blur to him or her. Apostleship demands "integralness," the meshing of the divine and the human.

Teilhard de Chardin dedicated his spiritual masterpiece, *The Divine Milieu*, thus: "For those who love the world." The world can only be saved, said Paul VI, by first loving it. And the priest or religious cannot love what he or she does not know.

The Vatican Council clearly recognized the crucial importance of judicious exposure to reality when it stated in its decree on the adaptation and renewal of the religious life: "Religious institutes should promote among their members an adequate knowledge of the social conditions of the times they live in and of the needs of the Church."

Holiness Through Action

Dag Hammarskjold, a contemplative by temperament and an expediter by profession, wrote that in our modern age the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action. This is particularly true of the priest and the religious exercising their apostolate in the world. It is even true for monks. Many of the world's most profound and influential theories of social revolt have historically originated in the writings of monastic scholars.

Christ once described His Apostles as the leaven in the lump of dough. If the leaven remains outside the dough, surely the lump cannot be raised to fullness. The leaven must be inside the dough, working on it from the within of the thing. Modern priests and religious, called by Christ to be apostles, must of necessity be the leaven of the world, must incarnate themselves at every moment into the social order. Unlike

the 19th century which exhorted priests and religious to be in the world but not of it, the 20th century bids these consecrated apostles to be both in the world and of it as well. Only then can they be truly relevant.

GUIDELINE 3—Encourage the child or youth to be self-reliant.

The vast body of research on American Catholics tends to support the assertion that Catholics are typically overdole and lack a well-developed initiative muscle. Many reasons have been suggested for this phenomenon, including residual Jansenism, an authoritarian clergy, a formalistic conception of Catholicism and an overexaggerated concept of otherworldliness.

If Catholic laymen tend to be typically unaggressive, then clerical and religious training seems to have reinforced and developed these qualities. One carefully conducted research study by a priest-sociologist of boys who spent many years in minor and major seminaries found that upon withdrawal from the seminary prior to ordination, these young men commonly stated that they felt that their initiative had atrophied. A sister-psychologist made an interesting research investigation of two groups of matched girls. One group entered the convent, the other remained in the lay state. A number of years later, this sister gave each group a psychological test and discovered that the girls who entered the convent perceived themselves as more compliant and docile, less healthily aggressive, and less worthy as human beings than did the girls who pursued careers in the temporal order.

Developing Initiative

It is almost universally agreed by modern Catholics that the consecrated apostolate urgently needs priests and religious of dynamism, initiative, open-mindedness and vitality. Priests and religious are

being called upon not simply to be "where the action is," but indeed to cause that very action. Once again, parents cannot shunt this responsibility solely to seminary and novitiate. Forward-looking seminaries and novitiates are even now attempting to inaugurate responsibility programs in their institutions. But these institutions are limited in their attempts by the type of boy or girl they receive from the parents. Religious houses cannot remake an overdodile, toadyistic personality into a forceful, aggressive apostle.

At home, parents should encourage by every device the development rather than the suppression of the child's achievement drive. Little programs can be started in the home in which the child is gradually given an increasing measure both of responsibility and of the incentive to fulfill this responsibility in the best possible manner. Cooperative activities with the teachers at school toward the development of initiative can prove effective.

GUIDELINE 4—Help the child and youth grow into a rich emotional life.

One of the most essential elements of a full, well-developed personality is a rich emotional life. It is quite difficult, if not impossible, for a person to be a truly effective priest, religious, or layman if he or she has stunted or atrophied emotions. Emotions constitute an indispensable sector of human fulfillment because they are simultaneously a crucial avenue to attaining knowledge and also a fruitful means of release of tension. Only those persons who hold an exaggerated view of the role of the intellect will deny that a person learns things by emotional experiences which cannot be learned in any other manner. Angels have intellects, but not emotions. Humans possess both intellect and emotions. The priesthood, brother-

hood and sisterhood need complete human beings. The angels will take care of the pastoral needs of angels; the pastoral needs of human beings can be met only by other human beings.

Jansenism was a 17th-century Church heresy which wreaked much the same havoc in Catholicism as Puritanism did in Protestantism. Jansenism flourished particularly in France and Ireland, and from these countries it spread to the United States. There is still a strong, residual influence of Jansenism in American Catholicism. One area where this Jansenistic influence can be strongly seen is the way in which Catholic parents and Catholic schools typically regard the emotions. Quite commonly, Catholics harbor a strong fear, or at least an uneasy wariness toward the emotions. One example: When children or adolescents enter a church, their parents immediately tell them to "hush up," to suppress their emotions, and to assume an attitude of external "reverence" which is quite foreign to the emotional and concrete nature of young boys and girls. Are emotions somehow irreligious?

Jesus Used Emotions!

Jesus was a perfect man, which meant that among other things He was an emotional man. He did not suppress His emotions in church or anywhere else for that matter. (After all, He is church, since He is the Real Presence.) Jesus experienced—and manifested—deep sadness when He wept openly over the tomb of His good friend, Lazarus. He displayed righteous, open anger in His dealings with the money-changers at the Jewish temple, intensesness with His traveling companions on the road to Emmaus, and a joy brimming all over when He appeared to the Apostles in the upper room on the night of His Resurrection. If parents do not permit emotions such as these and others to grow and mature in their children,

how can the Church expect other Christs from such families? How often do Catholic parents scold their children for crying over some misfortune ("It's not manly to cry, Johnny!"); for being angry at some injustice ("Control your temper, Joe, it's not gentlemanly!"); for being intense ("It will raise your blood pressure, Jane!")?

Of course self-discipline or self-control is a crucial ingredient in attaining emotional maturity, and family life should be oriented toward this goal. But a tight and total system of external controls over the growing child or youth does not encourage true self-control. The contemporary concept of self-control is the ideal of the strong, silent, nonemotional type. This notion was typified by the mottoes which appeared on the Nazi school walls for the inspiration of German youth: "Don't cry! Remain proud and silent!" Such an ideal is not educationally sound, but false and morbid. Self-control means satisfactory adjustment to one's particular emotions (which vary according to different persons) for fruitful living. Control means the proper, effective use of emotions, rather than blocking or stopping them. Emotional control is not the same as emotional maturity.

Room for Expression

A home which wishes to promote emotional maturity must be pervaded by an atmosphere which is open and permissive. The climate of the home should be expansive, not repressive, so that the child or youth may feel free to express his whole self. Revealing one's total personality is important not merely so that the parents can know what is going on within the child, but even more crucially because this unfolding of self affords the child or youth the opportunity of externalizing his or her personality, something which is vital for solidifying past growth and for developing to the next stage of maturity.

The Second Vatican Council's decree on the renewal of the religious life states that emotional maturity is necessary for a successful candidate for this life. A priest or religious must live a rich life of the emotions, first, for his or her individual perfection as a human person, and, second, for the perfection of his or her apostolic endeavors. Modern youth and young adults lead a life which is deeply emotional—as anyone who listens to contemporary popular music knows. Hence the priest or religious who wishes to be relevant to youth and to young adults, to be “with it,” must not merely *know about* emotions, but *know* them directly by living a mature, deep emotional life. Such a rich emotional life is the fruit only of a branch which was planted and cultivated in the original family setting.

GUIDELINE 5—Realize that problems are a normal and indeed a necessary part of growing up.

Problems are always developmental, and only sometimes moral. Without problems, a child or youth cannot grow up. Many psychologists hold to the theory of “developmental tasks,” a theory which maintains that before a child can attain the next stage of maturity he must first successfully accomplish a certain broad “task” which a particular stage of his development imposes upon him. This so-called “task” is really a problem imposed upon everyone by virtue of the person's biological nature, his psychological nature, his spiritual nature, and finally by the culture in which he finds himself. Thus, for example, one developmental task for children and youth is to achieve independence from their parents. To do this, adolescents diligently strive to forge their own independent self-identity by adopting dress, speech, habits, and culture quite ostentatiously different from their

parents and from adults in general. Achieving independence in externals to them constitutes a visible manifestation of their striving to achieve independence in the inner temple of their own personalities.

Growing up, then, necessitates having problems. Parents should not try to suppress a child's problems, or shelter their offspring so that they glide over these problems without ever facing up to them. Rather, the home should provide the warmly acceptant and supportive arena whereby the child or youth works out his problems openly. In working out his problems, the child or youth will make mistakes; the home accepts such mistakes without unnecessarily punishing the boy or girl. It is in this that the home has a unique advantage over society, for society customarily punishes the child for the mistakes he makes in solving those problems which his own personality, and indeed that very society, impose on him.

“Problem” Not Same as Guilt

Catholic parents should be very careful not to equate the existence of problems with moral guilt. Problems as such have no relation to moral guilt whatever. Nor should Catholic parents equate their child's inadequate or even “false” solutions to problems with moral guilt. A sin exists only when *all* three of the following conditions are met: first, that the deed is objectively sinful; second, when the deed is recognized and admitted as sinful by the person doing the deed; third, when all the circumstances and concrete context of the deed are such that the objective nature of the deed is not substantially altered. In the case of developmental problems, particularly with adolescents, it is quite common that the second and especially the third conditions are absent, thus reducing or commonly eliminating any guilt from what might seem at first sight to be a morally evil action. Thus, for example, in forging his

psychological independence from his parents, an adolescent might have recourse to vulgar or even obscene language. If—as usually is the case—this language is the youth's way of exhibiting his independence, then such language is not sinful because it bears no conscious relation in the youth's mind with sexually impure thoughts or words. Rather, use of this kind of language is directly a function of his developmental need to attain independence. Parents should understand this and, instead of punishing their child, should preferably provide the climate whereby a more acceptable manner of exerting his independence can be achieved, for example, assisting the youth to get a Saturday job where he can earn his own money and thus feel independent.

Scrupulosity

Two major youth problems which worry Catholic parents, and which have direct bearing on the cultivation of successful vocations to the clerical and religious life, are scrupulosity and doubts of faith. Scrupulosity has been shown by research to be a common phenomenon among Catholic adolescents, particularly those boys and girls having a religious nature. Scrupulosity is not the sign of a well-developed moral sense, as is sometimes supposed. Rather, scrupulosity is a form of neurosis known as obsessive-compulsive. Indeed, as Nolan has remarked, scrupulous persons are not normally sorry for their alleged transgressions. It has been shown that the three major causes of scrupulosity are a rigid and sheltered home training, a legalistic attitude toward religion, and a moral pride engendered by families which delight in regarding themselves as "good" and "pious." Unless a family develops a psychologically healthy tolerance for children and youth in the working out of their problems, parents can easily induce scrupulosity in their offspring. From the religious-

vocation viewpoint, scrupulosity is quite serious for two reasons. First, scrupulosity has been shown to be a major reason why a young person who would otherwise strongly desire to become a priest or religious declines to enter a seminary or novitiate. Such youths think themselves "too evil" or "not worthy" of becoming priests or religious—forgetting that the 12 men whom Jesus picked for His little seminary were not all models of perfect virtue. Second, scrupulosity is a terrible affliction, both personally and in the apostolate, for not a few priests and religious.

Doubts of Faith

Doubts of faith constitute a second major problem area occurring in later childhood and adolescence. Yet such doubts constitute an indispensable part of maturation. They are part of the natural process of growing up, since an individual's concept of his religion must increase in direct proportion to the expansion of his self-image and of his view of reality. The Catholic religion is not closed to doubts, for then it would cease to require faith of its membership. As Hans Küng has observed, doubt is the shadow cast by faith.

To be sure, a lack of doubts rather than their presence is what is unnatural. Maturity demands the shedding of a childish form of Catholicism, and the elimination of the marginal elements of religion, particularly superstitious accumulations. If an adult has never experienced doubts of faith during late childhood and adolescence, it is problematical whether he has ever shed the baby skin of a childish religion and grown to the fullness of a vibrant, mature religious commitment. The modern Church cannot afford to have priests or religious who have a childish faith. Such persons have never wrestled with the angel, as Jacob did, have never come to grips with the essence and the mystery which constitutes the core of their

religion. Further, in their apostolate with mature adults, as well as with children and youth who are working out their religious maturation, such priests and religious are irrelevant. Bishops and religious superiors want priests, brothers and sisters of mature faith, and have every right to expect that Catholic families will supply them with such candidates.

The ideal family, like the ideal seminary or religious house of formation, recognizes that sheltering a youth from problems is itself to induce a greater problem. Thus Bishop Carter, a Canadian educator, stated the following in his introduction to the decree on Christian education of the Second Vatican Council: "The stricture of the *Imitation of Christ*—'Son, in many things it behooveth thee to be ignorant'—may have been productive of ascetic monasticism, but it was hardly the proper norm of a 20th-century Christian."

GUIDELINE 6—Support the youth in his efforts to forge his own personalized code of morality.

A person's conception of himself is not inherited biologically, but rather is evolved by himself as he goes about living and reflecting on his own interaction with the world around him. Because this so-called "self-concept" is psychological both in its origin and in its nature, many contemporary professional educators and psychologists regard it as the most important influence on a person's behavior. A person thinks and behaves as he perceives himself and reality to be, not as he really is or as objective reality really is. This does not minimize objective reality, or embrace a relativistic outlook on life. Rather, it states a crucial psychological fact, a fact which everyone has experienced in his or her relationship with other people.

This primacy of the subjective has deep roots both in traditional Catholic philosophy and current Church theology. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the person, not his parents or his teachers, is the primary proximate cause of his own learning. "All learning proceeds according to the mode of the learner," states the Patron of the Schools. In other words, from a psychological point of view, each person forges his own concept of morality and his own relationship to morality.

The Second Vatican Council repeatedly reinforces this important point. The Decree on Religious Freedom states that each person must be free to find his own religious relationship with God. The Decree on Education states that "children and young people have a right to be encouraged to weigh moral values with an upright conscience, and to embrace them by personal choice." Commenting on this passage of the decree, Bishop Carter remarks: "The theme of personal responsibility which has dominated so many of the deliberations of Vatican II comes out very clearly here. Note the insistence on children and young people and their development in contradistinction to a previous attitude of education as if it were imposed from above."

Not a Path to Safe Living

Like the Incarnation, the priesthood and the religious life constitute a great adventure and a supreme risk. The consecrated apostleship is not a path to safe living. Nor is the consecrated apostolate a consecrated mediocrity. Rather, priests, brothers and sisters risk all to gain others for Christ. On a deeper level, by embracing what is a vocationally circumscribed life, priests and religious risk not finding themselves if their vocational choice, or the reasons for that choice, are incorrect or inadequate. And, finally, the dynamism and chance-taking, which are indis-

pensable if priests and religious are to exercise a fruitful apostolate in what is often a world uncongenial to fundamental Christian values, demand that great personal spiritual risks be taken by these consecrated apostles. A person who has not forged for himself his own expansive framework of beliefs and morality, but who has simply received these from authority figures without questioning is in great peril in the modern apostolate. Either his apostolate will crumble, or he himself will.

Neither the home, seminary, nor novitiate should unduly restrict or hem in a youth's experiencing. Opportunities must be provided for exploration, even in the moral sphere, within the spacious context of fruitful living and the broad wishes of the Church. The home should not constitute a narrow, predetermined, directional path, but rather a free, unchartered sweep which is supportive of any worthwhile personal exploration. Such free exploration of necessity involves risks on the part of the child or youth. But as Cardinal Suhard has observed, "there is no human action without dangers or setbacks." Children and youth must be given the freedom to explore the contours both of their own personalities and of the external world—even if this means, as it often does, the freedom to make mistakes. The role of the home is not to act as a shelter to shield the youth from all errors and mistakes, or even from sin, but to help him grow and live fruitfully. In Mounier's words, "the child must be educated as a person, along the path of personal experience and apprenticeship in free actions."

Will It Be Their Downfall?

It might be wondered whether such an expansive attitude toward youth will tend to lead to their moral downfall. This would not appear to be the case. Every person has an inner tendency toward growth and maturity. The basic nature of the human person,

whether youth or adult, is good, positive and constructive. Freedom to explore and to take risks, to forge his own moral code against the broad backdrop of the Church, acts only to free the positive, constructive forces within the youth. When he is free from defensiveness, anxieties and fears, his actions inevitably move in a positive, fulfilling direction. Man was created good; he fell, but not substantially so, with Adam's sin. But most important, he rose triumphant with the Resurrection of the new Adam. Responsibility essentially presupposes freedom, Von Hildebrand once wrote. The new wave of freedom washing over religious communities, with its concomitant increase in personal responsibility, necessitates that parents send to seminaries and novitiates young men and women tutored in freedom. No longer is the Church or the religious life content to hand down rules to youth from on high; it prefers to give them both the latitude and the supportive aids whereby young people can forge their own uniquely and exquisitely personal relationships to God and to the universe.

Youth are going to develop their own moral codes, whether parents like it or not. As Father McGucken, S.J., once wrote, objectives of conduct cannot be obtained by irrational, mechanical drill. Nor can they be obtained by parental command. Parents should gently help youth, rather than attempt directly or indirectly to coerce them. Youth need strong hands on the wheel, not a heavy foot on the brake. The consecrated apostleship requires a broad representation of individual free men with complementary (but not essentially conflicting) moral perceptions, so that they can effectively minister to the wide spectrum of human needs.

GUIDELINE 7—Assist the child and youth to attain a proper, balanced concept of sex and its place in his or her life.

A person achieves his or her natural and supernatural perfection not as a human being, but as a *male* human being or as a *female* human being. In other words, a person can attain fulfillment only through his masculinity or through her femininity. Any attempt to live as if one were a neuter gender is a denial of a basic, concrete fact of one's existence.

Because priests and religious lead a celibate life, this does not mean that they cease being men or women. Both sides of the debate on the wisdom of clerical celibacy miss the heart of the matter. Celibacy is not really the main issue; the fundamental point is the relationship between priest and women. All men, priests included, need a deep relationship with a woman. But this is a far different thing than asserting that all men, priests included, need to get married. It is quite possible, and indeed very important, for a man to have a deep relationship with a woman, a relationship which is sexual but not genital. It is a Freudian error to equate sexual and genital. Genital is only one aspect or sphere of sexual. (This entire discussion deliberately excludes the so-called Platonic relationship between man and woman because such a relationship is a psychological impossibility.)

If all the world's population were male, there would be no men left. Conversely, if every person in the world were a female, there would be no women left. A man can only become a full man by having deep contact with a woman or women, and a woman can only realize her womanhood by having a profound relationship with a man or men.

Priestly or religious celibacy, then, does not demand that the person renounce sex, but only the geni-

tal aspect of it. The Church wants real men and women as its consecrated apostles, not sexless individuals. In its decree on the renewal of the religious life, Vatican II noted that religious should be trained to make the celibate life consecrated to God part of the richness of their whole personality. To be sexless is to die as a human being, rather than to enrich the whole personality.

Perhaps no developmental period in a person's life is more highly characterized by an intense search for one's masculine or feminine role than is adolescence. It is one of the imperative tasks of the home to assist the youth in his or her search. In adolescence, for the first time, a boy is crucially and fundamentally aware that he is a male human being; the girl, that she is a female human being. But this awareness is vague, and the youth is beset with anxieties and doubts. The boy and the girl are propelled to find out what the limits and contours of their newfound personalities are really like. They need to explore, and they will gratify this need, no matter what. If the home does not positively assist the youth in this exploration, he or she will do it unaided.

Association with members of the opposite sex is the natural and most liberative type of sexual exploration. During adolescence, youths begin to find that companionship with members of the opposite sex brings forth new personality traits they never realized they possessed.

For Potential Celibates?

It may be objected that while companionship is wholesome for youths who will someday marry, it is inadvisable for boys and girls who will live celibate lives as priests or religious. Temptations will be put in their way, and vocations will be lost. These arguments, while well intentioned, nonetheless are inadequate. First of all, it is better that a potential voca-

tion is lost through contact with members of the opposite sex before ordination or religious profession than afterwards. Second, and more important, companionship with the opposite sex while one is forging his or her own self-identity is necessary for total personality growth. Without such social experiences the quality of the person's priestly or religious vocation will be seriously impaired, and the burden of coming to a true realization of one's sexual self will be placed on a person whose celibate state does not allow for the same kinds of sexual relationship possible in a teen-ager in the lay state.

Regrettably, many Catholic parents (and educators too) still view companionship with the opposite sex as primarily or exclusively preparatory to choosing a marriage partner. On the contrary, such companionship has for its primary purpose the development of each person, the bringing out in the boy his masculine self and in the girl her feminine self through interaction with another human being whose personality complements his or her own. Hence reasonably frequent dating by Catholic boys and girls, even by those who are thinking of becoming priests and religious, is usually desirable from a developmental point of view. But to be effectual, such companionship with members of the opposite sex should take in a wide range of persons. Steady dating, except in cases when the "steady" serves as a needed ballast for rejection at home, is usually unwise as it inhibits that full growth which can come only from contacts with a broad range of members of the opposite sex. Further, for the future priest or religious, steady dating is commonly unwise because his or her relationships after ordination or profession will be with many members of the opposite sex, not exclusively with one.

Parents, then, should encourage their offspring to

date when in the upper grades of high school. They should make their homes warm and pleasant, places where their children will wish to bring their friends of both sexes. Parents should organize parties where youths can enjoy themselves, rather than maintain an aloof posture which forces their offspring to have their own "parties" at a roadhouse or drive-in theater. Girls should receive special attention from their parents in this entire matter, because the research has shown that accurate perception of one's sexual role is more difficult for girls than for boys in contemporary American society. Research has also shown that graduates from single-gender Catholic high schools (particularly all-girl schools) are less socially mature than graduates from coeducational high schools. In cities not sufficiently progressive to have coeducational Catholic high schools, parents must take special efforts to promote social maturity in their children. Every boy and girl, whether entering the lay or religious life, must accept and live his masculine self or her feminine self as completely as possible. Entering a celibate life does not in any fashion require the abandonment of one's masculine or feminine role, but rather the renunciation of only one aspect or function of that role. A person's sexual essence is not and cannot be abdicated; what is given up is only one of its functions.

GUIDELINE 8—Regard the priestly or religious life primarily as a normal career choice, rather than as a thunderbolt from God on high.

A vocation is a developmental phenomenon, not a Pauline flash of lightning striking the young man or woman off the high horse of a previously made vocational commitment. A vocation develops within the ongoing context of total personality maturation.

Grace suffuses nature; it does not transform nature without first having carefully laid the natural foundations for such a transformation. This is particularly true in the flowering of the bud of a vocation to any career, including that of the consecrated apostleship.

In the development of personality there occurs an accompanying growth in vocational awareness. The young child, for example, might wish to become a policeman because Officer Kelly at the school crossing looks so nice in his dark blue uniform with its shiny badge. But as the years glide by the boy realizes that there is also the dark side to a policeman's vocation, and that the patrolman's career is not for him. In school the little girl sees Sister Mary Grace, full of vitality, a benign authority figure with a special mysterious costume. And little Sally wants to grow up to be like Sister Mary Grace.

Research studies have shown that the most fertile sources of religious vocations do not come from vocation posters or from vocation exhibits. Indeed, an almost negligible percentage of vocations to the religious life originate in such sources. The overwhelming number of religious vocations come from a young person identifying with a cleric or religious, either from personal contact in school or in a direct apostolic situation. However, not infrequently such identification is only fixed on the positive side of the life of the priest or religious. The dark side is often hidden from view, and so the identification does not form the whole picture. As a result, there often occurs a clerical or religious romanticism, or what vocational educators and psychologists term a "fantasy choice." It is in no way downgrading the excellence of a clerical or religious vocation to suggest that this vocation be considered as another type of career choice. The priesthood or religious life has a certain inherent appeal to some and not to others primarily because

such a career is well suited to the amplification and extension of some persons' fulfillment and not to others'.

"Fantasy Choice"

Since religion is a career, the aspirant to that life must know all sides and facets of that career. The "fantasy choice" mentioned previously occurs because a youth looks only at the glamorous side of the clerical or religious career. When he or she comes to the seminary or novitiate, and progressively matures away from a fantasy choice toward a reality choice, such a person typically leaves the religious house.

A home which does not insure that a child's career choice is based on reality and not on fantasy places too much burden on the seminary or novitiate. These ecclesiastical institutions are places for career exploration, to be sure; however, parents should not abuse this experimental situation by failing to send seminaries and novitiates youths who possess the readiness to vocationally explore within the context of a reality choice rather than of a fantasy choice.

Conscientious parents who wish to nurture a reality career choice in their children will avoid placing in the hands of their offspring vocation material of a glamorous variety. These parents will also work closely with priests or religious in the vineyard, so that with the aid of these career professionals, the youths will be able to come to an awareness of the total demands of the clerical and religious lifeway.

GUIDELINE 9—Assist the youth to come to the awareness that there is an enormous difference between lifeway and lifework.

The term "lifeway" designates the broad vocational categories of priest, brother, sister, or layman. On the other hand, the term "lifework" designates

a particular career, for example, teacher, nurse, writer, missionary, and so forth. As can be immediately seen, lifeway and lifework are two different vocational thrusts. The clerical or religious vocation (like the lay vocation) involves simultaneously a lifeway and a lifework. Thus, for example, Father Hannon, Father Hiltz, Father Caulfield, and Father Catanzaro all share the exact same lifeway, that of priest. But each has a different lifework: Father Hannon is a chaplain in a mental hospital, Father Hiltz is a teacher in a Catholic high school, Father Caulfield is a missionary in Bolivia, and Father Catanzaro is pastor of St. Richard's Parish.

Confusion or blurring of lifeway and lifework can easily cause youths to refuse to enter the clerical or religious life, or when once in the seminary or novitiate to withdraw prior to ordination or profession. Before entering the diocesan priesthood or a religious institute, a boy or girl must be attracted to both the lifeway and the lifework(s) of that diocese or institute. A girl who does not wish to become a nurse should not become a member of a religious institute whose lifework includes nursing, however attractive that institute might appear to the girl.

The careful delineation of specific lifeworks within the clerical or religious lifeway has become increasingly difficult in recent years when dioceses or religious institutes have taken up apostolates outside the scope of their original mission. Thus, for example, the lifework of direct sacramental mediator has been the traditional lifework of the diocesan priest; however, in recent years in America, the lifework of teaching in and the administration of schools has all but relegated this crucial lifework to a minor position in many dioceses. Many men who entered the diocesan priesthood to take up the directly sacramental and pastoral lifework now find themselves

teaching, and hence are not as vocationally satisfied or happy as they would have been were they in the lifework of their choosing.

A One-Way Street

Both lifeway and lifework are crucial for satisfactory vocational adjustment. A priest or religious cannot be a vocational schizophrenic, liking the lifeway but not the lifework, liking Mass in the morning, devotions in the evening, and disliking everything in between. Lifework, like lifeway, is directly related to personal development. A man or woman grows as a person in and through both lifeway and lifework. Offering up a distasteful lifework for a "higher intention" is poor theology precisely because it is poor psychology. Some of the forward-looking religious institutes and dioceses are beginning to realize this, and are providing maximum freedom of choice in lifeworks to their members.

In working to foster a clerical and religious vocation in a child or youth, parents ought to help their youngster to clarify his tentative choice of both lifeway and lifework. It is not sufficient for a youth to look at the clerical or religious lifeway and ignore the lifeworks within that lifeway. Should he be interested in the lifeway of priest or religious, he should be placed in contact with a broad spectrum of lifeworks as represented by the entire range of diocesan clergy and religious institutes. Many aspirants to the priesthood or religious life who withdrew from seminary or novitiate might have been priests, brothers, or sisters today if their vocational horizons had been initially broadened by parents who had helped the child to choose the correct lifework within the broader lifeway.

GUIDELINE 10—Place the religious vocation in its proper perspective.

The great Apostle Paul has a beautiful passage about there being only one service of God but many ways of exercising this service. Some young men and young women enter the service of God in the lay state by teaching, others by being accountants, others by being economists, others by being musicians, and so forth. Still others enter the service of God by becoming priests and religious. Who serves God best remains hidden in the mind of God. Indeed, it is an idle question to speculate on who serves God best; the real question is to serve God, and to let God worry about whatever qualitative differences might possibly exist.

Hence, it is so very crucial for parents not to exaggerate the importance and life of a priest or religious. So often vocation posters appear on church or school walls reading: "Do you wish to give your life to God? Then be a priest, a brother, or a sister." Yet do not lay persons in a host of careers also give their lives to God — totally to God?

A boy or girl who becomes a priest or religious solely because he or she feels this is the only way to give one's life totally to God will have his or her illusions — and possibly even more — shattered when he or she later discovers Catholic laymen doing the same. Healthy clerical-lay relations can exist only if both clergy and laity perceive each other as full-fledged apostles, equal in dedication but differing only in formal consecration and perhaps in the specialization of the ministry.

Wise parents therefore nurture religious vocations realistically, within the spectrum of a wide array of careers by which their girl or boy can serve God.

Those parents whose children have manifested interest in the religious career should not be treated with any favoritism, much less with awe. Such treatment can easily lead to an exaggerated pride which can hamper the effectiveness of the consecrated apostle should he or she become a priest or religious.

CONCLUSION

The axis on which this pamphlet hopefully revolves is the supreme necessity for parents to establish a warm, loving, deep personal relationship with each of their children within the context of the home. Perhaps a little story can serve to summarize this basic theme. In a research study, two investigators removed infant monkeys from their mothers almost immediately after birth. These neonates were then presented with two objects. One, called the "hard mother," consisted of a sloping cylinder of wire netting with a nipple from which the newly born monkey might feed. The other object, termed the "soft mother," consisted of a cylinder made from foam rubber and terry cloth. Even when the newly born monkey received all its food from the hard mother, it clearly and increasingly preferred the soft mother. What is true of lower animals in this instance is doubtlessly all the more cogent for humans, that is, no amount of material reward can ever take the place of certain warm qualities which every person needs.

Throughout its history the Church has vigorously fought every heresy which attempted to dehumanize Christ. Guardini once said that the Gospel of St. John is the most divine because it is the most human. So also it can be said that the more human are Christ's

priests and religious, the more divine will be the fruits of their apostolate. Herein lies the tremendous responsibility of parents: to give seminaries and novitiates candidates whose humanness surpasses all expectation.

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