

## **Father Philip's Address to St Paul's Assembly**

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

**Theme for the week: Vocation**

**John 15 : 9-17**

“Vocation”. We have already heard quite a bit about vocation. But what IS vocation?

The word comes from the Latin “Vocare” – which means to call.

So our understanding of the word is that vocation is about the call of God to each and every one of us.

So the next question is – call to what? To what is God calling us?

In the Church we most commonly use the word when we talk about a call to the Priesthood – or the Religious life as a monk or a nun.

But God can call us to any type of work. As Dr Gareth Jones told us yesterday, when we become God's companion we begin to show his glory.

That may be a call to work in education, or higher education. It may be a call to work in the medical field or in politics. Our vocation may show forth in the legal system or social work, in journalism or in music.

It doesn't matter what the work is – what matters is that we find God in it and allow him into our life.

But how do we find our vocation? How do we know what God is calling us to do?

That question was asked the other day on the Chaplaincy Facebook page. What are the things we can do to try and understand what our vocation is?

There are four things we can do:

First of all – become aware. Become aware of God. As Dr Gareth Jones yesterday said so well, make space for God. If you do not make space for God in your life, how can you expect God to be able to guide you?

Find time and space to be alone with God, to listen to the quiet voice of God in the middle of the noise of this world.

And become aware of how God can speak to you through other people. Has anyone ever told you that you would make a good priest, or a good teacher or anything else?

Secondly – gather information. This of course goes hand in hand with the whole process of seeking a career path or an education path. Ask yourself what your gifts are, what sort of work you are best suited to. And think if you ever say ‘no’ to God.

Thirdly, do not be afraid to choose what you believe God is asking you to do. What choice is the most loving choice you can make? What choice will most help you to be fully yourself.

Finally, look for confirmation of your choice. What happens when you share your thoughts with other people. Do they respond positively and say that they can imagine you doing that? Be open to both positive and negative responses from family and friends. Try and find the voice of God in the people who know and love you.

So we can begin to understand and find our vocation through prayer, through asking other people to pray, through looking at our gifts and listening to what other people say about us.

Your own priest or minister at your Church if you go to one is someone to speak to, as is your College Chaplain, myself. And in speaking with the Careers team – don’t be afraid to include what you think God might be asking of you.

It is not always a clear answer. Sometimes it may take all our life to find our true vocation.

Those of you who have been into my office at the Guidance Centre on the third floor may have seen three old cartoons on the wall of the office. Three priests in the Anglican Church in England in the 1800’s.

One of them is a man called John Henry Newman.



Newman was a priest in the Anglican Church, but later joined the Roman Catholic Church and was a priest there. He was a great writer, including the writer of hymns (there are three of his hymns in our hymn book) – an educator and was made a Cardinal in the Catholic Church.

Newman wrote a meditation on vocation. It is a wonderful piece of writing which reminds us that we ALL have a Vocation – whether or not we know it.

This is it:

**God has created me to do Him some definite service.  
He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.**

Just as we heard yesterday at Assembly – we all have a unique call by God – we are all different. We all have a vocation – but my vocation is not your vocation and your vocation is not my vocation.

**I have my mission. I may never know it in this life,  
but I shall be told it in the next.  
I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.**

As I said earlier, it may take a lifetime to really know what our vocation is – and in fact we may never find out in this life what it is – or was. However it is always

important because other people rely on our vocation. We hand on the message and the love of God from person to person and generation to generation.

**He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work.**

We all have a purpose in life. We have freedom of choice. If we do good in this world we are fulfilling that vocation given to us by God.

**I shall be an angel of peace,  
a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it  
if I do but keep his commandments.**

**Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away.**

If we walk close to God, as his companion, we will do all sorts of good things in his name – even if we are not aware of it.

**If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him,  
in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him.  
If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.**

Our vocation does not require us to be always joyful or certain or healthy. We can do God's work even when we are sick, confused or unhappy.

**He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about.**

There is a reason for our being here, there is a purpose, one which God knows.

**He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers.  
He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me.**

Life does not always go perfectly. But even when it is not going perfectly we can still serve God – because:

**Still, He knows what he is about.**

That meditation by John Henry Cardinal Newman is one which has been printed on cards and will be distributed to all the students and staff of St Paul's College today or tomorrow. Do keep it, and over the years look back at it – especially if you are not sure about the future.



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I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.  
He has not created me for naught.  
I shall do good; I shall do His work.  
I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place,  
while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments.  
Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away.  
If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him,  
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He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about.  
He may take away my friends.  
He may throw me among strangers.  
He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me.  
Still, He knows what He is about.

*(John Henry Cardinal Newman 1801-1890)*

I have a short video to show you now. It is an American Bishop speaking to three men who are to be ordained priest – to be made priests in the Church.

*You can watch the video clip here:*

<http://vimeo.com/70186385>

There may be some of you in this hall today who are called to the Priesthood. I hope that there are. You will not be the first, Saint Paul's has had a number of students who have gone on to be priests.

But the Bishop in that video was not just speaking to the new priests. He was speaking to everyone in that Church – and what he said there is true of you here today as well.

Most importantly he said “We are all called to be more”. We are ALL called to be more. You and I. That “more” is to walk more closely with God, to be a closer companion to him and to share his love in this world.

As we heard in our reading this morning – Love one another.

It is our love of one another and our service to one another which shows God’s true glory. As we heard the Bishop in the video say “Christ came not to be served but to be serve. Let that be your call”.

Let that be your call. We are ALL called to be more.

Thank you.