

A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience

By John Neafsey

A book review by Phil Aaron, SM

For the last ten years or so, the Lilly Foundation has spent millions of dollars in grants to universities and individuals to promote research and activity to determine how religious oriented youth, who in years past responded in relatively large numbers to the call of a vocation to the priesthood and religious life, are now responding to a personal vocation in both secular and church spheres of life. Lilly is interested in knowing what is replacing the so-called *religious vocation* of the past.

Author John Neafsey, a clinical psychologist at Loyola University of Chicago, was supported by Lilly in writing **A Sacred Voice is Calling**, in which he explores what it means to find and follow a personal calling. The subtitle, *Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*, reveals the uniqueness of Neafsey's approach. He discusses calling in the context of forming a personal conscience with reference to social issues rather than in the context of a particular institution or lifestyle. Issues such as 9/11, the war on terror and the Iraq war are used as examples of situations one could use to sharpen one's conscience and provide opportunities to hear a call. The book should be suggested reading for any person struggling to find meaning in life.

Neafsey has done a marvelous job of giving examples of people who have heard and followed a special calling – from Native American Black Elk to Mother Teresa and Thoreau. He has used numerous quotes which will inspire those who are in a process of discernment.

Being a psychologist, Neafsey makes good use of psychological theory related to the underpinnings of the notion of the true self as a foundation for developing a meaningful and dedicated life.

Developing a strong social conscience is a key element in the author's presentation. He cites contemporary reconciliation attempts in South Africa and Guatemala and martyrdom in Latin America as situations which can help to develop a critical conscience.

The author is very successful in his attempt to take a broad interdisciplinary and ecumenical approach to the notion of sacred calling. He demonstrates that "vocation" is a "universal or archetypal phenomenon."

[Order the book.](#)