

## tion slowly discovered

ly poor and for children with emotional and physical problems.

Dunne said he set about his ministry with doubts: "Who would want me to do anything with all my imperfections?"

But as the months and years passed he figured out why he was called to be a deacon. "People have a talent, a gift to bring to the altar," he said. "And I can communicate the joy of being a Christian well."

"It's like when you're first in love," Dunne continued. "It changes you. There's a glow about you. You act differently."

"Ideally a Christian should be like that," Dunne continued. He added that a community "can't ask for saints in leadership positions." But we can ask ministers: "Are you a happier person? Are you more at peace? Is the world a better place because you walk in Jesus?"

As a married deacon with three children, Dunne sees himself as a trailblazer in the parish, a bridge between clergy and laity.

Initially, he said, there was "a great deal of uncertainty. Parishioners didn't know what a deacon is and what he does."

He recalls the first time he baptized a baby during Mass. It was

"a big revelation for people."

One of his primary tasks is "teaching people they are the church." In effect, he urges people to recognize the vocation that is theirs as baptized people.

He also "tries to teach parishioners it's possible to be a Spirit-filled person within marriage." He credits his wife with being a "tremendous asset" in his ministry.

How do his children react to his new role? Dunne indicated they are supportive. For instance, his 11-year-old son is "obviously proud of it" since he tells all his friends, "My dad's a deacon."

Dunne takes his children to D.C. Village whenever possible to get them familiar with his work as a permanent deacon.

Visiting the home teaches his children "to adjust to difficult situations," Dunne thinks. It also "gives people a lift" to talk to the youngsters.

Today Dunne says the people he ministers to still may not know "what a deacon is. But they accept me as a spiritual leader. That's my role."

(Ms. Bird is associate editor of Faith Today.)

## FOOD...

### ...for thought

Which of the following has a true Christian vocation?

- a) A young woman who is a wife and mother.
- b) A 25-year-old single, professional woman.
- c) An associate pastor in a rural parish.
- d) A retired laborer.
- e) All of the above.

Did you answer "e"? The truth is a broadened understanding of the term "vocation" is developing within the church.

It is easy to see that priests and members of religious orders actively live the Christian life. They have vocations.

But aren't all Christians called to live the Christian life actively? During the post-Vatican Council II period, a renewed understanding and appreciation of the term "vocation" has been sparked.

Without denying in any way the distinctions between the ordained and the non-ordained, the new Code of Canon Law recognizes the vocation of all people who are baptized. It says:

"In virtue of their rebirth in Christ there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality with regard to dignity and the activity whereby all cooperate in the building up of the body of Christ in accord with each one's own condition and function."

Linked to one's Christian dignity is a responsibility, a vocation — a "call" to live the Gospel. The call applies to all.

But how, and where, do individuals live out their vocation?

The life of a spouse or a parent provides countless opportunities to actively respond to situations in a Christlike manner. The same can safely be said for single people, children and the elderly.

This can be described as a call to holiness that is lived out in the midst of the world. According to this vision of things, the active Christian life is lived out wherever people are: at worship, at work, at home.

It is not surprising, then, that more and more is heard now about the link between worship and the world of work.

Most recently this concern was echoed in the first draft of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the U.S. economy.

"None of us," the draft of the pastoral letter says, "can afford to live a spiritually schizophrenic existence in which our private lives are oriented toward Christian discipleship while our economic activities are devoid of these same values. All Christians are called to put into practice the eucharistic promise in our daily lives and work."

## that you calling?

in a dramatic way.

Samuel was asleep when he thought he heard someone call his name. He jumped up and ran to Heli, thinking he might have wanted something. But the old man merely yawned and sent him back to bed.

Again this happened, in all likelihood much to Heli's annoyance.

But the third time it happened the old man suspected someone was calling the boy and that it might be the Lord. Accordingly, Heli told Samuel that if he heard the call again he should answer: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9).

Sure enough, hardly had Samuel gotten back to sleep when he distinctly heard: "Samuel, Samuel." He replied as instructed: "Speak, for your servant is listening."

The Lord gave Samuel a message for Heli, a most unpleasant one. For the scandalous behavior of Heli's two sons was about to bring disgrace on the whole family.

And this was just the beginning of Samuel's illustrious career as a prophet, a bearer of God's word to his people.

Sensitive to the divine will,

Samuel started to make the rounds of the tribes, instilling a willingness to put aside their rivalries and become one strong, united people — a united kingdom.

Samuel was God's agent in the selection of Saul, the first king of Israel, and in the choice of the great king David as Saul's successor.

One never knows when or how God is going to call. God does not always call one's name audibly, but he has many means of communication. Persons, events, circumstances of various kinds can all be channels of God's call.

The important thing is to be sensitive and open to God's approach. As in the case of Samuel, the call may be indistinct, uncertain and puzzling at first.

If the call is authentic, God will keep calling — in his often strange way, and in his own time. Again as in the case of Samuel, it will be wise to consult a person whose judgment one trusts.

There is never any telling what great things lie in store for one who is responsive to God's mysterious promptings.

(Father Castelot teaches at St. John's Seminary, Plymouth, Mich.)

### ...for discussion

1. Do you think of yourself as a person with a Christian vocation? Why? Why not?
2. Can you recall an occasion when you did something differently than you otherwise might have because of your vocation? What was it?
3. Ed Marciniak writes that, for him, the worst kind of unemployment is to be without a sense of vocation? What does he mean? Do you agree?
4. Father John Castelot writes that a vocation is a gift. Often one's discovery of this gift is assisted by other people, by events and circumstances in life. Father Castelot adds. What does he mean? Can you think of a time when another person stimulated your own thinking about your vocation? How did this occur?

### SECOND HELPINGS

"Developing the Parish as a Community of Service." This easy-to-read book by Trinity Mission Father Loughlan Sofield and Trinity Sister Brenda Hermann is based on a vision of parish life in which all members see themselves called to serve people in need. It includes many practical, useful ideas for accomplishing that goal. Baptism, the authors state, makes people "members of the Christian community. For most Catholics that Christian community is experienced in the parish. The parish, then, exists for one purpose: to carry out the mission of Jesus. How does a parish do this? It fulfills its responsibility by developing the living faith of its members and by calling forth, challenging and supporting the gifts of its members — gifts to be used in service to others." The community of service is a framework in which every member "fully understands the mission of Jesus as a personal responsibility," the authors state. (Le Jacq Publishing Inc., 53 Park Place, New York, N.Y. 10007. \$12.)