

WHERE Do I Fit In?

It's natural to turn to those we trust, such as family members, coaches, and teachers, when we aren't sure what to do. It's also important for us to turn to God. Sometimes he provides guidance even when we don't turn to him in prayer.



by Sr. Dorothy Ederer, O.P.

What Does God Want Me to Do?

My first assignment as a member of the Grand Rapids Dominicans was teaching eighth grade. I loved this work, and I was good at it. I taught for a very happy and rewarding 13 years. Then, I had the premonition that my life was about to turn in a different direction. But I didn't know what this might mean.

The time came when the women in our community come together to reflect on our lives and consider where God may be calling us to serve. One morning I jokingly said to the other sisters, "Well, I will go where God wants me to, but he will have to call me." Seconds later, the phone rang, and laughingly I said, "I might as well answer it. It's probably God." I picked up the phone, and the priest who was head of campus ministry at Western Michigan University was on the line wanting to speak to me. He asked if I would be interested in coming to work with him as a campus minister. I was stunned and made all kinds of objections. All he said was, "I know you will love working with our students here. They need someone like you. You will do just fine." He was right. For 13 years we made Jesus real to the 3,000 students from different faiths on the Western Michigan campus.

I had a dream of someday making Jesus real for people in a travelling ministry, but this wasn't anything more than a dream. Then I read a book, called *Joshua*, and I met the author, Father Joseph Girzone. Soon another phone call came—from Father Girzone, asking me to work with his

team in a ministry that went all over the world. For nine wonderful years, we brought Jesus to people throughout the United States and other countries.

God will speak. All we have to do is listen. None of us knows what God has planned for us, but if we keep our hearts and minds open to his call and eagerly follow, it is thrilling what can happen! We will never be disappointed.

God Guides

Take a moment to think about the following questions. Then on a separate sheet of paper, write an answer to each. *What is one good decision I've made this school year? When I made the decision, how did I know what God was asking me to do?*

During the next week, focus on your words and actions. Think about how God may be guiding you as you go through your everyday life.

SR. DOROTHY EDERER, O.P., is a Grand Rapids Dominican, campus minister, and author of two books, *Colors of the Spirit* and *The Golfer's Prayer Book*.

Reflect

Session 21 > Truth Revealed by God

WHERE? Do I Fit In?

As Catholics we are called to respond to Catholic social and moral teachings. We are guided to assist the poor and vulnerable and to uphold the dignity of human life, each working with the unique gifts that God has given us to serve his kingdom.



by **Palmira Perea Hay**

How Do I Respond to the Needs Around Me?

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. . . . Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Matthew 25:35-36, 40

I have a distant cousin who is deaf. When I was a child, my mother found out he had no place to live, so she invited him to live with us in our already-crowded house. He lived with us for years. I am now 70, and my mother’s example of generosity still moves me and motivates me.

Recently, our parish got a request to visit a family in need. My husband and I are volunteers with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, so we made the visit one cold January day. It was a family in crisis—three children and a single mother. The mother had moved to our town because she had been diagnosed with lymphoma the day before Christmas, and she needed urgent cancer treatment. They also had very little money.

We arranged for the family to receive help. Our parish provided financial assistance with the rent and utilities. The woman needed a course of chemotherapy at the hospital, but she had no way to get there, was very anxious, and spoke only Spanish. I was able to take her to the hospital. I interpreted for her and stayed with her for

every treatment over seven months. The woman calls me her “Angelita.” And now she has been declared to be free of lymphoma.

It is a gift and a privilege to participate in the healing of another person. Why did I do it? My mother’s example still shows me the way—the way of Jesus.

Reflect

Needs Chart

On a separate sheet of paper, make a three-column chart with the following headings: *At Home*, *At School*, and *In My Community*. Under each heading, list at least three areas in which you see a need for care, love, or healing. Then reflect by asking yourself, “How might I bring care, love, or healing in each situation?” Take time in prayer to ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to respond to each need. Notice what happens as you work to meet the needs you listed.

PALMIRA PEREA HAY lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with her husband, Steve. Together they engage in ministries such as taking Holy Communion to people in the hospital and visiting people in prison.

Session 22 > Acting on Behalf of Justice

WHERE Do I Fit In?

Since before kindergarten, most of us have heard over and over again that it is important to share, take turns, help others, and generally make the world a better place. We know this almost instinctively, and so we might not take time to think about why this concept is important. As Catholics we know that we can look to Jesus Christ for the answer.



by Gregory
Augustine Pierce

Why Am I Being Sent?

At the end of his time on earth, Jesus gathered his disciples together and told them to go out into the entire world to preach, baptize, and build the Kingdom of God. They were sent.

I grew up in New York City. I got sent to Chicago.

My wife and I have three children. I run a small business that produces good products and provides excellent service to our customers. I vote in every election, and I am involved in a variety of community organizations and social justice efforts. This work is how I try to make the world a better place. As a husband, father, businessman, and citizen, I carry out my part of Jesus' mission to proclaim that the reign of God has already begun—that it is within each and every one of us.

Many people think that only priests, nuns, brothers, and deacons have vocations. Actually, every baptized Christian has a calling from God. This call is to build up what Jesus called "the kingdom of God, on earth as it is in heaven." This was Jesus' vision for how the world should be—a very different way for human beings to relate to one another and to our world, because it is based on love, not hatred, power, money, or ambition.

Jesus told a story about two sons. If told today, the story might go something like this. The father said to the first son, "Please go out and mow the lawn." The boy said he would, but his friends showed up and so he went off with them instead. The man then said to his second

son, "Please go out and mow the lawn." But the boy complained, "I did it last time. It's my brother's turn. My friends are coming over right now. I won't do it." But when his friends arrived, the boy told them to come back in an hour, and he went out and mowed his father's lawn. Jesus asks us, "Which son did the will of the father?" The correct answer is "the one who mowed the lawn."

So, mow the lawn. Find the work God has for you, and do it.

Witness to Love

Write on the lines two or three sentences to describe a time when you witnessed someone making a decision based on love rather than hatred—even when hatred may have seem justified. Then write a final sentence to describe one positive outcome of this person's decision.

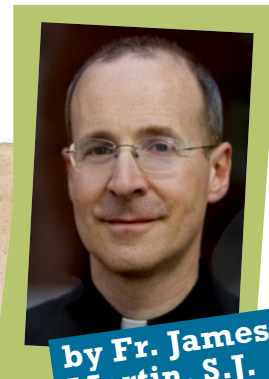
Reflect

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Session 23 > Renewal in the Church

WHERE Do I Fit In?

Throughout childhood, most of us hear this question at least once a year: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" It's likely that at least one time we'll give the answer "I don't know." And this honest answer is OK to give because as our lives unfold, we can trust that God will lead us in the right direction.



by Fr. James Martin, S.J.

Discovering Who You're Meant to Be

We know what Jesus was like as an adult. But what was he like as a boy? He must have had the same experiences that all kids have. He ate the meals that his family made for him. He had to learn how to read. Saint Joseph taught him how to saw wood and hammer a nail the right way. Like all of us, he got sick from time to time. He got sad when things didn't turn out the way he hoped. And he was happy when he was with his friends in Nazareth and could play with them. (Maybe he was especially happy when the school day ended!)

Jesus must have gradually discovered who he was. He listened to what was in his heart. When he saw people who were poor, he wanted to free them from poverty. When he saw people who were sick, he wanted to heal them. When he saw people who were lonely, he wanted to help them find friends. He started to act on these desires and do the things God the Father wanted him to do. He told people how much God loved them and how they should love others. He healed the sick, and he helped lonely people feel part of the community again. All this took time. It was awhile before Jesus discovered who he was meant to be.

What am I supposed to be? That's the big question growing up. When I was a boy, I wanted to be an architect. That seemed cool and creative and fun. Then I studied business in college and worked for a big company. That job choice seemed solid and respectable

(and well-paid!). Finally, I realized that God wanted me to be a priest. That's what I really wanted. The signs were there all along. But it took me awhile to understand them.

Have you ever thought about the person whom you want to be? Think about it. God showed Jesus. He showed me. He'll show you too.

Reflect

Vocation Reflection

On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of all the talents and skills that you feel you possess—nothing is too insignificant. Reflect on your list. Ask yourself the following questions as you reflect.

- † What kinds of vocations or careers might suit a person with these talents and skills?
- † When I grow up, how might I be able to use these talents and skills to help my family, my community, or the world?
- † If not for a vocation or career, why do I think God may have given me these skills and talents?

FR. JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is a Jesuit priest and best-selling author of several books, including *My Life with the Saints*.

Session 24 > People for Others

WHERE? Do I Fit In

Traditionally, we believe that Pentecost marks the birthday of the Church. When we hear the word *church*, we often think of the building where we go to pray or the community with whom we worship. Theologian James Campbell reminds us that our family is a domestic church where we can experience God's love and grace.



by James
Campbell

What Does It Mean to Be Church?

We live in the presence of God every moment of our lives. I have experienced God with special closeness in my own family.

My younger sister is a member of the Little Sisters of the Poor, whose mission is to care for the elderly. For 25 years she has done this in Colombia, South America. Her particular responsibility is to make sure that there is food on the table every day. For many people, the food my sister provides is all the food they will eat that day. It's difficult work. Every morning my sister receives Jesus in the Eucharist so that she can have the strength to feed his people.

Once, while on a family visit, my brother asked my sister if she wanted to discuss new ideas about Jesus and the Church. My sister wasn't much interested. She told my brother that he should come and live with her community for awhile if he wanted to know what Jesus meant in her life. There he would see that Jesus is present in the Church in all the ways the sisters cared for the needs of people who are poor.

My wife, Barbara, and I experienced the presence of God most joyfully when we were together at the birth of our two daughters. Our second daughter was unexpectedly born at home. When we knew everything would be OK, Barbara and I were so filled with joy that we spontaneously sang a song popular in the Church's liturgy at the time. We sang, "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in him."

JAMES CAMPBELL is the author of *Stories of the Old Testament: A Catholic's Guide*.

I think of my family as a small "domestic church." It's where my wife and I have had the honor of watching our daughters grow in wisdom and grace. It's where we see God every day. All of us can celebrate God's presence in the domestic church of our families. We are all fed in the Eucharist so that in one another we can continue to see the face of God.

Reflect

Church

Take a moment to reflect on your experience of the Church. Then, in the box, draw an image that expresses what the Church means to you.

Session 25 > Celebrating Pentecost