

Spring 2015



Vocation Connections

Vocation:

“Like the prophet Jonas, whom God ordered to go to Nineveh, I found myself with an almost uncontrollable desire to go in the opposite direction. God pointed one way and all my ‘ideals’ pointed in the other. It was when Jonas was traveling as fast as he could away from Nineveh, toward Tharsis, that he was thrown overboard, and swallowed by a whale who took him where God wanted him to go.”

Thomas Merton

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What Shall I Do With My Life?
Howard Thurman

In Good Company

by Fr. James Martin, S.J.

Editors Note: After graduating from the Wharton School of Business, Fr. James Martin began his career at General Electric. After finding dissatisfaction “as a yuppie in the corporate world,” Fr. James discerns his true calling and finds himself applying to the Society of Jesuits.

It would, I realized, be impossible to wait until August 15 to find out the Jesuits' decision, and then simply quit my job. I couldn't give such short notice and just leave, without spending a few weeks helping to recruit and train my replacement. Instead, I would have to make a decision: Should I leave my job before I knew whether the Jesuits had accepted me?

At the time, I expected a dramatic, incontrovertible answer to this dilemma. In other words, a sign. I figured if I was committing my life to God, God could at least provide me with something more tangible. But after a week of frustrating indecision, nothing came: no definite answer, no voices, no visions, no warm feelings. Of course, if any of those things had happened, I probably would have been scared to death. Still, I began to wonder if the experiences of the retreat—Jesus being my friend and all the rest—had been an illusion.

The next Sunday I found myself in another church in Stamford, St. Mary's. During the Mass I prayed for a sign, something that would help me see what I had to do. After Mass, out of desperation, I knelt in front of a statue of Jesus. I was so frustrated; hot tears filled my eyes. I prayed and said, "Take me!" as hard as I could. And suddenly I felt a wordless voice within me saying, "I will." It was unlike anything I had experienced. I had felt the words inside my head. Surprised, and a little frightened, I stood up immediately and bolted out of the church. Had I imagined the whole thing? I wasn't sure ...I didn't think so. But what I didn't imagine was the sense of clarity about what I needed to do.

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The answer was now obvious: yes, of course, quit work. Though it was willfully illogical—how could you quit a job without the promise of something else?—I figured that if I weren't accepted I could do some other work of some sort. I had a laughably dim idea that I could teach in a Catholic school somewhere, despite knowing less than the average sixth grader about Catholicism.

I gave my notice the next day. I sat down in Karen's office and explained that I was leaving, to become a priest.

"You're kidding, right?" she said.

After I assured her that I was not kidding, she asked me if I could stay to help her find someone. Then she thought for a minute and said, "Wow! Could you baptize children?" I guessed so. "Great. Maybe you could baptize mine?" Sure, I said, why not?

After six years at GE, it was difficult to believe that I could give it all up so readily. But the intense desire to enter the Jesuits made leaving the company easier. I knew that I would miss my coworkers but, by this point, not the work. And the more I thought about it, the more I couldn't wait to enter the novitiate.

A big influence on James Martin's discernment journey was Thomas Merton. While "flipping idly through" *No Man is an Island*, he stumbles upon the passage below and realizes, "It was so clear. I didn't feel as if I were at all made for the life I was leading."

"Why do we try to spend our lives striving to be something that we would never want to be, if we only knew what we wanted? Why do we waste our time doing things which, if we only stopped to think about them, are just the opposite of what we were made for?"

Fr. James Martin S.J. is a Jesuit priest, culture editor of *American Magazine* and the author of several books including the award-winning *My Life with the Saints*, the bestselling *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, and most recently, *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*.

Upcoming Events

Stories of Calling: Spring Presentations

Our understanding of vocation – how we come to realize and embrace our callings – is deepened and enriched by engaging the call narrative of another person. Launched just last year, these offerings have become widely popular. Please join us for one or both of the spring presentations to be offered in Michels Ballroom at noon.

Lunch is provided at no charge. Registration is required at x3155 or snc.edu/vocation.

Jessica Schmechel
Thursday, February 12

Dr. Michael Lukens
Thursday, March 5



Thursday, February 19: 7:00pm



“Carrie Newcomer is the most insightful and lyrical singer-songwriter I know—always attuned to the still, small voice of the soul that’s so often muffled by the noise of the world.” ~ Parker Palmer

Join us as we welcome acclaimed singer-songwriter, Carrie Newcomer, back to St. Norbert College for a campus concert. A master at seeing the sacred in everyday life and someone deeply in tune with the lived experience of vocation, Newcomer’s lyrics and quotations have often appeared here in our newsletter.

The concert will be held in Dudley Birder Hall. Admission is free, but tickets will be required. Tickets can be obtained at the St. Norbert College box office. A free-will donation in support of St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter will be accepted at the concert. You won’t want to miss this! For more information on Carrie and to hear tracks from her new album, *A Permeable Life*, and other albums, visit carriewcomer.com.

A Day of Reflection

Campus Center Reflection Lounge
Wednesday, June 3 8:00am-6:00pm



Take some time to reflect on your own personal calling and how you support the callings of others in this one-day experience of vocation exploration for SNC faculty and staff.

There will be no cost for this event and food will be provided throughout the day. Information on how to register for this new offering will be announced soon.

Vocation Connections is an occasional newsletter published by the Program of Faith, Learning & Vocation. We invite your comments, suggestions, and contributions.

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What Shall I Do with My Life?

Give me the courage to live!
Really live—not merely exist.
Live dangerously,
Scorning risk!
Live honestly,
Daring the truth—
Particularly the truth of myself!
Live resiliently—
Ever changing, ever growing, ever adapting.
Enduring the pain of change
As though 'twere the travail of birth.
Give me the courage to live,
Give me the strength to be free
And endure the burden of freedom
And the loneliness of those without chains;
Let me not be trapped by success,
Nor by failure, nor pleasure, nor grief,
Nor malice, nor praise, nor remorse!
Give me the courage to go on!
Facing all that waits on the trail—
Going eagerly, joyously on,
And paying my way as I go,
Without anger or fear or regret
Taking what life gives,
Spending myself to the full,
Head high, spirit winged, like a god—
On . . . on . . . till the shadows draw close.
Then even when darkness shuts down,
And I go out alone, as I came,
Naked and blind as I came —
Even then, gracious God, hear my prayer:
Give me the courage to live!

Howard Thurman (1800-1981) grew up in poverty in Florida, raised by his grandmother, a former slave. Educated at Moorehouse, Columbia, and Rochester Seminary, he served many years as pastor of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco and Dean of the Chapel at Boston University. This poem is part of a sermon preached to a student audience in 1939 in response to the question, "I love Jesus for the shaft of light that he throws across the pathways of those who seek to answer the question, What shall I do with my life?"

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