

Young adults search for vocations

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Faith & Family

Catholic Courier | Diocese of Rochester, NY | June 2004

Terry Johnson, 30, graduated from the University of Notre Dame with an M.A. in theology and was eager to change the world. She worked for a large Midwestern parish for a few years, but became frustrated with rigidity among church staff: lack of open-mindedness to her new ideas and an absence of innovative ideas.

She began losing her love for the church; the energy and creativity that she evidenced while in school dwindled. So she packed up her talents and skills, and decided to try her luck at corporate America.

She bought a few nice suits and nylons, moved to a growing urban area and worked an office job — an entry-level marketing position — until she grew restless there too. The paycheck was nice, and the health benefits were incredible. But she left work feeling a bit empty.



Therese J. Borchard

Our Turn

"Am I really contributing anything to society?" she wondered. She returned to the question so many young adults ask over and over: "What is my vocation?"

Renee LaReau, a young-adult writer, chronicles the struggles of many 20- and 30-somethings in her

book *Getting a Life: How to Find Your True Vocation*. Like Johnson, LaReau and friends want to use their full potential, to find jobs that give glory to God. On top of that, it would be nice to get paid.

For LaReau, me and tons of other young adults, the word "vocation" used to conjure up images of religious life.

LaReau writes: "Something happened to me gradually in my 20s as I went through college and graduate school, developed friendships and entered the working world. I began to sense that this concept of 'vocation' wasn't nearly as narrow as I'd thought. I began to catch some 'glimpses of grace,' hints that God was at work in the lives of my friends and family, that each of us was being

called by God in our own way."

She quotes the spiritual writer Father Henri Nouwen, who wrote, "My deepest vocation is to be a witness to the glimpses of God I have been allowed to catch."

We know that no job is perfect and that no person, place, thing or career ever will fill the void that is simply part of being human. Only faith in a loving God and a few other things — like faithful friends, a caring family, a sense of humor — can help to satiate the thirst that keeps us searching, learning and wondering.

And when we grow exhausted, as we often do, it helps to know that we have the company of each other.

Therese J. Borchard is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

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