

## The way to find happiness

*By Sister Constance Veit, lsp*

In his message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations this year, Pope Francis acknowledges the fact that every vocation – from marriage to consecrated life and priesthood – involves a call from God embracing our entire existence.

Realizing that every path in life is a call from God is worth pondering.

“Each year, the World Day of Prayer for Vocations invites us to reflect on the precious gift of the Lord’s call to each of us, as members of his faithful pilgrim people, to participate in his loving plan and to embody the beauty of the Gospel in different states of life,” Pope Francis wrote. “Hearing that divine call ... is the surest way for us to fulfill our deepest desire for happiness. Our life finds fulfillment when we discover who we are, what our gifts are, where we can make them bear fruit, and what path we can follow in order to become signs and instruments of love, generous acceptance, beauty and peace, wherever we find ourselves.”

I’d like to reflect on two aspects of this message – that God is calling each of us to participate in his loving plan and that our acceptance of his plan is the surest way to find personal fulfillment.

When we speak of someone having a ‘calling’ we generally assume this means a call to priesthood or religious life. But this is a narrow understanding of the concept of vocation.

God has a plan for each of us; he is calling each of us to a specific vocation, which may or may not involve full-time service in the church.

Realizing that God has a plan for us – and discerning what this plan is – is essential to our personal growth as we mature from childhood to adulthood.

As the pope says, it’s a matter of discovering who we are, what our gifts are and where we can make them bear fruit.

Do we take into account that our personal gifts have been “received”?

This is what St. Paul was trying to teach the Corinthians when he said, “What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it?” (1 Cor 4:7).

Looking back on my own vocation, I realize that as a youngster I didn’t look at my abilities and blessings as gifts given to me by God. I didn’t even understand that God had a plan for my life – I thought that life was all about *my plans!*

I began volunteering with the Little Sisters of the Poor and the elderly – not because I felt God calling me to religious life or because I was committed to improving the lives of elderly people

in need – but simply because I thought community service would “look good” on my college applications!

In just a few weeks, however, I discovered qualities within myself that I never knew existed – gifts like love and empathy for the elderly and joy in making them happy – and I came to the conviction that caring for the elderly – giving my life for them – was my God-given purpose and my mission in life!

Discovering who I was, what my special gifts were and where I could make them bear fruit, led me to experience a sense of personal fulfillment and lasting joy. Despite life’s inevitable ups and downs, this joy and purpose have never waned; they have endured for almost 40 years now! Even when I was quite self-absorbed and ignorant of his ways, in his kindness God came to meet me where I was and to make himself known to me. This encounter, though completely unexpected, was very real.

When I look back at my own vocation, I often think of the words Pope Benedict XVI addressed to young people during his inaugural homily on April 24, 2005: “With great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return.

Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life!”

If you think God might be calling you to a vocation of service, feel free to email me at [serenity@littlesistersofthepoor.org](mailto:serenity@littlesistersofthepoor.org).

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