

**St. Agnes Guild Conference
Diocese of Grahamstown
Dale College, King Williams Town
1st July 2016**

Topic: Vocation and Spirituality

1. VOCATION

Oxford Dictionary defines vocation as: “A *strong feeling of suitability for a particular career or occupation*: - *Occupation such as nurse, teacher, priest, doctor, lawyer etc*”.

The Church definition of vocation:

- A summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action; especially: a divine call to the **religious** life.
- An entry into the priesthood or a **religious** order.

If you are looking for a simple definition of a vocation, the literal meaning of the word is a "**call**."

But a vocation is more than an ordinary call. A vocation is a call from God, and anyone who has felt God's call knows that the process is anything but simple. While most people think of a vocation as what they are called to do in life, it is important to understand that the first and most important call from God is a call to be - the universal call to holiness.

2. CLARIFICATION

Your vocation is not the same as your career or profession. However, there is an overlap between a vocation and a profession.

A career or a profession is something that you have in order to support yourself and to contribute in some way to the good of the society. You don't need to believe in God to choose a career or a profession. A person can pick, choose and switch profession freely depending on his/her preferences, strengths or circumstances. A profession or a career always has a horizontal dimension.

When we talk about vocation, we introduce a vertical dimension in our life, which is God. It is no longer 'what do I prefer?' but rather 'What does God want me to be?' A vocation is not something that you can switch like a profession or a career.

For example, a person may work in retail sales because he/she has what it takes to sell a product, to establish customer relations, to follow directions and to work with a team to accomplish daily tasks. That same person's vocation may be to be a single person, a wife or a husband, to be a religious brother or sister, to be a deacon or priest.

3. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE FOUR SPECIFIC VOCATIONS

We live out the invitation '*to be holy*' differently depending on which vocation we have chosen. The four specific vocations are:

1. single life,
2. married life,
3. consecrated life or
4. the ordained ministry.

Each vocation is a call to follow Christ closely.

For someone who has **chosen a single life**, even though they have not formally taken the three vows of *poverty*, *chastity* and *obedience*, yet they make a personal commitment to put their freedom at the service of others in their work and prayer. And in doing so, they strive to follow Christ in their daily lives.

For a **married Christian couple**, they follow Christ by giving themselves to each other completely and without any reservation, promising to love each other faithfully for the rest of their lives, sharing their joys and sufferings in whatever circumstances life brings them. They express their love through their sexual union, which brings them together in the closest intimacy and opens them to the gift of new life.

For someone who has **chosen the consecrated life**, their path of following Christ is through their vows. They are called to live as Christ lived; to model their lives on the life of Jesus, making their hearts freer for prayer and service.

For those who have **chosen the ordained ministry**, through sacramental ordination, they share in the priesthood of Christ in a special way. Their very beings are transfigured so that they can represent Christ the Good Shepherd for God's people and Christ as the Head of the Church.

They not only offer their own lives to the God, as all Christians do, but they also stand before the Church and minister to the faithful as Christ '*in person*.' Thus, when they teach with the authority of the Church then Christ teaches; when they absolve sins in the sacrament of Penance then Christ forgives; when they offer the Sacrifice of the

Eucharist then Christ offers that Sacrifice; when they love, support and care for God's people then Christ is present with his people.

5. DIFFERENT YET THE SAME

The lifestyle and demands of each particular vocation is very different but there are some similarities between them. Each vocation is a commitment to love in a certain way. The object of every vocation is God. It is not building a better society, renewing the Church, having a family, fulfilling yourself, helping people or confronting new challenges. All these things may be involved in a vocation but the primary objective is to love God.

Each vocation challenges us to live our faith more deeply and to follow Christ more closely. Each vocation, if it is lived generously and faithfully, will then involve times of lasting happiness and reward but also suffering and sacrifice. Finally, it is important not to compare the value of different vocations but to appreciate the value of each one and to discover which one is right for you.

6. SPIRITUALITY

Oxford Christian Church dictionary explain Spirituality as *“a vague term now used to refer both to people’s subjective practice and experience of their religion, and to the spiritual exercises and beliefs which individuals have regarding their personal relationship with God. It is usual to regard, “prayer, meditation, contemplation, and mysticism as major factors in spirituality.”*

The Spiritual life is the whole of one's life insofar as it is motivated and determined by the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Jesus. Spirituality is not only exclusive to a certain denomination or parish; no one has a monopoly over the Spirit of God.

7. ANGLICAN SPIRITUALITY

Anglican spirituality is corporate, liturgical and sacramental. We also appeal to Scripture, tradition and reason.

That is why, even though the Bible is so central to Anglican spirituality and is read extensively and regularly and serially in the office (evening & morning) and the Eucharist liturgy, the bible per se is not the basis of Anglican spirituality. The bible itself is never, purely and exclusively, the basis of any spirituality, even spiritualities which would think of themselves a biblical.

Anglican Spirituality is grounded in the ongoing corporate, liturgical life of the church participated in by lay people as well as clergy, by those with occupations in the world as well as those committed to the monastic life.

Anglican spirituality arises out of the common prayer of a body of Christians who are united in their participation – through physical presence and liturgical dialogue and sacramental action.

It involves a corporate life whose times and *seasons*, *offices*, *ordinances*, *readings* and *sermons* are the means of corporate participation in and through Christ. Private

devotion, prayer and meditation on the part of individuals are supports for and means of putting oneself into and extensions of the ongoing corporate liturgical life of the church.

For many Anglicans especially those in seminary and monastic life, our Anglican Spirituality is shaped by the Benedictine Spirituality, which its central tenants are;

- Prayer
- Study
- Work

In all this, we profess to do them not for self-glorification but for God and other.

Vocation needs to be rooted in Spirituality, both of them cannot be forced on a person they should be an individual choice.

QUESTIONS

1. What is your Vocation or Calling?
2. What do you believe the church needs to do to make people especially women aware of their vocations?
3. How can your Guild assist you in living out your Calling.