



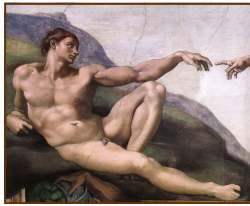
ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 1: "VOCATION, CHARISM & MISSION"

sheet 1

1. Vocation

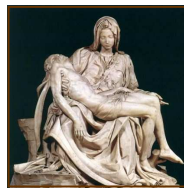
[1] The Call to Perfection



'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' [Gen 1.27]



'now he commands all men everywhere to repent' [Acts 17.30]



'many are called, but few are chosen' [Matt 22.14]



'You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' [Matt 5.48]

Vocation [Latin, vocare 'to call'] is:

General—to all mankind whose chief end is to love God and enjoy him for ever

Christian—to every believer to 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' [Matt 28.19]

Individual—to a person with a specific task 'for he is chosen instrument of mine' [Acts 9.15]

Vocation is not for our benefit, but for the benefit of others; not to be served, but to serve

God calls — Abraham [leave home], Gen 12.1-4; Moses [excuses], Exod 4.10-15; Samuel [confused], I Sam 3.1-9; Jeremiah [afraid to speak], Jer 1.4-9; Paul [persecutor], Acts 9.1-6

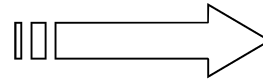
We see in Isaiah 6.1-13, the classic place of the call of God to the prophetic vocation, that the encounter with God elicits the feeling of total unworthiness [v 5], and cleansing [v 6f], an invitation to respond to the call [v 8], the giving of a specific task [v 9ff]. When this call to prophesy [in Christian terms, the call to participation in the work of Christ who is himself 'prophet, priest and king'] comes to an individual in a very real sense it follows the Isaiah example.

Francis: before the San Damiano



cross, hears the word, responds to the call, is given the commission, & acts.

'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' [Matt 19.21]



And to develop our reflection on 'vocation' we look at two Gospel passages:

Matt 19.16-26—the rich young man [The young man comes to Jesus, asks what he must do for eternal life; is told to keep the Law; says he has done that all his life; is then told 'if you would be **perfect...**'] This word 'perfect' is the key for in the Greek it is 'teleios', meaning 'complete/the finished article'. What Jesus demands here he does not demand of every Christian, but he does demand it of this man for whom God has an individual vocation. [He turns it down—and 'went away sorrowful']

Mk 5.1-20 & Lk 8.26-39—the Gerasene demoniac [should be read in conjunction with the previous passage in attempting to understand individual vocation]. Here, the man 'begged that we might be with him', but Jesus 'sent him away, saying, "Return to your own home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.' [The Greek for 'sent him away' is 'exeluthei' - the tense, indicating 'on a permanent basis', 'once and for all time']—he acted on his vocation for we are told 'he went away, proclaiming...'

In the case of the 'rich young man' this was individual vocation: God's project for him—to sell all and follow [and thereby be 'complete', 'fulfilled', 'perfect' ('as having nothing, yet possessing everything' II Cor 6.10)]

In the case of the 'Gerasene demoniac' the individual vocation: God's project for him was— to stay put, remain in the world, proclaim the message where you are [at home].

Vocation is always and for everyone a call to perfection

Thus, there is not a state of life, or ministry, that is "more perfect" since perfect is superlative, so nothing, logically, can be more complete than that

The gift of the Spirit makes God's ancient commandment to his people timely and possible: 'You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy' [Lev 19.2] To become holy seems a difficult goal, reserved for people who are quite exceptional, or suited to those who wish to remain apart from the life and culture of their own time. Instead, to become holy is a gift and a task, rooted in baptism and confirmation and entrusted to everyone in the Church in every age. It is a gift and a duty of lay people as well as Religious and sacred ministers, in the private realm as in public affairs, in the life of individuals as in that of families and communities. However, within this common vocation that calls everyone to be conformed not to this world but to God's will [Rom 12.2], there are different states of life and numerous vocations and missions. The gift of the Spirit is the basis of everyone's vocation. It is at the root of the consecrated ministries of the bishop, priest and deacon, who are at the service of ecclesial life. It is also he who forms and moulds the soul of those who are called to a life of special consecration, configuring them to Christ, chaste, poor and obedient. In the Spirit himself, who through the sacrament of marriage surrounds and consecrates the union of the spouses, the mission of parents, called to make the family the first fundamental expression of the Church, finds its strength. It is therefore **indispensable** for each one to seek and recognise day after day the long path on which the Lord is leading him to his personal encounter with him. Dear friends, question yourselves seriously about your vocation and be ready to answer the Lord who is calling you to take the place he has prepared for you from eternity.

