



The every-Christian call

By Ed Marciniak
NC News Service

Who has a vocation?

The answer is that we all do. Priest, homemaker and police officer, wife and husband, student and teacher.

Every Christian is asked to follow Jesus Christ, to bear witness to God's kingdom. A vocation is not the private property of a select few but a gift from God to all.

St. Paul announced the good news: "There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone." (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

Priests, Sisters, Brothers and lay missionaries find their vocation as

one of the church's "civil servants." But most Christians, as married or single laity, discover their vocation elsewhere.

In most instances, the laity's calling is to serve the world directly. By their baptism and confirmation, their vocation is to bring the message of the Gospel to the world.

The worst kind of unemployment, in my view, is to be without a sense of vocation. Such Christians fail to respond to God's invitation. Sunday religion is kept separate from work-filled weekdays. Only on Sunday are they accustomed to confronting the Gospel personally. Their orientation is toward a career, not a vocation.

On the other hand, many embrace the galvanizing truth that God's work is done through the

worldly vocation of a parent, public official, soldier, nurse, bookkeeper or musician. Holiness is to be found in the messiness and humdrum of daily living.

Not long ago, Martin Luther King III remarked to an audience of federal workers in Washington that if his father were alive today he would tell them that their work was a path to God:

"If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets as Michelangelo carved marble. Sweep streets as Shakespeare wrote plays. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven will have to say, 'Here lies a great street sweeper who did his job well.'"

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British mystery story writer Dorothy L. Sayers wrote of the carpenter's vocation:

"The very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables. (Attend) church by all means...but what use is all of that if in the very center of his life and occupation he is insulting God with bad carpentry?"

She continued: "No piety in the worker will compensate for any work that is not true to itself; for any work that is untrue to its own technique is a living lie."

Writing in the New York Times Magazine, Peter Shaffer, author of the play "Amadeus," said this about Mozart's vocation: "Wolfgang Amadeus was fitted...for one supreme mode of existence: to be the magic flute at the lips of God."

No less singular a vocation is the calling of a busy mother of five who says: "Most of the time, my Christian vocation is lived outside the doors of the parish church — in my family, my neighborhood or my part-time job...My world consists of births and deaths, deadlines and anniversaries, children seeking an encouraging word and neighbors becoming friends."

She added: "I am not very churchy although my faith is the keystone of my life. With five growing children, my vocation is titled 'mom.'"

Each of us, wherever we are — behind a desk, on an assembly line, in front of a stove, in the pulpit or inside city hall — has a vocation that calls for a response.

For our God is a God who calls.

(Marciniak is president of the Urban Life Institute in Chicago.)

A vocation sl

By Katharine Bird
NC News Service

In 1976 while still in law school, Joseph Dunne felt he was being called to another vocation as well — that of a permanent deacon.

At first he was incredulous. "I'm the last one I'd ever expect to be an ordained minister. I wasn't a churchy, clerical type," Dunne said in an interview at his Washington, D.C., law office. "I had no interest in being a priest and I had only been practicing my religion again for three years."

Nonetheless, the feeling persisted. Every time he saw the deacon serving at church, Dunne said, he got a strong impression it was "something I should be doing."

Dunne talked with his wife and then with some close friends about the deacon program. They "confirmed me in my suspicion," he said.

Though still dubious, he applied to the permanent diaconate program in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., and was accepted.

In 1981 he was ordained a deacon and assigned to St. Francis Xavier Parish. He also ministers at D.C. Village, a home for the elder-

God, is that

By Father John Castelot
NC News Service

About 10 centuries before Christ a woman named Hannah had a son she named Samuel. His birth brought her great happiness, for she had almost given up hope of ever having a child. In her joy and gratitude, she dedicated Samuel to the Lord's service.

As soon as he was old enough, Hannah brought Samuel to the Israelite shrine at Shiloh and offered him as an assistant to Heli, the priest in charge. She even went so far as to make a little priest's outfit for him to wear.

This might seem like a case of the mother having the vocation. But it was not. For there was no prospect of Samuel's becoming a priest, since in Israel priesthood was hereditary. To be a priest, one had to belong to the tribe of Levi and Samuel's father was of the tribe of Ephraim. Moreover, no one "has" a vocation. One receives a vocation when called by God, and only then.

All Hannah did was place her son in an atmosphere where he would be open to God's call should God choose to call him for some purpose. And God did call,