On the choice of a state of life

Critical ed. in Giovanni Bosco, *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica dei suoi doveri negli esercizi di cristiana pietà per la recita dell’Uffizio della B. Vergine, dei Vespri di tutto l’anno e dell’Uffizio dei morti coll’aggiunta di una scelta di laudi sacre*. Torino, Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana 1880, pp. 75-78.

In His eternal decrees, God has destined each one of us to a state of life with its corresponding graces. Accordingly, as in every other case, so also in this all-important matter, the good Catholic should seek to discover the will of God following the example of Jesus Christ who said in fact that his sole purpose in coming down to us was to comply with the will of his eternal Father. It is then most important, dear children, that you choose your vocation wisely, so that you may enter the career for which the Lord has destined you.

Some souls, whom God wishes to favour particularly, receive a clear indication of the state to which he calls them. You cannot expect so much, but you have the consoling guarantee that God will direct you in the right way, provided you do not neglect the right means for making a prudent choice.

One of these means is to spend your childhood and youth without offending God, or else to atone by sincere penance for the time misspent in sin. Another means is humble and persevering prayer. Often repeat with St Paul: *Lord, what is it that you wish me to do?* Or with Samuel: *Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening*. Or with the Psalmist: *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God*. Or use some other aspiration of love.

When the time has arrived for a decision, have recourse to God in frequent and very fervent prayer. Pray for guidance during the Holy Mass at which you assist, and offer up each Communion for the same purpose. You could also make a novena or a triduum, perform some act of mortification, or go on a pilgrimage to some noted shrine. Pray to the Blessed Virgin, who is the Mother of Good Counsel, ask the help of St. Joseph, her spouse, who faithfully kept the divine commandments; pray to your Guardian Angel and to your Patron Saints. It would be well also to prepare for your decision in such an important matter by making a retreat or a day of recollection.

Resolve to follow God's will whatever happens, and despite the disapproval of those who might give you more secular advice.

Should your parents or other individuals begin to oppose what you perceive to be the will of God in your regard, remember that this is the occasion to put into practice the great advice to obey God and not human beings. Conduct yourselves towards your parents respectfully and honourably; answer and treat them submissively and humbly, but without putting at risk the supreme welfare of your soul. Seek good advice on what to do, and then confide in him who can do all things. Consult experienced and God-fearing persons, and especially your confessor, to whom you should confide your vocation and your dispositions.

The young man who is faithful to his vocation

When St Francis de Sales understood at home that God was calling him to the priesthood, his parents observed that as the first born son he ought support and sustain them, and that his inclination to the clergy came from an indiscreet devotion and that he could also be holy in secular life. They felt it was better if he followed their intentions to offer him an honourable and advantageous marriage. But nothing could move him from his holy resolution. He constantly put God's will before that of his father and mother, and while he loved them tenderly and respected them deeply he preferred renouncing all the temporal advantages before lessening the grace of his vocation. His parents, notwithstanding their worldly outlook, were pious people and alter were happy with their son's resolve.

Prayer to know one's proper vocation

Here I am at your feet, O merciful Virgin, to implore from you the most important grace of my state in life. I only want to perfectly do the will of your Divine Son throughout my life. I ardently desire to choose the state that will most console me at the hour of my death. Grant Mother of Good Counsel, that I may hear a voice which removes every doubt from my mind. Since you are the Mother of my Saviour, also be the Mother of my salvation; because of you, O Mary do not enlighten me, who will? If you do not instruct me, Mother of Wisdom, who will teach me? Hear then, Mary, my humble prayers. Guide me, doubtful and vacillating, put me on the right path that leads to eternal life, because you are the only hope of virtue and life, the fruits of which are nothing but the fruits of honour and honesty. Three Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory bes.