

Someone suggested that if Jesus had sent his twelve disciples for psychological testing this might well be the reply he would have received:

Thank you for submitting the résumés of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have taken our battery of tests. We have run the results through our own computer. After having arranged personality interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant, it is the opinion of our staff that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the enterprise. They have no team concept.

- Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper.
- Andrew has no qualities for leadership.
- The two brothers James and John place personal interest above company loyalty.
- Thomas shows a skeptical attitude that would tend to undermine morale.
- Matthew has been blacklisted by the Jerusalem Better Business Bureau.
- James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, definitely have radical leanings, and registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.
- One of the candidates however, shows real potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man.

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Easter, often called “Good Shepherd Sunday.” Priests are encouraged to speak about vocation, and the call to serve God.

Most of us mistakenly think of “vocation” as something like a job. But I would debate that. During my life, I’ve held many jobs - electronics tech,

electrical engineer, software designer, military linguist, cryptologic asset, brake systems designer - to name a few. None of them really defined me - rather, they were what I was qualified for, and what paid the bills.

For all of us, our “vocation” was given to us at birth. God called each and every one of us from our birth - even from before our birth, if we listen to the Prophet Jeremiah who says that we are called when we are still in our mother’s womb.

Our baptism orients our vocation to Christ ... and confirmation solidifies our vocation as a mission - a sending out - as Christians in the world.

From there, what we do is a delicate balance between paying the bills and doing God’s Will - that is, rendering unto Caesar and rendering unto the Lord. The point of the little story that I read at the beginning of this homily is that - none of us are qualified for the work in God’s Kingdom ... at least not in and of our own skills.

While we go to school to learn how to do our jobs, we go to God in prayer and supplication in order to obtain the graces necessary to live out our vocation.

No class can prepare a husband and wife for their first fight. Or a mother and a father for tending to a sick baby. Nothing prepares us for the death of a loved one; or ultimately for our own death.

Rather, it is God’s power that supports us despite our being unprepared ... it is God’s mercy that fills in where we are weak ... where we are lacking ... in skills, or expectations.

As a priest, I can still remember my first Mass - [said at this altar.]  
Surrounded by [many of you, and] my family and friends. What classroom  
or textbook could have prepared me for the outpouring of love and  
prayers ... and the graces of that day?

I think the best way to put it - not to sound brash - is that while most of us  
are qualified for the jobs we hold ... none of us is qualified ... none of us are  
worthy of our true vocations in Jesus Christ.

But that is O.K. There's nothing wrong with that. Because, if we didn't know  
that ... if we failed to realize that truth ... we might not take it as seriously as  
we need to ... we might handle it without the care that it deserves.

And so, on this Good Shepherd Sunday, let us pray for the graces and the  
strength to embrace wholeheartedly our own vocation - whatever that may  
be - and however complicated and complex a situation it might be. Let us  
embrace our Call - not alone, but through, with, and in Christ Jesus our  
Lord and Savior. Let us rely on His strength and His mercy ... His power  
and His grace - to fulfill the call that God has placed on each one of us ...  
on each of our lives.