

Is This a Calling?

Saint Teresa of Ávila

(Teacher Version)

Note to Teacher

If you use this article for the unit 2 “Apply Revelation, Inspiration, and vocation to today” learning experience (step 11), read it aloud to the students or distribute copies to the students to read silently.

2. I remained in the monastery a year and a half, and was very much the better for it. I began to say many vocal prayers, and to ask all the nuns to pray for me, that God would place me in that state wherein I was to serve Him; but, for all this, I wished not to be a nun, and that God would not be pleased I should be one, though at the same time I was afraid of marriage. At the end of my stay there, I had a greater inclination to be a nun, yet not in that house, on account of certain devotional practices which I understood prevailed there, and which I thought overstrained. Some of the younger ones encouraged me in this my wish; and if all had been of one mind, I might have profited by it. I had also a great friend in another monastery; and this made me resolve, if I was to be a nun, not to be one in any other house than where she was. I looked more to the pleasure of sense and vanity than to the good of my soul. These good thoughts of being a nun came to me from time to time. They left me very soon; and I could not persuade myself to become one.

3. At this time, though I was not careless about my own good, our Lord was much more careful to dispose me for that state of life which was best for me. He sent me a serious illness, so that I was obliged to return to my father’s house.

4. When I became well again, they took me to see my sister in her house in the country village where she dwelt. Her love for me was so great, that, if she had had her will, I should never have left her. Her husband also had a great affection for me—at least, he showed me all kindness. This too I owe rather to our Lord, for I have received kindness everywhere; and all my service in return is, that I am what I am.

On the road lived a brother of my father—a prudent and most excellent man, then a widower. Him too our Lord was preparing for Himself. In his old age, he left all his possessions and became a religious. He so finished his course, that I believe him to have the vision of God. He would have me stay with him some days. His practice was to read good books in Spanish; and his ordinary conversation was about God and the vanity of the world. These books he made me read to him; and, though I did not much like them, I appeared as if I did; for in giving pleasure to others I have been most particular, though it might be painful to myself—so much so, that what in others might have been a virtue was in me a great fault, because I was often extremely indiscreet. O my God, in how many ways did His Majesty prepare me for the state wherein it was His will I should serve Him!—how, against my own will, He constrained me to do violence to myself! May He be blessed for ever! Amen.

6. Though I remained here but a few days, yet, through the impression made on my heart by the words of God both heard and read, and by the good conversation of my uncle, I came to understand the truth I had heard in my childhood, that all things are as nothing, the world vanity, and passing rapidly away. I also began to be afraid that, if I were then to die, I should go down to hell. Though I could not bend my will to be a nun, I saw that the religious state was the best and the safest. And thus, by little and little, I resolved to force myself into it.



(This excerpt by Teresa of Ávila is from *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus, of the Order of Our Lady of Carmel*, translated from the Spanish by David Lewis, third edition, enlarged with additional notes and an introduction by Rev. Fr. Benedict, OCD [New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1904].)

