**Thoughts from Deacon Peter January 17, 2021**

I heard recently that medical school applications are at an all time high. They are calling it the “Anthony Fauci effect.” As young people have seen Dr. Fauci and other health care professionals lead the fight against COVID, they’ve been inspired.

Challenging times often lead people to ask questions about the meaning of their lives. That can allow us to hear the voice of God in a new way. The disciples in our Gospel today were very committed to following John the Baptist. But when Jesus came, John said “Behold the Lamb of God!” and pointed them in a different direction.

In the Catholic tradition, we sometimes call figuring out what God is calling us to do

“discerning a vocation.” *All* of the baptized have been given gifts to help the Christian community bear witness to the Kingdom of God. Our vocation is the unique way that God is calling us to grow in holiness and service to others.

Discernment can lead you in many different directions. You may be called to embrace a particular state of life, such as priesthood, marriage or religious life. Perhaps you are called to parish ministry, like being a lector or a volunteer with Saint Vincent de Paul. Catholics are also called to bring their gifts and talents outside the parish. Your vocation could be the kind of work you do or it could be something you do outside of work, like being a soccer coach or teaching English as a second language.

How do I know if I have a vocation? If you feel repeatedly drawn to something or experience great joy in doing it, that’s a good clue. Sometimes, others will see it in you before you see it in yourself and make an invitation, like Andrew invited Peter in today’s Gospel.

There also are times when hearing God’s call will lead us to speak out for justice. In light of recent events, it seems appropriate that we celebrate this weekend the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., probably the most well-known leader of the civil rights movement. If you are interested in learning more about Dr. King, consider reading *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King* or Taylor Branch’s historical trilogy *America in the King Years*.

Six years ago--almost to the day--I began my own journey of discernment. In January of 2015, my wife Gina and I attended an information session on the diaconate sponsored by the Diocese of Oakland. That began a long road of prayer, discernment and formation for Gina and me that culminated in my ordination last September. I’m happy to report that Bishop Michael Barber has announced he is calling a new deacon class. Information sessions are being held in January and February. Click [HERE](https://oakdiocese.org/events/2021-deacon-formation-information-session-1) for more information.