

Have I Been Called?

July 15, 2012

When I saw the program for today's service I was so happy to see the song, "Holy, Holy, Holy." My uncle Bob was a Catholic priest and for some reason I always associate this song with him.

He was such a cool guy; as a young man Bob was drafted out of Boston College to play for Indianapolis Colts. He was a real heart throb, such a handsome man, and my dad and my aunt nicknamed him Sloane, after the song L. David Sloane sung by Michelle Lee in 1968. A line from that song goes "give me a break, save a girl a heartache." My uncle Bob definitely got around and was well-loved by both the girls and the guys at school. Instead of going to play professional football after college, Bob felt called to be a priest and chose the seminary.

I started asking him about his calling when I was about 14, just when I myself began to appreciate the handsomeness of boys and the excitement of things I didn't know about yet. I wondered what could be more compelling than that excitement. To give up professional opportunities and what was evidently a socially exciting lifestyle for God ... well, a calling must feel unmistakably huge!

I don't remember his exact response, but I remember his expression when he tried to describe it. I think his words went something like: "I just knew." Somehow this calling was so otherworldly that it couldn't be adequately described, even by those who received one.

So the feeling of God was always a great mystery to me. I felt jealous that I couldn't feel it. Sometimes I bought into the teaching of my catechism that I was a sinner, and that's why I couldn't feel God. That really didn't stick for long because according to much-told family lore, my Uncle Bob was definitely a rascal who had all the girls swooning over him. He even caused a bit of a stir in his Worcester parish hierarchy because he refused to take up a collection for something his bishop wanted. He was the only one in my family I ever heard swear -- so clearly he was no saint.

Every now and then I'd return to the subject with my uncle as I grew up, got married, got divorced, dabbled in Eastern philosophies and new age beliefs. He listened perfectly, always without judgment, answering my questions about dogma and church policies and women as priests. Yet he still couldn't articulate (to my satisfaction) his calling.

He passed away from cancer at the age of 54, before I began to really practice mediumship, so I thought I'd seen the last of him when he died. He was one of the first spirit people to enter my awareness when I actively started spirit communication, and he's been around frequently since then. He was the one who told me there are many paths to God, and that Heaven receives all comers.

But I still have questions for him, which he still can't really answer.

How do I really know God is in my life? I pray every day for communion, for grace, for the natural ability to see as God sees, and love as God loves.

When I talk to some spiritual people I admire, they all tell me the same thing, “you just know.” Like love, like meeting your spouse, they say, “I just knew.”

How come I never knew? Did you ever feel that way? Everyone around you seems to be getting it, and you nod your head and say, “Yeah, I get it too,” but inside you’re thinking something like “I have no idea what you’re talking about or what I’m supposed to be feeling right now.” But you don’t want to be saying that when everyone else is nodding along with the teacher -- you just keep hoping that if I go along, and act like I get it, maybe eventually I will. By osmosis or something.

Sometimes I feel like I’ve been left out of an important club. Or that I missed an assignment way back in the beginning, and now I’m always checking in with the people to my left and right, asking them -- “Do you know what that means?”

One of the reasons I was first attracted to the new age trends, was because there are so darn many of them the odds were pretty good I was finally going to “get it.”

There’s rune casting, angel cards, meditation, past life regression, chakra clearing. I learned phrases like “holding the space,” and tried to discern whether something “resonated” with me. Frequently thinking to myself, “Am I the only one who thinks the Emperor is stark naked?”

I remember sitting on top of a mountain in New Hampshire, chanting Native American sounds with a bunch of white people under a full moon. I was supposed to have my eyes closed but I felt so ridiculous, pretending to be someone I wasn’t, that I was peeking at the others around the fire. Everyone looked filled with rapture, so I said to myself, “Screw it,” and threw my heart and soul into this chanting business. Afterwards my brothers and sisters of the wolf were embracing each other, some were crying and swooning, and I did the same thing because I didn’t want to stand out. But I didn’t really get it. I wasn’t really transported. (There was no way I was going to admit that though).

I did admit it once, years ago. I took a seminar on the Pre-Human Self, which was a meditation designed to connect us with our selfhood when we were still all part of the landscape. Our rock-self, and stream-self and cloud-self and algae-self. I really, really tried. I wanted to know that self so badly. But I didn’t get there, and I made the mistake of saying so at the end of the class. I thought maybe someone else had trouble like I did and could offer me some guidance. But you could have heard a pin drop when I spoke up. The looks of abject pity would break your heart, so from that point on I pretended to “get it” right along with everyone else.

I kept plugging away. I wanted that experience where I just *knew* God was talking to me. I attended a seminary, not because I felt a calling but because I *wanted* to be called, to feel that irresistible, undeniable tug in God's direction. For years I studied all the major religions and religious texts. I chose to study the Gnostic tradition because it's based on developing a personal relationship with God that involves *knowing*, which is what "gnosis" means.

While I now know an awful lot about God in an academic way, I'm still not sure I really, truly get it. I wonder now if it's even possible, after all this time of pretending to have the rapturous experiences others clearly seem to have. I wonder if it's possible to relax myself and my expectations enough to just let what happens, be "it," whatever "it" is.

I guess it's a little like faking, well, you know -- the big "O." That's a pretty clear example of something a person "just knows.: The experience is definitive enough that there's no guessing, "Well, I'm not sure. Did I or didn't I?" If you have to ask, you didn't.

But if one makes faking it a habit, I expect that over time it becomes difficult to relax enough to let nature take it's course, and to let the real thing unfold.

Surely for some people the calling to serve God is an unmistakable, no-question-about-it, experience. For many of us though, we're still searching. It's by faith alone that we go forward seeking, seeking, seeking. We may not have the experience of God, but we have the *promise* of God that calls us forward.

These are some of the promises that God made to each one of his children:

"Because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of His glad welcome." Ephesians 3:12

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds." Phillipians. 4:7

"I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me." Proverbs 8:17

For people like me, the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is calling to us, compels us to keep searching for the unmistakable experience of God. If you're like me and you've been trying to feel that elusive holy grail of rapture, you keep meditating, reading, attending services, seminars, and pilgrimages. You keep trying to live a compassionate life, to be of service, to share your knowledge, experiences and resources; you keep trying to better yourself, to be tolerant, to love yourself.

If you're like me, you keep trying to experience God's calling, because God promises that one day, you will.

And that Promise, dear brothers and sisters, is itself a true, legitimate calling.

Amen.